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An Assessment of Adams County's Efforts to Address Homelessness

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Thank you for this opportunity,
The Burnes Center Staff

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The number of people experiencing homelessness in Adams County, especially those in camps along the Clear Creek and the South Platte River, has grown over the past several years, prompting Adams County to re-examine its approach to addressing this issue. As a result of increasing public concern, the office of the County Manager and members of the Board of County Commissioners reached out to the Burnes Center on Poverty and Homelessness (BC) to assist in this re-examination.

In response to the County's request, BC proposed to undertake three primary tasks:

- Conduct an analysis of services currently available to address the needs of individuals living in encampments in Adams County.
- Develop a set of recommendations to meet the needs of individuals living in encampments while simultaneously addressing concerns of public health and safety over both the short and long term. The plan would involve collaboration with key stakeholder groups—individuals experiencing homelessness in encampments, county leadership, county agencies, homeless service providers, and city officials from municipalities surrounding the encampments.
- Look broadly at the County's strategies for addressing homelessness more generally and help inform short- and long-term strategies in the County to address all aspects of homelessness, not just those individuals in the encampments.

METHODOLOGY

In developing its approach to these three tasks, BC staff identified a basic research question and several sub questions to guide its assessment and recommendations. The basic research question is: ***What can the County do to improve its services to those experiencing homelessness?***

The sub questions are:

- A) Who are the campers and what do they need in terms of services?
- B) What services are available in the County for those experiencing homelessness, including the campers?
- C) What are the gaps in services in the County for the overall population of those experiencing homelessness?
- D) What recommendations do the campers have for improving services?
- E) What recommendations do county officials and service providers have for improving services?

In its assessment, the Center utilized a systems mapping approach that includes the identification of needs, available services, gaps in services and solutions for the creation of a truly integrated system of services in a geographical area. We also used a partnership approach to research that involves various organizational representatives and community members including those who are currently experiencing homelessness as collaborative and active participants in the process. We gathered data from residents in the camps, from service providers in the County, from County officials, and from other interested parties as a basis for our recommendations.

FINDINGS

Our data collection and analysis identified five important findings:

- A. There is inadequate shelter space in the County for families and for individuals.
- B. Like most other jurisdictions across the country, there is insufficient housing to address the needs of the County's individuals who are experiencing homelessness.
- C. There are services that individuals identified as being needed, especially showers, employment assistance, help getting identification, storage, housing assistance and shelter.
- D. There is a lack of a clear countywide plan to address homelessness.
- E. There is a need for improved collaboration among the various departments that have responsibility for dealing with homelessness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of these findings, the recommendations have been grouped by time frame.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION OVER ONE TO THREE YEARS

The following seven recommendations, will take some time, probably 1-3 years. However, given the immediacy of the winter months, we encourage the County to move quickly to start considering them as soon as possible.

Recommendation #1: The County should convene a group to develop a 10 Year Plan to address homelessness.

Recommendation #2: The County should develop a plan to evaluate its efforts to address homelessness.

Recommendation #3: The County should approach future efforts to address homelessness as a seamless system of services rather than as a series of individual services and agencies.

Recommendation #4: The County should hire a homelessness services coordinator.

Recommendation #5: The County should improve and expand its communication and coordination between county government offices and its network of housing providers including the Adams County Housing Authority.

Recommendation #6: The County should provide dedicated alternative safe, secure, dignified, habitable space for persons not willing to go to shelters.

Recommendation #7: The County should provide some assistance to the Sheriff and Deputy Sheriffs that patrol the encampments.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION OVER THREE TO FIVE YEARS

The following four recommendations are listed in the 3-5 year time frame because complete enactment of them will take at least that long. However, we strongly encourage decision makers to begin to think through enactment strategies long before the third year.

Recommendation #8: The County should provide more available shelter space for families and for single adults.

Recommendation #9: The County should explore creating service jobs for those in the encampments and for others experiencing homelessness similar to the Denver Day Works program.

Recommendation #10: The County should pay much more attention to homelessness prevention.

Recommendation #11: The County should develop strategies to locate services where the people are, rather than providing services in a central location.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION OVER FIVE OR MORE YEARS

It will likely take five to ten years to adequately address the affordable housing crisis, at a minimum. However, we think Adams County should start addressing the issues of affordable and attainable housing earlier than five years from now.

Recommendation #12: The County should create more affordable/attainable housing for its poorest residents.

Recommendation #13: The County should form partnerships with surrounding county governments, city governments and service providers to develop a true regional approach to address homelessness.

CONCLUSION

Although a few of the recommendations can be accomplished with the expenditure of very little money, most of our suggestions will require political will, real commitment, and substantial financial investment. If our nation's failure to end homelessness over the last 35 years has taught us anything, it's that solving this problem doesn't come on the cheap. However, we also know from a variety of studies that creating housing and appropriate wrap-around services is cheaper than letting individuals continue to live on the streets and in shelters.¹ Therefore, it is in the best interests of Adams County to move forward aggressively to address these recommendations.

¹ Culhane (2008) *The Cost of Homelessness: A Perspective from the United States*

Perlman & Parvensky (2006) Denver Housing First Collaborative Cost Benefit Analysis and Program Outcomes Report. Denver: Colorado Coalition for the Homeless.

Tsemberis (2010) *Housing First: ending homelessness, promoting recovery and reducing costs*

Zaretsky, Flatau & Brady (2008) *What is the (net) cost to government of homelessness programs?*

ASSESSMENT REPORT

INTRODUCTION

Adams County, like cities, suburbs, and rural areas across the country, has been challenged by the question of how best to respond to its population of people experiencing homelessness. Although there has been a county response to homelessness over the past number of years, in the past several months, the Sheriff and other county departments have received increasing numbers of reports from concerned citizens regarding newly developed homeless encampments along the Clear Creek and South Platte River trail systems near the intersection of highways 270 and 76. These new encampments have raised concerns related to public health and safety.

As a result of the increase in citizen concern, the office of the County manager and members of the Board of County Commissioners reached out to the Burnes Center on Poverty and Homelessness (BC) to provide advice on how best address these issues. In addition, the County requested that the BC provide recommendations about the overall approach to homelessness in the County.

In response to the County's request, BC focused on three primary tasks:

- Conduct an analysis of services currently available to address the needs of individuals living in encampments in Adams County. This included identifying service needs, barriers, and gaps in service, as well as the capacity of service providers.
- Develop a set of recommendations to meet the needs of individuals living in encampments while simultaneously addressing concerns of public health and safety over both the short and long term. The plan would involve collaboration with key stakeholder groups—individuals experiencing homelessness in encampments, county leadership, county agencies, homeless service providers, and city officials from municipalities surrounding the encampments.
- Look broadly at the County's strategies for addressing homelessness more generally and help inform short and long term strategies in the County to address all aspects of homelessness, not just those individuals in the encampments.

In developing its approach to these three tasks, BC staff identified a basic research question and several sub questions to guide its assessment and recommendations. The basic question is: ***What can the County do to improve its services to those experiencing homelessness?***

The sub questions are:

- A) Who are the campers and what do they need in terms of services?
- B) What services are available in the County for those experiencing homelessness, including the campers?
- C) What are the gaps in services in the County for the overall population of those experiencing homelessness?
- D) What recommendations do the campers have for improving services?
- E) What recommendations do county officials and service providers have for improving services?

METHODOLOGY

Study Approach—Systems Mapping

BC designed the assessment instruments utilizing a systems mapping approach. Systems mapping includes the identification of needs, available services, gaps in services, and solutions for the creation of a truly integrated system of services in a specific geographical area. We used a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach to conduct this research, that is, a partnership approach to research that involves various organizational representatives and community members including those who are currently experiencing homelessness as collaborative and active participants in the process.

Interviews

The Burnes Center worked with Adams County officials to develop two interview protocols—one for individuals experiencing homelessness and residing in encampments and another for Adams County homeless service providers.

The interview protocol for individuals experiencing homelessness included questions about:

- Personal and demographic information
- Length of time the individual had been camping
- Why they were camping
- Which services they used and where those services were located

In marked contrast to most other studies of this kind, we also asked about the types of services the individual needed to be able to access in Adams County. This question provided the participants with an opportunity to identify not only what services they need but suggestions they might have for improving the County's approach to addressing homelessness.

BC staff interviewed homeless service providers about:

- Types of services offered at their organizations
- Restrictions or requirements for services (e.g., sobriety, background check, populations served, etc.)
- Current capacity and demand for homeless services
- Which organizations and county departments they collaborate with to address homelessness
- Homeless issues that they believe are most pressing in Adams County and their suggestions for addressing these issues

In addition, BC developed a set of interview questions for Adams County officials from the various departments, asking:

- How each department interacts with individuals experiencing homelessness
- How County departments interact among themselves regarding homelessness
- How County departments interact with service providers
- What if any departmental resources are available to address homelessness
- Opinions regarding the major issues in the County related to homelessness, including suggestions for improving the County's response to these issues

Data Collection

BC traveled to homeless encampments on the Clear Creek trail on October 28, 2016 with the Adams County Sheriff's Department. BC staff and interns clearly communicated to participants that the interview was voluntary and that none of the information collected would identify a specific individual. Participants received ten dollars as compensation for completing a 30-45 minute interview. BC conducted 24 structured interviews with individuals in the encampments; however, one interview was eliminated from the analysis because the participant's mental health prohibited the interviewers from collecting accurate information. This respondent made it clear that he was not likely to access services or stay in a shelter.

From September 1 to November 18, 2016, BC completed 12 structured interviews with representatives from all of the major service providers in Adams County that offer shelter and housing assistance. We also interviewed representatives from the Adams County Housing Authority. BC completed a number of interviews with additional organizational representatives from local government, law enforcement and non-profits that offer services relevant to homelessness (e.g., employment assistance, referral information, case management, mental health, drug treatment, etc.). Three representatives of Adams County service providers either cancelled their interview appointments and could not reschedule or were unavailable for interviews within the assessment period. These organizations included Servicios de la Raza, Salud Family Health Centers and A Rising Hope.

Additionally, BC conducted seven interviews with Adams County officials from the following departments/offices: County Manager, Sheriff, Parks and Open Spaces, Community and Economic Development, Human Services and Long Range Strategic Planning. A complete list of the County departments and service provider organizations interviewed is included in Appendix A.

Secondary Data Collection

BC gathered data on Adams County demographics, poverty and homelessness as well as information related to the availability and capacity of housing and sheltering services within the County. The researchers collected these data from:

- Online sources including the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI) Point-in-Time (PIT) surveys, the Colorado Department of Education data on homelessness among school children, and demographic data from the census..
- Regular meetings of service providers in Adams County including the Coalition for the Homeless meetings, Poverty Reduction Workgroup meetings and through email exchanges with Adams County employees and service providers. These data supplement and provide context for the interview findings.

Analysis

SPSS, a standard statistical software package, was used to analyze quantitative data (e.g., frequencies, cross tabs, means, etc.). Qualitative interview data were coded by major themes and then summarized. The instruments—the interview protocol for individuals in the homeless encampments, the interview protocol for homeless services providers and city officials, and the list of questions asked of county officials—are included in Appendix B.

Limitations of the Data

All individuals found in homeless encampments on October 28, 2016, were invited to participate. Since these findings reflect those individuals that voluntarily agreed to participate, it was not a random sample. Therefore, while our sample appeared to be representative of the population, results cannot be generalized to the entire encampment population.

Homeless families are an important demographic that are not represented in this assessment, as BC staff did not encounter any families with children in the encampments. As discussed below, families comprise a large percentage of those experiencing

homelessness in Adams County. BC was only able to infer some of the needs of homeless families from interviews with service providers and background data.

Finally, fewer interviews with service providers were collected than anticipated because of scheduling conflicts and cancellations. However, we interviewed the major providers of shelter and housing assistance in the County. Additional interviews would help add depth to the assessment and increase the validity of the results.

BACKGROUND

Demographics, Poverty and Risk of Homelessness in Adams County²

According to the latest census data, Adams County has a population of 491,337 of which 27.5% are under the age of eighteen and 9.8% are sixty-five or older. The Office of Long Range Strategic Planning states that Adams County has the highest number of children per capita in the state, with approximately 30,000 children under the age of five. In 2014 there were an estimated 155,047 households. Approximately 30% of the population speaks a language other than English in the home. An estimated 81% of the population has a high school diploma and only 21% have a Bachelor's degree, representing an opportunity for increasing income potential through education.

According to census data, the median household income in 2014 was \$57,421³ per year, and an estimated 13% of the population was experiencing poverty. The Office of Long Range Strategic Planning states that 125,000 people in Adams County have less than \$500 in their checking and savings accounts combined at any time, thus representing individuals who are at risk of experiencing homelessness in the event of a financial stressor. Another set of data illustrative of the number of households possibly living on the edge of homelessness includes those receiving governmental assistance. The Adams County Department of Human Services has provided information regarding their caseload in Table 1.

² Demographic and Census data in these paragraphs comes from Census.gov unless otherwise noted.

³The National Low Income Housing Coalition 2016 *Out of Reach* report states that the AMI for Adams County in 2016 was \$80,100.

Table 1. Adams County Human Services Caseload⁴

Benefit Type	2014	2015	2016
Average No. of SNAP Households Served Monthly	22,531	21,726	21,244
Average No. of TANF Households Served Monthly	1,294	1,455	1,454
Average No. of Adult Financial Households Served Monthly	2,756	2,702	2,556
Average No. of Health First Colorado (Medicaid) Households Served Monthly	55,119	64,243	73,188
Average Monthly Benefits Issued for the Same Households			
SNAP	\$7.4 million	\$6.89 million	\$6.5 million
TANF	\$512,759	\$578,126	\$583,041
Adult Financial	\$958,856	\$1.0 million	\$919,390
Medicaid	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>	<i>No data</i>

**No data available for SSI households*

Housing Costs⁵

There are an estimated 167,043 housing units in the County, and renters make up approximately 35% of the population. The National Low Income Housing Coalition's (NLIHC) report provides additional information on the housing wage in Adams County, i.e. the hourly wage needed to afford a two-bedroom unit without exceeding 30% of the household income. In Adams County the estimated cost of a two-bedroom unit at Fair Market Rent (FMR) is \$1,227 per month making the housing wage in Adams County \$23.60, which is slightly higher than the state average of \$21.12. This represents 2.8 minimum wage jobs at forty hours per week and a yearly salary of \$49,080. NLIHC states that in 2016 there were approximately 54,976 renter households and the average renter wage was \$14.97. The rent affordable at this wage is approximately \$778 per month; it would take 1.6 jobs at this average renter wage to pay the fair market rent.

Data on Homelessness

Table 2 highlights some demographic characteristics of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Adams County according to the Metro Denver's Homeless Initiative (MDHI) Point-in-Time (PIT) surveys. Several data points are conspicuous in the

⁴ Data provided by the Adams County Department of Human Services.

⁵ These data come from the NLIHC 2016 *Out of Reach* report http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/OOR_2016.pdf

annual counts of homeless subpopulations below. First, overall numbers for 2016 are down substantially from all the previous years. However, from what various individuals reported, we believe this represents a serious undercount, created by an incomplete execution of the PIT in January of this year, rather than by a substantial reduction in actual numbers. Related to this is the number of persons who are chronically homeless. (Persons are considered chronically homeless if they have a disability and have been either homeless constantly for over a year or have had four bouts of homelessness in the past three years.) Although the actual numbers of such individuals is down in 2016 (probably due to the undercount), the percentage of chronically homeless individuals compared to the total population of those experiencing homelessness is actually higher than in previous years.

Second, prior to 2014, MDHI counted persons who were doubled-up as homelessness. In the 2014 PIT, MDHI separated out this population. In part, this accounts for the tremendous drop in total homeless from 2013 to 2014. This alteration to the definition of homelessness where doubled-up was no longer considered homelessness could also account for some of the change in percentages related to gender, as it is possible that females are more likely to be doubled-up than males. As well, this change in methodology likely influences the rise in unsheltered individuals as a percentage of the total population. Additionally, family composition among those experiencing homelessness has changed between 2014 and 2015, which may be accounted for by the locations where the survey was administered.

Table 2. Subpopulations of Homeless in Adams County – PIT Counts⁶

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total Homeless	1531	864	1,264	532	572	200
Male/Female	40%/60%	37%/63%	37%/62%	57%/43%	51%/49%	52%/48%
Chronically Homeless	7	14	32	36	31	13
Unsheltered	1.1%	3.7%	6%	11%	18%	30%
Family status						
Single Adults	12.3%	12.6%	15%	16%	56%	NA
Unaccompanied Youth	--	--	--	--	5%	7%
Persons in Families with children	85%	85%	80%	81%	32%	69%
Persons in Families without children	3%	3%	5%	4%	7%	31%

The PIT survey collects data on the reasons why individuals and families are experiencing homelessness and where they last had a permanent residence. Table 3 includes the top five reasons given for why individuals and families were experiencing homelessness in Adams County over the last three years. For the last three years the top three reasons given for homelessness in Adams County included losing a job or unemployment, housing costs that are too high, and family/relationship breakup.

Table 3. PIT Reasons for Homelessness in Adams County⁷

2014	2015	2016
• 40.9% Lost job or could not find employment • 27.4% Family or relationship break-up • 20.9% Housing costs were too high • 15.3% Bad credit • 14.4% Mental Illness	• 26.4% Unable to pay rent • 25.4% Lost job or could not find employment • 20% Family or relationship break-up • 14.1% Asked to leave • 12% Bad credit	• 26% Lost job or could not find employment • 24% Unable to pay rent • 22.9% Family or relationship break-up • 22.9% Asked to leave • 15.6% Alcohol/Substance use

⁶ Metro Denver Homeless Initiative <http://mdhi.org/point-in-time-reports/>

⁷ *Ibid*

Over the last two years mobility among those experiencing homelessness surveyed during the PIT has shown that the majority of individuals spending the night in Adams County had a permanent place to stay in Adams County (61% in 2016 and 53% in 2015) or in Denver (17% in 2016 and 22% in 2015). The percentage of those from out of state or country fell to 9% in 2016 from 14% in 2015. Although the majority of individuals experiencing homelessness in Adams County had their last residence in Adams County, the PIT shows that more individuals migrate to Denver once homeless. In 2015, 375 homeless individuals in the Metro Denver Area said their last permanent residence was in Adams County—190 were surveyed in Denver, 146 in Adams County. In 2016 there were 230 people metro wide that last resided in Adams County—127 were in Denver compared to 55 in Adams County. The greater concentration of services for homelessness located in Denver is likely the reason for this migration.

The Adams County Department of Human Services recently examined poverty and mobility in the County. While this examination was larger in scope than just looking at homelessness, census data indicate that there is a higher percentage of impoverished people moving into Adams than the state average (9.2% vs. 7.5%). Both Arapahoe and Weld Counties have higher percentages of people below the 100% poverty level moving into their counties than Adams (10.6% and 9.5% respectively).⁸

The PIT survey is only one source of data and has a number of limitations.⁹ Additional data are needed to supplement the PIT in order to gain a more accurate picture of homelessness. The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) collects data on school-aged children experiencing homelessness throughout the school year. While the PIT survey uses HUD guidelines to define homelessness, the Department of Education operates under a different definition of homelessness, one that includes families that are

⁸ Personal Communication with Herb Covey.

⁹ The PIT survey only provides a snapshot of homelessness during a single night in January and the limitations of the PIT survey are widely recognized. Some of these limitations include: 1) it only counts those identified as homeless at that time and who are also willing to participate; 2) it only captures those who meet the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) definition of homelessness which does not include people living in motels paid out of their own pocket, couch surfers and those living double/tripled up.

doubled/tripled up and living in motels. Table 4 includes information on homelessness in Adams County from the CDE. These numbers only include the school-age children in homeless families, not the adults or the younger children/any children that are not enrolled in school. These numbers suggest that many more individuals are experiencing homelessness than is shown in the PIT, especially if one estimates the unaccounted for family members. These increased numbers are likely the result of the more inclusive definition of homelessness used by the CDE and the collection of data throughout the school year.

Table 4. Colorado Department of Education Homeless Data by School Year¹⁰

	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Shelters, Transitional Housing, Awaiting Foster Care Placement	133	199	208	166	210
Doubled-up Due to Economic Hardship	2837	3963	3470	3511	3778
Unsheltered	101	58	45	58	91
Hotel or Motel	79	176	148	139	206
Totals	3150	4396	3871	3874	4285

Sheltering in Adams County

There are five major service providers in Adams County that provide shelter—Access Housing, Almost Home, Cold Weather Care, Comitis Crisis Center, and Growing Home. There are 62 shelter beds year round for families with children: Access Housing (18), Almost Home (30) and Growing Home (14). Currently Access Housing is unable to use two of its eight buildings, reducing their available beds to 10 and the total number of shelter beds for families to 54. Approximately, 25% or one-fourth of Access Housing’s families is homeless because of domestic violence. There is one domestic violence shelter in Adams County, A Rising Hope, which has approximately 6 beds for survivors of domestic violence.

¹⁰ Colorado Department of Education https://www.cde.state.co.us/dropoutprevention/homeless_data

There are only two service providers in Adams County that serve single individuals experiencing homelessness. Comitis Crisis Center is located just inside Adams County in Aurora and serves both individuals and families year round with 139 beds. Additionally, Cold Weather Care consists of a network of Churches in Adams County that offer 20 shelter beds to individuals during the coldest six months of the year.

All of the shelters have limits on the length of time an individual or family can stay in their shelters, ranging from 30-90 days. The number of available shelter beds is only a fraction of what people need, according to the data from the PIT and Colorado Department of Education.

Housing Assistance in Adams County¹¹

The Adams County Housing Authority (ACHA) manages the vast majority of housing vouchers (currently 1,498) in Adams County (housing vouchers allow individuals and families to pay only a portion of their monthly rent bill). Almost 300 additional vouchers in Adams County are not managed by ACHA (e.g., 75 in Commerce City and 220 in Brighton). ACHA receives approximately 15-20 contacts per week from households in Denver needing to use their vouchers in Adams County. The average household size for the voucher program is three, with an average annual income of \$13,000. Well over half (69%) of the vouchers in Adams County are held by non-disabled elderly adults without children. According to federal guidelines, at least 75% of individuals in the housing voucher programs must be at or below 30% area median income (AMI) and an additional percentage up to 25%, can be at or below 50% AMI.

Individuals and families are chosen to receive housing vouchers through a lottery system in Adams County. The last time the lottery opened in 2014, the Housing Authority received approximately 4,000 applications in two days for an estimated 500 available vouchers—a demand that is eight times greater than the supply. The Housing Authority expects an even higher volume of applicants in 2017 due to the launch of the new online application system.

¹¹ Data provided by the Adams County Housing Authority.

Out of the 500 individuals that were randomly selected through the lottery at the last opening, approximately 450 qualified for the program and 300 were successful in finding housing. There is currently a 98% occupancy rate in the county that has caused many property owners to opt out of housing voucher programs because they can collect higher rents at market rates. In the recent past, 60-70% of housing vouchers issued in Adams County were returned because the recipient could not find a unit where they could use the voucher. The competitiveness of the rental market also affects the number of vouchers that are issued. As the Fair Market Rent increases, ACHA must spend more money per voucher, reducing the overall number of available vouchers.

ACHA also manages 10 properties with an estimated 1,500 units of housing. There is not significant overlap among the voucher programs and ACHA properties (approximately 200 vouchers). There are two properties in development that will include 60 additional units. Table 5 shows the residents by AMI in all 10 ACHA properties.

Table 5. ACHA Property Residents by Area Median Income (AMI)¹²

Percent of AMI	Percent of Residents	Number of Individuals
Less than 30%	39%	1387
31-50%	37%	1328
51-60%	15%	532
Above 60%	9%	334
Totals	100%	3581

The breakdown of household size among all housing voucher programs and properties managed by ACHA is 29% one-bedroom, 40% two-bedroom, 23% three-bedroom and seven% four-bedroom. The data suggest that there are far fewer affordable housing resources in Adams County for larger families.

Encampments

Throughout the Denver metro area, an insufficient number of shelter beds, restrictive regulations in existing shelters, and the general condition of many shelters have forced

¹² Ibid

some persons experiencing homelessness to remain outdoors, usually in some kind of primitive encampments. These individuals have created such campsites for decades, but these encampments have multiplied in recent years due to an increasing number of persons experiencing homelessness and various local statutes that have placed significant restrictions on what persons can do in the out-of-doors.

Within the past year, due to an increasing public outcry from the business community and the public, some local jurisdictions have stepped up enforcement of the various local ordinances, leading to a series of “street sweeps” that have forced people in campsites to “move along” and to abandon most of their belongings. Despite protests from local advocates, Denver and Boulder seem to have adopted a whack-a-mole approach to eliminating these campsites, and police clashes with encampment denizens and advocates have become commonplace.

While Adams County has not yet engaged in “street sweeps”, local citizen complaints have forced County sheriffs and local police to closely monitor a growing number of encampments. As the interview findings show, it is likely that this growth is fueled in part by persons seeking to escape from the extensive police attention in Denver and Boulder who are setting up camp in Adams and Jefferson Counties.

The state of homelessness in Adams County reflects the lack of housing resources across the entire country. If one includes all the households that are either at significant risk of becoming homeless or actually experiencing homelessness, we have a deficit of 7.5 million housing units. Every state, on average, would have to create 150,000 units, overnight, to eliminate this deficit. For every 100 extremely poor and homeless households in the US, there are just 17 affordable and attainable housing units available. Further, for the bottom 20% of people who either rent or own their own homes, they spend 87% of their annual income on housing, leaving them with just about \$1,000 per year for everything else—food, clothing, health care, child care, transportation, etc., **one thousand dollars for the entire year.**

Another way to look at the housing crisis nationally is to consider the housing wage. Across the country, the housing wage is \$20.30. The wage in Colorado is \$21.12. In Denver, the needed wage is almost \$24, and in the City of Boulder, the housing wage is more than \$50 per hour. In Denver, a person would have to work almost three full-time jobs at minimum wage to afford a modest two-bedroom unit. In Boulder, an individual would have to work about six full-time jobs at minimum wage to afford an average two-bedroom house.¹³

In addition, the federal government provides approximately \$250 billion in housing subsidies of which 80% goes to homeowners who itemize their tax deductions and claim a mortgage interest deduction and deductions for state, local, and sales taxes, and 20% goes to low income renters.

Although many recognize that homelessness is in large part an economic issue, the result of the lack of available, affordable housing, it is not uncommon for municipalities to enact statutes that criminalize homelessness rather than addressing the root cause of the problem. These statutes include camping bans, bans on various aspects of panhandling, sit and lie ordinances, to name just a few. Denver, for example, has instituted a series of street sweeps over the last several months, much to the satisfaction of some residents and business owners and to the dismay of others.

Given this background look at homelessness in Adams and the country, it is clear that residents in Adams experiencing homelessness or extreme poverty face the same kinds of obstacles in obtaining housing that their counterparts face nationwide.

ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

This section of the report includes the quantitative and qualitative assessment findings from the interviews. The findings are separated into sections corresponding to the research questions identified in the Introduction.

¹³ Out of Reach 2016, National Low Income Housing Coalition.

Research Question: What can the County do to improve its services to those experiencing homelessness?

A) Who are the campers and what do they need in terms of services?

D) What recommendations do the campers have for improving services?

BC interviewed 24 individuals experiencing homelessness along the Clear Creek trail in Adams County on October 28, 2016. The following sections provide:

- A basic description of the demographic and personal characteristics of the individuals contacted in the encampments
- Information regarding the individual experiences of homelessness
- Reasons for camping in Adams County
- Details regarding the services these individuals currently access and where these services are located
- What services these persons need in Adams County

As described in the section on data collection, only 23 interviews were included in the analysis.

Demographic and Personal Characteristics

Of the individuals interviewed, 16 are male and seven are female. Five stated they are veterans. Since criminal history can often create barriers to accessing services and housing, BC staff asked about felony convictions and if the individual was prevented from obtaining housing or other services because of his or her criminal history. Fourteen interviewees stated that they had been convicted of a felony, and nine of the 14, stated that their criminal record was a barrier to housing or other services. For example, one respondent stated that he was camping because he was unable to rent an apartment because he did not pass the property owner's criminal background check despite having good credit. Another respondent said there is no housing available for felons.

Homelessness and Reasons for Camping in Adams County

The total length of time homeless among those interviewed in the encampments ranged from 17 days to 10 years, with the average length of homelessness equaling 571 days or

approximately 1 year and 7 months. Two persons stated that they had been without a permanent place to stay for less than 1 month, eight persons between one and three months, four persons for more than three months but less than one year, and nine persons had been experiencing homelessness for more than one year. Nineteen respondents said that they sleep in a camp most of the time, two sleep on the street most of the time and two stay with friends or family most of the time. Twelve respondents answered that their last permanent residence had been in Adams County, five in Denver and six from outside the state. The proportion of people coming from out of state is higher than what the PIT survey suggested. This could mean that there are actually higher numbers of individuals from out of state or that people coming from outside the state are more likely to camp than those from the metro area.

Interviewed participants indicated that they have been camping in Adams County anywhere from one day to 10 years. Of the 23 respondents, 14 persons have been camping in the Clear Creek and Platte River trail area for less than one month, four persons from one to three months, two persons from over three months to one year and three persons for more than a year. Eleven respondents stay alone while camping in Adams County, six said they stay with a partner or spouse, and six with friends. Additionally, five persons have a companion animal that stays with them.

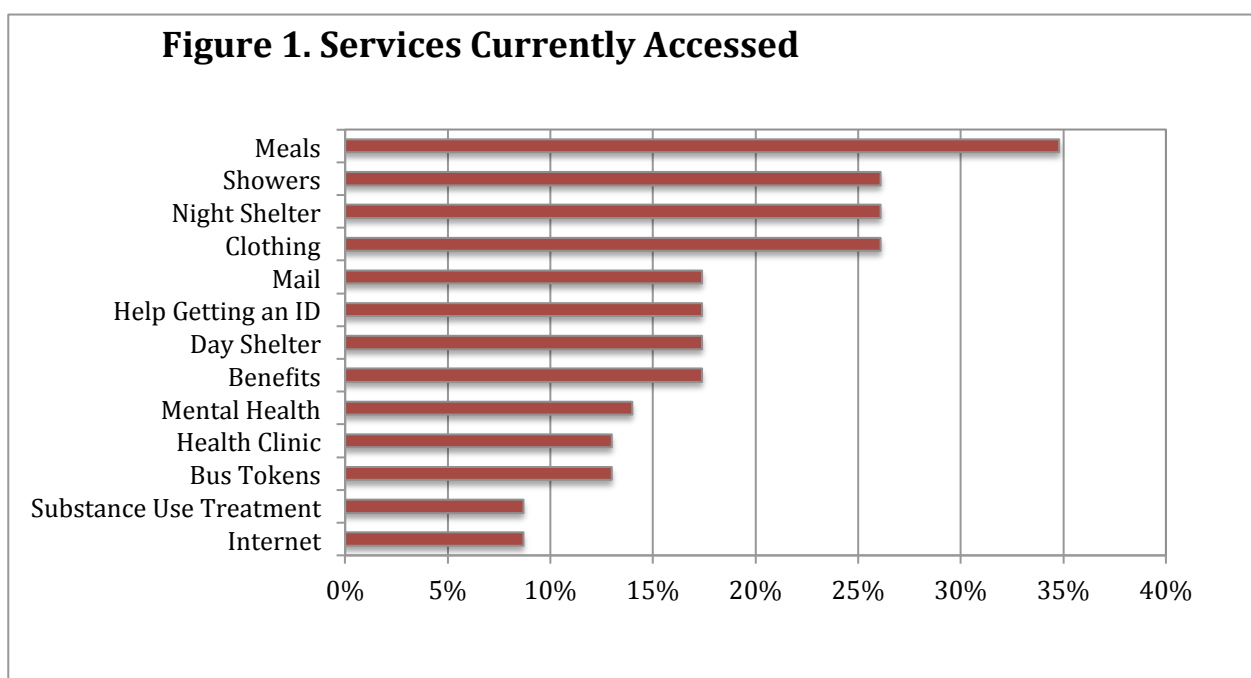
BC staff also asked individuals why they are camping in Adams County. The theme that emerged most frequently among the reasons given for camping was that camps are safer and allow for more privacy than shelters. Individuals stated that shelters are “too crowded” and full of “unstable people.” Respondents described that they had their belongings stolen while staying at a shelter because there was not enough storage. Two individuals stated that they have mental health issues (PTSD and bipolar) and do not feel safe around lots of people.

A second theme among the reasons given for camping in Adams County was that the respondent had friends or family staying in the area—both housed and camping. A few respondents said that prior to camping they were staying with friends in the area, and

others said they have friends camping here. One respondent indicated the desire to stay close to children who live in Adams County. Finally, respondents said there is less police harassment for individuals experiencing homelessness along the bike trails in Adams County than in Denver.

Services

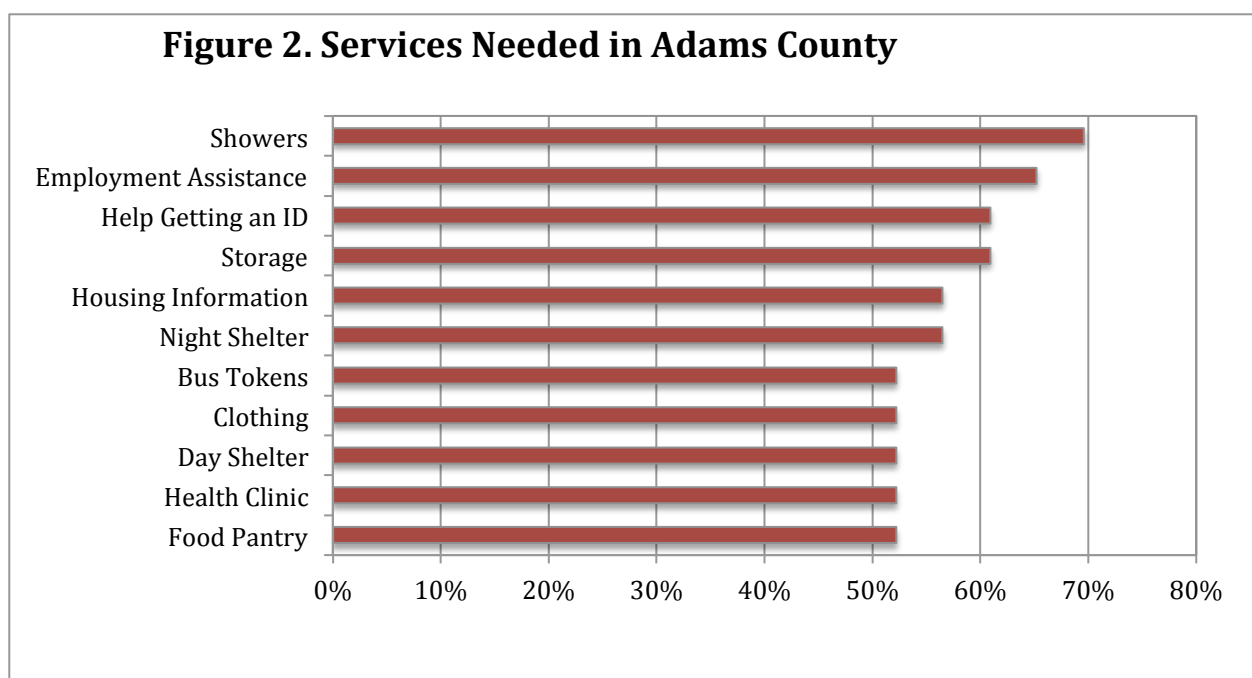
BC staff asked the interviewees about the services they currently access as well as services they need in Adams County near the encampments. Figure 1 shows the most frequently identified services that the respondents are currently accessing.



Eight respondents get meals from service providers and community organizations, and six access night shelter, clothing services and showers. The interview findings show that most of these services are accessed in Denver. Thirteen of 23 respondents stated that they access services in Denver. The organizations where respondents receive services most often are the Denver Rescue Mission, the St. Francis Center, and Samaritan House. Only three individuals stated that they receive services in Adams County, from the Department of Human Services and the Adams County Food Bank. Additionally, three

individuals stated that they receive services at the JeffCo Action Center in Jefferson County.

Interview respondents also provided information about what services they need in Adams County. Figure 2 contains all services that over half of respondents stated as needed in Adams County. In addition, almost half, 11 or 48% of respondents stated Adams County needs more housing vouchers, meals, mail, professional skills training and substance use treatment, and 10 persons stated the need for transitional housing and mental health services. Other important comments related to services included the need for a local resource center, mobile resources, bathrooms and water.



These findings highlight several important issues. First, needed services are in very short supply in the County. Over half of the respondents needed to go to Denver to get many of these basic services. Second, transportation becomes a critical issue. Few if any of the respondents have direct access to a car, so they must rely on either friends who do have cars, on public transportation that is limited in Adams, or on bicycles which are few and far between. Getting to and from Denver becomes even more difficult in light of these limitations on transportation.

In the Denver Metro Area, service providers use the Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) to assess the chronicity and medical vulnerability of individuals experiencing homelessness in order to identify those most appropriate for different housing programs available across the metro area. BC staff asked interview participants to identify any disabling conditions for which they would like to receive services. The responses to this question provide some insight into the medical vulnerability of the individuals interviewed. Approximately 65% or 15 individuals interviewed stated that they had one or more disabling conditions that needed services while eight did not have a disabling condition. Five respondents had one disabling condition, three had two, and two had three or more disabling conditions. Table 6 shows the frequency of each disabling condition among respondents.

Table 6. Frequency of Disabling Conditions

Mental Health	52.2%
Chronic Health	26.1%
Physical Disability	21.7%
Substance Use	13.0%
Developmental Disability	4.3%
AIDS/HIV	4.3%

BC staff also specifically asked about shelter. The majority of respondents, 18 or 78% stated that they would stay in a shelter if one was available in the area, while five said they would not stay in a shelter. However, most of the respondents said they would only use a shelter under specific conditions (e.g., during winter, if the shelter allows couples, if the shelter allows companion animals, and if the shelter has services for PTSD). Additionally, while many said they would access a shelter under such conditions, they also stated that they would prefer a place to camp legally and free, a “camping community.”

Research Question: What can the County do to improve its services to those experiencing homelessness?

B) What services are available in the County for those experiencing homelessness?

C) What are the gaps in services in the County for the overall population of those experiencing homelessness?

E) What recommendations do county officials and service providers have for improving services?

From September 1 to November 18, BC staff interviewed 12 different groups from Adams County service providers, local governments and other community organizations that provide services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The groups interviewed included representatives from seven homeless service providers, two local governments and three other organizations—the Adams County Housing Authority, Adams 12 School District Family Liaisons, and Anythink Libraries.

Current Services and Collaborations

In order to better understand the system of services, BC staff asked these organizations questions related to the types of direct services provided to individuals experiencing homelessness, requirements and restrictions for service provision, populations served, capacity for services, and the types of work collaborations in and outside of the County. These 12 representative organizations provide a wide variety of services for those experiencing homelessness—shelter, health care, mental health, substance use treatment, education, employment, utilities assistance, identification assistance, clothing, showers, bus tokens, etc. Of a list of 35 different services, childcare and legal services were the only services not provided by this group of organizations. Since there are many services offered among only a fraction of the providers in the County, it is possible that individuals experiencing homelessness in the encampments who still want or need additional services, may not know they are available, have transportation issues, or the services are not available in Adams County.

The interview findings show that the availability and accessibility of day and night shelter for all populations experiencing homelessness represents a major gap in services in Adams County:

- It was already noted that the number of available beds is far below the number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness according to the PIT and Colorado Department of Education data.
- Providers of shelter in Adams County are unable to accommodate many sub-populations. There is no shelter in Adams County that can accept unaccompanied youth or accommodate individuals that would like to stay together with their friends. One shelter, Growing Home, can take in companion animals. Comitis is the only shelter that can house individuals with severe mental health issues or substance use issues.
- All of the shelters have at least one requirement for services that creates barriers for individuals seeking shelter. These requirements include sobriety, drug tests, possessing personal identification, receiving benefits in Adams County, employment or seeking employment and the absence of certain types of criminal convictions.
- All five shelters stated that they regularly have to turn individuals and families away. Four of the five said that they do not have the capacity to serve everyone, but only two could estimate how many people they are unable to serve. Comitis estimates that they turn away 400 people per month and Almost Home estimates 10 families per day. Cold Weather Care states that approximately 30% of individuals seeking shelter who pass the initial intake screen are denied a place to stay because the organization cannot accommodate companion animals and certain physical disabilities.

BC staff asked about the types of working collaborations among organizations. All 12 organizations worked with a variety of service providers, city officials, and county departments. Nine, or 75%, worked with organizations or agencies in other counties. When asked who their organizations worked with to address issues of homelessness, 92% said they work with local law enforcement, 75% said Adams County Department of

Human Services and Almost Home, 67% said Growing Home, and 58% said Cold Weather Care and the Adams County Housing Authority.

Recommendations from Service Providers

During the interviews, BC staff also asked these organizational representatives what they believe to be the most important issues related to homelessness in Adams County and what suggestions they have to improve the County's response to homelessness. Data from the interviews identified the following themes regarding major issues related to homelessness:

- Denial among public officials, local governments and the general public that homelessness exists in the County including denial about the number of individuals and families at significant risk of experiencing homelessness.
- Lack of a collective effort to address homelessness.
- Lack of employment and low wages.
- High cost of housing and lack of affordable housing.
- Insufficient resources for families experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness.
- Providing more support for law enforcement.

In order to solve these issues, the interviewees stated the need for better connection and communication among service providers, community groups, local governments and the County. They said that city and county government officials need more knowledge of and involvement with the issue of homelessness and that the County should create a revenue stream to address homelessness. Additionally, they indicated a need for more funding to make housing more affordable and keep people in their housing (services for homeless prevention such as emergency rental assistance, more low-income housing developments, more rental assistance vouchers, etc.). Finally, the interview respondents highlighted the desperate need for more shelter for both families and individuals.

Recommendations from County officials

BC conducted seven interviews with Adams County officials from various departments—County Manager, Sheriff, Parks and Open Spaces, Community and Economic Development, Human Services, and Long Range Strategic Planning. BC staff asked questions regarding the office or department’s interaction with individuals experiencing homelessness, the available resources to address homelessness, how the different county departments collaborate to address homelessness, ideas as to why people are camping in Adams County, and the major issues of homelessness facing the County as well as suggestions for addressing the stated issues.

The Adams County Department of Human Services and the Sheriff’s Department were the only two agencies that stated they have regular contact with individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Other departments mainly interact and provide resources to local homeless service providers. The Sheriff’s Community Resource Team is the only County entity that said they have regular and continued interaction with persons in the encampments. This team serves as the main outreach to the encampments despite a lack of resources for addressing many of the underlying social and systemic causes of homelessness—unemployment, underemployment and low wages, high housing costs, mental health, substance use, etc.

The respondents did not indicate an intentional collective approach within county government to address homelessness. They stated that different departments collaborated on various projects related to homelessness as the need arose. For example, the Sheriff’s Department collaborated with the Department of Human Services to conduct the PIT survey and worked with Parks and Open Spaces to assess the health and safety impacts of some of the abandoned campsites. However, there is not a lead department or office to direct and coordinate homeless programming.

Many of the County officials echoed what the service providers and local government representatives had to say in terms of the major local issues related to homelessness—denial of the issue, lack of affordable housing, the lack of a strategic and regional

approach, and a lack of public will to allocate resources for homelessness. The Sheriff's department raised a number of important public health and safety concerns specifically related to the encampments—drug use, used syringes near public trails, large amounts of debris, human waste, exposed power lines, fires, extreme mental health issues and interpersonal violence. The immediate need for health and safety in the encampments combined with the diverse needs of other populations experiencing homelessness throughout the County call for a multi-level approach that addresses the specific needs of individuals through the creation of “safe spaces” and increasing access to services while at the same time addressing the larger systemic issues of homelessness.

Adams County Officials were very open to a number of creative solutions for homelessness including the possible creation of authorized encampments, transforming county building space into shelter space and creating opportunities to develop mobile services. Finally, most Adams County officials identified the importance of asking individuals who are experiencing homelessness for their articulation of needed services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear from the Adams County statistics and comments from county officials, service providers, and residents in the campsites that services available in the County are inadequate. There are many more family members and single adults experiencing homelessness than there are available shelter beds. Also, there are more family members and school-aged children who are at significant risk of homelessness than available housing and shelter by several orders of magnitude. This is a growing problem exacerbated by rapidly increasing housing costs and likely cutbacks in federal funding for social service programs. Planning should begin now. In addition, we are heading into the winter months, and the 20 beds available through the Cold Weather Care project are clearly inadequate to provide comfort for the numbers of persons in the river encampments.

Furthermore, the Denver metro area is at a real crisis point in its approach to those persons living on the streets and in encampments. Denver's code enforcement has

created a schism in the overall effort to address homelessness between those experiencing homelessness and their advocates, and the business community and political leadership. It is very possible that Adams County, if it follows a constructive thoughtful approach to addressing the needs of its most at risk population, can provide real leadership to the metro-wide area and beyond.

Since we understand that it will be impossible for the County to enact all the following recommendations immediately and that some of them will be more costly than others, at the urging of the County, we have grouped the recommendations into groups based on the amount of time we suggest it takes for their enactment.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION OVER ONE TO THREE YEARS

These recommendations involve a change in organizational attitudes and culture and involve increasing collaboration among departments and agencies. While we recognize that changes in organizational culture will take time, we encourage responsible parties to begin to design strategies to bring about such change as soon as possible.

Recommendation #1: The County should convene a group to develop a 10 year Plan to address homelessness.

Several years ago, the County created a Blue Ribbon Commission to develop a 10 year plan to address homelessness. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, the work of the Commission faltered, and the Commission itself came to a close.

However, in spite of the dissolution of the earlier effort, the basic concept of a county-wide commission/coalition remains a good one, especially if the mission of a new effort were expanded to include addressing extreme poverty in the County. Under the appropriate, committed leadership of one or more of the County's leaders, a comparable effort would be an important force in mobilizing services throughout the County and in developing a streamlined, integrated, and seamless system for the provision of these services. Such an effort, especially if it includes the faith community, would also produce a substantial increase in the sense of community throughout the County, by breaking down existing service silos and by engaging a larger portion of the entire community in

the effort. In addition, by creating this seamless system of services, Adams County could create an effective model for counties throughout the Denver metro area and could provide critical leadership in developing a region-wide comprehensive system of services (See Recommendation #13).

There are several requirements necessary for the creation of this effort. First, to avoid negative associations from the failure of the first effort, the coalition needs a new name. We recommend the following: Adams County Homelessness Initiative to End Vulnerability through Empowerment (ACHIEVE). Second, ACHIEVE needs to be chaired by one or more County leaders who have the time and the commitment to really push the agenda of the organization. Such leaders could be elected officials, department heads, business leaders, leaders in the faith community, or other well known and respected community individuals. Third, there needs to be real commitment from the relevant departments and the major service providers in the County to work actively to accomplish the goals of ACHIEVE. Fourth, there needs to be agreement about data and data sharing in order to make the transition from one service sector to another as seamless and painless as possible. Fifth, the leadership must be strategic in identifying the actual membership of the organization. All the relevant sectors must be represented, including individuals who are currently or have experienced homelessness. Finally, there needs to be a staffing component to carry out the work of ACHIEVE and to provide the glue for such an effort. Additionally, developing a formal 10 year plan in a public manner provides an opportunity to educate the public and develop support.

Recommendation #2: With or Without ACHIEVE, the County should develop a plan to evaluate its efforts to address homelessness.

Regardless of whether or not the County decides to implement some type of 10 year planning coalition, the County should create some mechanism for evaluating its efforts to address homelessness. A recent analysis of 10 year plans across the country indicated that, in almost every case, there were no plans to evaluate the effectiveness of these planning efforts.¹⁴ This is certainly true of the Denver's Road Home effort. Yes, there are

¹⁴ *Ending Homelessness: Why We Haven't, How We Can, Chapter 15*

reams of data about outputs, i.e. numbers of units of service provided—e.g., housing units created, outreach contacts, etc.—but there has been little cumulative assessment of the overall impact of these services on the lives of those experiencing homelessness.

Adams County is now at a point where it could provide real leadership in developing real outcome data about its efforts to address homelessness. It's not enough to identify numbers of families that move into housing; it is important to ascertain how long people remain in their units. It's not enough to determine the number of people who get jobs; it is critical to assess whether individuals stay in jobs and get wage increases over time. It's not enough to document the number of outreach contacts; we need to follow up on those contacts to find out what happened. We also need to examine whether our services lead to improved quality of life over time.

We recognize that this type of longitudinal program evaluation is difficult to accomplish and is potentially quite costly. We also understand the inevitable tension between adding additional services versus evaluating existing services, given finite added resources. However, we are strong believers in identifying truly successful programs for replication rather than continuing to invest in programs of questionable value.

Recommendation #3: The County should approach future efforts to address homelessness as a seamless system of services rather than as a series of individual services and agencies.

One of the current buzzwords in the social service arena is collective impact. All too often, departments and agencies attempt to advance their own agendas, thus leading to very isolated impact. It is important that the relevant county officials view their approach to homelessness as a collaborative and coordinated system. Such thinking provides the opportunity for some agencies to focus on some particular services rather than trying to provide them all, but it requires that agencies coordinate and collaborate extensively. The homelessness coordinator for the county should be in charge of developing this systems approach to the issue. (See Recommendation #4 below.)

This collaboration should include the efforts of individual jurisdictions. It seems inefficient and potentially duplicative for the County to be developing services while individual local jurisdictions are simultaneously trying to create their own ways of addressing the problem. City efforts should be identified and incorporated into the larger system of services available throughout the County.

We also recognize that technology will be required to assist in this cultural change. Various types of software are available to assist in organizational planning, client assessment and evaluation, and overall program evaluation. Appropriate department managers need to consider the inclusion of appropriate software to assist in the cultural change.

Recommendation #4: The County should hire a homelessness services coordinator.

After talking with county officials and with service providers, we conclude that there is a lack of clarity about the county's overall plan to address homelessness and a lack of coordination among county agencies and several of the local jurisdictions.

This has led to a fragmentation of services, to the detriment of our most vulnerable citizens. We recognize the existence of various political jurisdictions and the resulting mixture of governmental responsibilities for various services. However, if persons experiencing homelessness and extreme poverty in Adams County are to receive the kind of assistance that they need and deserve, we feel that coordination should be increased and that there be real clarity about the County's approach to ending homelessness.

Therefore, we encourage the county to hire a staff person, located in the Department of Human Services, to oversee and manage the entire county effort to deal with the troubling issue of homelessness. Therefore, this person should have both management and planning skills and experience.

We realize it will be necessary to find the funds to pay for this person's salary, however, we consider this recommendation to be one of the most important. If the County is to move forward aggressively to attack homelessness, engaging this person should be very high on the list of priorities.

Recommendation #5: The County should improve and expand its communication and coordination between county government offices and its network of housing providers including the Adams County Housing Authority.

During the course of our investigation, we have been struck by the separation of county government offices from the Adams County Housing Authority and other housing providers. To our way of thinking, it is very important that housing providers collaborate closely with other service providers, including county department offices in order to address the variety of issues confronting those experiencing homelessness. We urge the Director of the Housing Authority and the relevant heads of county offices to develop a strategy for much closer collaboration and coordination in order to marshal appropriate forces to address homelessness. This recommendation extends to County coordination and collaboration with other housing providers, such as the Brighton Housing Authority, various Community Housing Development Organizations, and DelWest. The creation of a seamless system of services for those experiencing homelessness demands much greater collaboration and cooperation. The County homelessness coordinator can play a major role in developing this increased collaboration.

In the case of the following two recommendations, complete enactment will take some time. However, given their importance and the onset of the winter months, we encourage the County to move quickly to start the process as soon as possible.

Recommendation #6: The County should provide dedicated alternative safe, secure, dignified, habitable space for persons not willing to go to shelters.

There are some individuals for whom crowded, congregate shelters are simply not the answer. Couples that are not allowed to stay together, individuals not allowed to keep their companion animals with them, persons with serious mental illness, active drinkers and/or drug users, and others who find shelters unsafe and unhealthy are all reluctant to go to shelters. These individuals deserve a safe, secure, and dignified place to be.

There are various types of places that can be created. These include: tent cities, yurtsvilles, and tiny home villages. We have visited one very successful tent city in

Portland, OR, Right to Dream Too (RtDT), and we came away very impressed by what the residents there have created. RtDT is a self-governing community of people with 40 places for overnight single males, 16 spaces in a separate tent for single females, a separate tent for families, another tent for persons with companion animals, places for 20 individual tents, an office tent, a small kitchen tent, electricity, port-a-potties, some running water, and an impressive set of community rules regarding responsibilities and behaviors. It is a community situated on a downtown parking lot next to an office building, and it has been specifically authorized by the Mayor.

Other examples of successful tent cities exist, as do tiny home villages. Lyons and Salida are both in the process of creating tiny home villages on land that has been given to tiny homebuilders by local public agencies, and there are other examples across the country. We find it incredible that local communities are prepared to create very commodious campsites for weekend campers that offer individual campsites; bathroom facilities with flush toilets, running water at sinks, and showers; garbage disposal bins and dumpsters; and even small stores in some cases; but they are not willing to provide even the simplest kinds of accommodations for our most at-risk populations. This is a wonderful opportunity for Adams County to again be a real local pioneer.

It should be noted that these alternatives have differing levels of permanence. Tent cities and yurtsvilles, though comfortable and independent, are not necessarily intended as an alternative to permanent supportive housing; they really are intended as a better transitional alternative than the streets and, in some cases, than overcrowded shelters. Tiny home villages, in comparison, can well become more permanent housing.

Also, we recommend that, as the County explores the creation of such alternatives, consideration be given to siting small “villages,” “cities,” and the like spread out over a wide area. By doing so, it will be possible to avoid the inevitable community NIMBY backlash. Most of this reaction centers on situations in which large numbers of people are gathered together in a single area. By spreading folks out, we can mitigate against community negative reaction.

Recommendation #7: The County should provide some assistance to the Sheriff and Deputy Sheriffs that patrol the encampments.

Our experience in interviewing persons in the encampments, reinforced by our conversations in the office of the county sheriff, suggests that these law enforcement officials are being placed in a very difficult position when they patrol the encampments. (Members of the Sheriff's Office Community Resource Team accompanied us as we traveled to various encampments for interviews.) First and foremost, these officers are law enforcement officials, but they are often being asked to provide what might well be called social work and case management assistance. With relatively little training, they are being called on to address issues of poverty and homelessness with which they have had little experience, and they articulate real frustration at having to serve in this dual capacity. The development of resource guides containing information on local homeless services is one example of where support is needed. The Sheriff's Community Resource Team is the only group that has regular and consistent contact with individuals in the encampments. They have developed a resource guide that they hand out to people they encounter on the trails. Since this group is the only major form of outreach, their resource guide materials should be continually updated and supplemented by social service professionals. We recommend several ways of addressing this basic problem.

A) One alternative is to employ a social worker that would accompany the officers as they make their rounds of the encampments. This individual could focus his/her attention on the service needs of individuals, while leaving the law enforcement issues to the Deputy Sheriffs. This person could also be responsible for providing up-to-date lists of services, including those available in Adams. If the funds were available, the county might hire this person as a full-time staff member. If funding was an issue, perhaps the County could share the expense and the person's time with Westminster, Northglenn, Brighton, and/or Thornton. Denver has initiated a co-responder program to address mental health issues by diverting individuals to more appropriate resources outside the criminal justice system. The program employs six clinicians (LCSWs and LPCs) that are law enforcement staff. From April to November of 2016, the co-responder teams have had over 800

contacts that have resulted in only 21 arrests. Overall, 47% of the Denver co-responder teams' contacts are with individuals experiencing homelessness, and that figure is 100% if you include only the contacts in District 3 (downtown Denver).¹⁵ Jefferson County has a similar program that pairs social service workers with law enforcement.

B) A second not mutually exclusive alternative would be to substantially enhance the training that all Sheriff's Department officers receive prior to their deployment in the field. In discussing this possibility with the Sheriff and several deputies, we sensed some real enthusiasm about collaborating with the Sheriff's Department to create a series of training modules regarding various aspects of addressing homelessness for law enforcement officers. These modules could then be offered to police officers in local Adams jurisdictions as well as to Sheriff's deputies and police in neighboring counties and jurisdictions.

C) The County should also explore creating collaborative relationships with various service providers and mobile services. Perhaps staff from one or another service agency could accompany law enforcement officials when these officers make their rounds.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION OVER THREE TO FIVE YEARS

The next four recommendations are listed in the 3-5 year time frame because complete enactment of them will take at least that long. However, we strongly encourage decision makers to begin to think through enactment strategies long before the third year.

Recommendation #8: The County should provide more available shelter space for families and for single adults.

A) Existing shelter space in the County is clearly inadequate. There needs to be additional night-time shelter space for single adults. Although the Cold Weather Care program deserves great commendation for its important contribution to housing adults, the 20 CWC beds are insufficient to meet the demand. Furthermore, the Comitis shelter beds are consistently filled to capacity, and they are geographically removed from most of the adults that need shelter. In the face of this deficit of beds, the vast majority of the campers

¹⁵ Personal communication with Chris Richardson 11/16/2016.

we interviewed expressed an interest in being in a shelter in the winter, depending on certain conditions. It is important to note that the campers identified several conditions to improve shelters such as: shelter space for couples to stay together, companion animals to stay with their owners, and better privacy.

B) Night-time shelter space for families with children is also totally inadequate. Existing service providers indicated to us the need to turn away families because of insufficient space. School liaisons also reported that some families have to live in Denver shelters because of insufficient space in Adams, even though their school-aged children continue to attend Adams County schools, thus creating impossible logistical conditions for childhood learning and school attendance. The County should provide more overnight accommodations for families.

C) In addition to overnight accommodations, several service providers and encampment residents indicated the need for day-time shelter with services. An excellent example of such a facility is the St. Francis Center in Denver, where there is a large space for individuals and a variety of services immediately available, including storage, showers, access to phones, employment assistance, a clothing closet, access to housing assistance, and assistance with behavioral health issues. Several campers identified one or another of these services as highly desirable. The newly created day shelter can also be viewed as a resource center, much like the St. Francis Center is viewed. We have not tried to identify where this shelter/resource center would be located; we leave that to the decision makers. However, we strongly encourage consideration of its creation.

D) There is virtually no 24 hour shelter in the entire metro Denver area. All of the shelter space is either for day-time use or for overnight stays, thus resulting in the always frustrating need to move from one type of shelter to a line-up to get into the other kind of shelter, with no guarantees about getting in. Adams County could provide real leadership by creating a 24 hour shelter in the metro area. Even if the County did so on a small, pilot basis, such an effort would provide a pioneering example of what could be done. A 24-hour shelter is not intended as a permanent residence. In order to avoid it becoming one,

various guidelines about length of stay and consumer efforts to find more permanent housing would have to be developed.

E) The Honen Building is due to be vacated soon, if it hasn't been already. As we toured the building, we felt that it was a potentially viable spot for a new shelter in the County, maybe even a 24 hour shelter. In talking with Human Services Director Chris Kline, we felt that with minor modifications, the building could serve as a shelter for both single adults and families, and its outdoor space and kitchen would be strong assets for the individuals housed there.

F) In considering shelter space, one often is confronted by neighborhood opposition to siting. It is quite understandable that neighborhood residents resist the creation of a large congregate shelter in their midst. Residents in some neighborhoods also feel that they are bearing the brunt of shelter locations because most of the shelters and other services are located in their neighborhoods. In order to address these concerns, we are strong advocates of the creation of a series of smaller shelters located in various parts of the County. Such a strategy can overcome many of the fears of neighborhood residents and eliminate the creation of large, overcrowded mega-shelters.

G) One of the overarching impressions that we gained from our various interviews was that the shelter system in Adams provides relatively little space for important sub-populations among those experiencing homelessness. We have already mentioned families; there are not enough shelter beds for families. Time and time again, service providers and school liaisons bemoaned the inadequacy of shelter and housing space for families with children. The same is true for single adults. The largest shelter facility in the County is Comitis, and its space is not only regularly filled by local Aurora residents, but it is geographically removed from many of the County's persons experiencing homelessness. In addition, there is virtually no shelter space for families without children, for individuals with companion animals, or for persons with serious addiction and/or mental illness issues, except for Comitis. There is absolutely no shelter space for unaccompanied youth. The County should pay careful attention to the shelter needs of

various subpopulations of those experiencing homelessness. Addressing those needs should be a high priority.

H) Finally, we recommend developing a countywide procedure for emergency shelter during severe weather so that individuals and families can receive shelter quickly with no or very few restrictions. Emergency shelter is especially important during winter months when the temperature falls below 40 degrees. Currently Adams County does not have what most service providers would identify as “emergency shelter” that can be easily accessed by anyone experiencing homelessness during severe weather. In Denver, there are a number of organizations that serve as staging sites for specific populations (e.g., men, women, families, unaccompanied youth, transgender individuals, etc.). When these shelters reach capacity, the Department of Human Services has procedures for providing motel vouchers.¹⁶

Recommendation #9: The County should explore creating service jobs for those in the encampments and for others experiencing homelessness.

For many persons experiencing homelessness, employment opportunities are seriously lacking. This certainly is true for those individuals we interviewed in the encampments. Over half of the individuals in the encampments said they need employment assistance. Additionally, unemployment has been cited as one of the top three reasons why individuals experience homelessness in Adams County for the last three years. Denver recently created a new program, Denver Day Works administered by Bayaud Enterprises, to employ persons experiencing homelessness on a day labor basis to engage in various tasks with the expectation that particularly good workers might get hired on a more permanent basis. This could be a very appropriate model for Adams County. What if the department of Parks and Recreation hired some of the individuals in the encampments to clean up various campsites along the trails and bike paths? This could provide some financial support for individuals, would create a much cleaner space, and might well appease path users and neighborhood residents.

¹⁶ A description of Denver’s Severe Weather procedures can be found here <https://www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/denver-human-services/community/denvers-road-home/helping-the-homeless--snowstorms.html>

The County should also explore other ways of creating employment opportunities for those experiencing homelessness. We understand the inherent difficulties in accomplishing this and recognize that this is a long-term project, but we feel strongly that the county should address this in some fashion.

Recommendation #10: The County should pay much more attention to homelessness prevention.

One of the truly puzzling characteristics of the national approach to addressing homelessness which, in turn, is reflected at the state and local levels is the apparent reluctance to consider homelessness prevention as an important part of the system's arsenal of programmatic approaches. We focus most of our attention on trying to get people out of homelessness rather than trying to prevent them from becoming homeless in the first place. This reluctance helps to explain why overall numbers of persons experiencing homelessness have not declined appreciably in the last 35 years across the nation. There seems to be a virtually endless supply of persons who become homeless, replacing those we manage to extract from homelessness. We must develop better ways to address this.

Our national lack of attention to prevention of homelessness is symptomatic of our national approach to many issues. Consider the state of the nation's roads and bridges. In short, if an expenditure can be kicked down the road, it will be. This is certainly true of our entire health care system, treatment rather than prevention, but that is slowly changing.

We recognize that various County departments provide some emergency assistance with rent and with other cost items. TANF and SNAP assist in other ways, as does Medicaid. However, as we indicate above, some 125,000 individuals do not have \$500 in available cash in case of health care emergencies or expensive car repairs. These individuals are at extreme risk of becoming homeless; they are the proverbial "one check away." The County needs to develop strategies to provide deeper assistance to these individuals and families so that they do not fall into homelessness.

Once again, we recognize that this whole area is one that could be placed in a longer time frame. To really develop an appropriate strategy to address prevention might well take 5-10 years or longer. However, we list it here so that decision makers can begin to plan strategies to accomplish this in the first three years. We want this to remain on someone's radar.

Recommendation #11: The County should develop strategies to take services to where the people are, rather than forcing them to come to a central location.

One of the things we heard from encampment residents and from school liaisons was the difficulty that many people experiencing homelessness have with transportation. This is particularly true in places like Adams County where public bus transportation is limited and where light rail service is virtually non-existent. All of this makes it very difficult for those without their own cars to get to appointments and to avail themselves of shelter and other services.

The entire service paradigm seems to be: we provide service at our location, so if you want the service, you come to us. This, frankly, flies in the face of everything we know about transportation difficulties. Services are being provided at the convenience of the service provider, not at the convenience of the service consumer. It seems logical to turn this paradigm around, that is, providing services where the consumers are, not necessarily where the provider is located.

What would this look like? For example, what if the county developed a mobile food pantry that traveled around to various locations in the county where persons experiencing homelessness congregated? Another possibility would be for the county to outfit an old bus or school bus as a series of small offices focused on housing, employment, and health care and/or social workers/community resource navigators. Another van could offer clothing and blankets. If one starts to think in this new way, all kinds of possibilities develop.

Short of reconstructing the service paradigm, people experiencing homelessness will need much greater help with transportation. This could come in the form of vans that go to various locations to pick up people and transport them to service agencies and/or providing bus tokens or financial assistance for taxis and/or bicycles. Regardless of what the County decides to do about transportation, officials should be creative and innovative in addressing this critical issue.

Another approach for taking services to people experiencing homelessness would be to identify locations where these individuals gather and take service providers to these locations. For example, libraries often become de facto day shelters for those experiencing homelessness. In Denver, the downtown library branch has hired two social workers to address mental health crises and help individuals navigate services. The same is true in Austin, Texas, and Salt Lake City. Some of the service providers we interviewed stated that a number of library branches in the County encounter significant numbers of persons experiencing homelessness. The County could provide a floating social worker that provides a regular schedule of services in libraries, parks and/or recreational centers across Adams County.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION OVER FIVE OR MORE YEARS

It will likely take five to ten years to adequately address the affordable housing crisis, at a minimum. However, we think Adams County should start addressing the issues of affordable and attainable housing earlier than five years from now.

Recommendation #12: The County should create more affordable/attainable housing for its poorest residents.

The housing squeeze that has hit Denver is clearly in evidence in Adams County. As we indicated earlier, the cost of housing is skyrocketing, just as it is in neighboring counties, while average annual income is failing to keep pace across the metro area, including in Adams. There is clearly a need for a significant expansion of more affordable housing in the county. We are aware that the Adams County Housing Authority is planning to build some additional housing, but officials there admit that its planned facilities are not

keeping up with demand. In addition, data from ACHA indicate that although there are insufficient Housing Choice vouchers to meet the need, over half of the vouchers that are distributed are returned because people are unable to find housing units and landlords willing to rent to them. This situation needs to change. Additional housing units should be developed, landlords should be persuaded to rent to voucher-holders, and incentives should be created to entice the building industry to develop more low-income housing.

We recognize that this can only be a long-term goal. The ultimate solution to homelessness is for everyone experiencing homelessness to live in suitable housing, usually permanent supportive housing. Creating enough of this will always be a long-term goal, but we should continue thinking about that now. One example could be that the County creates a dedicated funding source for housing those experiencing homelessness and/or affordable housing, along the lines of what Denver recently did.

Recommendation #13: The County should form partnerships with surrounding county governments, city governments and service providers to develop a true regional approach to address homelessness.

Collaboration across geographic and political boundaries is important because of the mobility of populations experiencing homelessness as well as the potential for integrated systems of services to better and more efficiently serve those experiencing homelessness. Adams County should develop a plan to establish partnerships with surrounding counties and municipalities as well as to work with homeless service providers in the region. Just as there are service silos within counties, each county also tends to be a service silo. The information we collected from the campers suggests that individuals experiencing homelessness do not pay attention to geographical boundaries; they necessarily move from Denver and Jefferson County to Adams and back to meet their needs. This strongly suggests a much more regional approach to addressing homelessness.

We recognize that there are initial efforts to move in this direction. Coordinated access and entry, along with appropriate data sharing represent a good first step. However, a truly regional approach requires much more. Adams officials should work closely with

their counterparts in other counties to develop a more coordinated approach across county lines.

CONCLUSION

There is growing research and evaluation evidence that providing housing and services is less expensive in both the short and the long term than continuing to incur the costs of law enforcement and the criminal justice system along with the costs of the health care system as these systems deal with people living on the streets and in unauthorized encampments. Recent studies underscore the veracity of that finding in communities across the country, including one such study here in Denver.¹⁷ That compilation did not even include the 2016 study, “Too High a Price,” that documented the expenditure of \$750,000 by the City of Denver in 2014 to enforce local anti-camping codes and that was before the City engaged in its most recent spate of street sweeps. Furthermore, the study authors estimated that six Colorado cities spent over \$5,000,000 over five years for the same kinds of enforcement.¹⁸ Although we did not obtain an estimate of the cost of the Adams County Sheriff’s outreach and enforcement, it is clearly substantial.

We recognize that enactment of all our recommendations will be costly. It is for this reason that we have spread them out in stages over time. However, it is important that policy makers in the County understand that, over the long haul, it will be less costly to do the right thing than it will be to continue to leave our most at risk brothers and sisters without the housing and services they need and deserve.

It is clear from our investigation that there is room for improvement in how Adams County addresses homelessness. In our various interviews and conversations, numerous people described gaps in services that needed to be addressed across the County. In our

¹⁷ Culhane (2008) *The Cost of Homelessness: A Perspective from the United States*

Perlman & Parvensky (2006) Denver Housing First Collaborative Cost Benefit Analysis and Program Outcomes Report. Denver: Colorado Coalition for the Homeless.

Tsemberis (2010) *Housing First: ending homelessness, promoting recovery and reducing costs*

Zaretsky, Flatau & Brady (2008) *What is the (net) cost to government of homelessness programs?*

¹⁸ Too High A Price,” Sturm College of Law, University of Denver

recommendations, we have tried to incorporate suggestions for how decision makers could take forward steps to fill these gaps.

We are optimistic about overcoming homelessness in Adams County. In all of our work, we have encountered dedicated people who are deeply committed to solving this problem. We have been impressed by the insights that our respondents have had, by the quality of the ideas that have been suggested, and by the passion and compassion that people have demonstrated. There is clearly a base of interest and commitment here upon which to build. That is very encouraging. It is also significant that County leaders reached out to outsiders to help them develop a coordinated strategy for moving forward. We certainly appreciate the opportunity to work on this issue with these leaders. We wish all of the interested parties the very best of luck as you move forward.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Complete List of Interviewees

Adams County Offices

- County Manager
- Community and Economic Development
- Human Services
- Long Range Strategic Planning
- Parks and Open Spaces
- Sheriff

Adams County Service Providers and Other Partners

1. 3CE The Center for Career & Community Enrichment
2. Access Housing
3. Adams 12 Family Liaisons
4. Adams County Housing Authority
5. Almost Home
6. Anythink Libraries
7. Cold Weather Care
8. Commerce City Government
9. Community Reach
10. Growing Home
11. Mile High Behavioral Healthcare Comitis Crisis Center
12. Westminster Government

Appendix B: Assessment Instruments

Encampment Interview Protocol

Individuals Experiencing Homelessness:

Adams County Government wants to learn more about the needs and experiences of people experiencing homelessness in Adams County. We are working with a research group called the Burnes Center on Poverty and Homelessness from the University of Denver's Graduate School of Social Work. They are helping us gather information that will improve services and service delivery in the County.

We are asking that you please answer the following interview questions. The interview is completely anonymous and entirely voluntary. If you do not want to participate or answer any question(s), it will not affect any services you receive in Adams County or any of your interactions with Adams County Government. The Burnes Center will combine all of the responses and will not report any identifiable individual information. Thank you so much for your help and time.

1. How long have you been without a permanent place to stay?

_____ days _____ months _____ years

2. How long have you been camping here?

_____ days _____ months _____ years

3. Who do you stay with here?

_____ Alone _____ with Friends

_____ with Spouse/Partner _____ with Children

_____ with Spouse/Partner and Children

_____ with Companion Animal

4. Where were you staying before you came here?

_____ Adams County _____ Metro Denver Area

_____ Denver City/County _____ Colorado

_____ Out of State

5. What services, if any, have you used in the past year and where were they located?

Organization name/location:

Shelter ☐ Day Shelter ☐ Night Shelter ☐ Help with night shelter access	Other Services ☐ Bus tokens ☐ Meals ☐ Food Pantry ☐ Clothing ☐ Showers ☐ Storage ☐ Mail ☐ Phones ☐ Internet ☐ Long Distance Calls ☐ Help Getting ID (including birth certificates) ☐ Help applying for public benefits, food stamps etc. ☐ Childcare ☐ Childcare assistance ☐ Utilities assistance ☐ Veterans services ☐ Legal service ☐ DV Services ☐ Other (please list):
Housing ☐ Housing Referrals ☐ Transitional Housing ☐ Permanent Supportive Housing ☐ Housing Vouchers	
Health Care ☐ Health Clinic ☐ Referrals ☐ ER ☐ Glasses ☐ Help with Obtaining Medications	
Behavioral Health ☐ Mental Health Services ☐ Mental Health Service Referrals ☐ Drug/Alcohol Treatment ☐ Drug/Alcohol Treatment Referrals	
Education/Employment ☐ Employment Assistance ☐ GED Assistance ☐ Education Assistance ☐ Professional Skills Training	

6. What services would be most beneficial to you/What do you need?

Shelter ☐ Day Shelter ☐ Night Shelter ☐ Help with night shelter access	Other Services ☐ Bus tokens ☐ Meals ☐ Food Pantry ☐ Clothing ☐ Showers ☐ Storage ☐ Mail ☐ Phones ☐ Internet ☐ Long Distance Calls ☐ Help Getting ID including birth certificates ☐ Help applying for public benefits, food stamps etc. ☐ Childcare ☐ Childcare assistance ☐ Utilities assistance ☐ Veterans services ☐ Other (please list):
Housing ☐ Housing Information ☐ Transitional Housing ☐ Permanent Supportive Housing ☐ Housing Vouchers	
Health Care ☐ Health Clinic ☐ Glasses ☐ Help with Obtaining Medications	
Behavioral Health ☐ Mental Health Services ☐ Drug/Alcohol Treatment	
Education/Employment ☐ Employment Assistance ☐ GED Assistance ☐ Education Assistance ☐ Professional Skills Training	

Notes:

7. What would a shelter have to be like to make it somewhere you'd want to go?

8. If a shelter was provided in this area, would you use it?

_____ Yes

_____ No

_____ Yes, if it met certain conditions. Notes:

9. Why are you camping?/Why specifically here?

The following questions are asked only because we want to know how best to serve individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Adams County. Knowing about some of your experiences and challenges allows us to develop programs and services that meet your needs. This survey is voluntary and you are not under any obligation to answer any of the following questions.

10) Where do you sleep at night most of the time? (Please check one location):

☐ Hotel or motel	☐ On the street, in a car, encampment, etc.
☐ Shelter	☐ With friends or family
☐ In your own house, apartment or room (including transitional housing or permanent supportive housing)	
☐ Other _____	

11) Are you a veteran? ____ Yes ____ No

12) Have you been convicted of a felony? ____ Yes ____ No

13) What is your age? # ____

14) Do you identify as: ____ Male ____ Female ____ Gender variant/Transgender/Gender non-binary

15) Please check all of the following that you think create difficulties related to your ability to live independently:

☐ Physical disability	☐ Developmental disability	☐ Chronic health condition	☐ AIDS/HIV	☐ Mental health problem	☐ Drug or alcohol problem	☐ Criminal Record
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THANK YOU!

Service Provider Interview Protocol

Service Providers/City Organizations:

Adams County Government wants to learn more about the needs and experiences of people experiencing homelessness in Adams County. We are working with a research group called the Burnes Center on Poverty and Homelessness from the University of Denver's Graduate School of Social Work. They are helping us gather information that will improve services and service delivery in the County.

We are asking that you please answer the following interview questions. The interview is completely anonymous and entirely voluntary. If you do not want to participate or answer any question(s), it will not affect any of your relationships or interactions with Adams County Government. The Burnes Center will combine all of the responses and will not report any identifiable individual information. Thank you so much for your help and time.

1. What organization/agency do you work for and what is your role?

_____ Homeless Service Provider _____

Role _____

_____ City Employee _____

Role _____

_____ Local Government _____

Role _____

_____ Other _____

Role _____

2. To what extent do you/your organization work directly with people experiencing homelessness?

_____ Provide direct services

_____ Provide referrals only

_____ Other

3. What services do you provide to individuals or families experiencing homelessness? Check all that apply.

Shelter ☐ Day Shelter ☐ Night Shelter ☐ Help with night shelter access	Other Services ☐ Bus tokens ☐ Meals ☐ Food Pantry ☐ Clothing ☐ Showers ☐ Storage ☐ Mail ☐ Phones ☐ Internet ☐ Long Distance Calls ☐ Help Getting ID (including birth certificates) ☐ Help applying for public benefits, food stamps etc. ☐ Childcare ☐ Childcare assistance ☐ Utilities assistance ☐ Veterans services ☐ Legal service ☐ DV Services ☐ Referrals of any kind ☐ Other (please list):
Housing ☐ Transitional Housing ☐ Permanent Supportive Housing ☐ Housing Vouchers	
Health Care ☐ Health Clinic ☐ ER ☐ Glasses ☐ Help with Obtaining Medications	
Behavioral Health ☐ Mental Health Services ☐ Drug/Alcohol Treatment	
Education/Employment ☐ Employment Assistance ☐ GED Assistance ☐ Education Assistance ☐ Professional Skills Training	

4. This section asks about requirements/limitations the organization has for the population it serves (limitations such as age, drug-use, etc.)

4 a. Does your organization have ...? Check all that Apply:

_____ Required Sobriety

_____ Required Drug Tests

_____ Must have Identification
 Circle all that apply: Valid State ID / Jail ID / Any Photo ID /
 Other: _____

- _____ Must have an address
- _____ Must have an address in Adams County
- _____ Must receive benefits in Adams County
- _____ Limitations on income: _____
- _____ Must be employed or actively seeking employment
- _____ Limitations regarding a Criminal Record
 - _____ No Criminal Record _____ No Felonies
 - _____ No Sex Offenses _____ No Domestic Violence
 - _____ Other: _____
- _____ Limitations on what an individual can bring to/store in your space? Notes:
- _____ Other Requirements or Limitations:

4 b. Can you accommodate? (Check all that apply)

- _____ Single Adult Men
- _____ Single Adult Women
- _____ Families with children
 - Circle all that apply: Single Men / Single Women / Couples
- _____ Heterosexual couples
- _____ Homosexual couples
- _____ Individuals who wish to stay with group of friends
- _____ Unaccompanied youth
- _____ Transgender by gender (not sex)
- _____ Companion animals

_____ Individuals with a physical disability
_____ Individuals with severe mental health issues
_____ Individuals with drug and/or alcohol dependency
_____ Other _____

notes:

4 c. What ages do you serve?

___ 0-18 ___ 19-25 ___ 25-55 ___ 55-65 ___ 65-older

notes:

5. How many people do you serve on a daily/monthly/yearly basis?

_____ # per Day _____ # per Week _____ # per Month

6. Do you turn people away for services? _____ Yes _____ No

Why do you generally have to turn someone away?

About how many?

_____ # per Day _____ # per Week _____ # per Month

7. What other organizations do you collaborate with to provide services?

7 a. Emergency Shelter/Homeless Service Providers in Adams County (check all that apply)

_____ Almost Home _____ Cold Weather Care
_____ Comitis _____ Growing Home
_____ Other: _____

7 b. Other Types of Service Providers in Adams County

List Organization Name(s): _____

7 c. City and County Organizations/Agencies

_____ Local government name: _____
_____ Local Police
_____ Local Library Branch: _____
_____ Local Parks
_____ Adams County Human Services
_____ Adams County Housing Authority
_____ Other Adams County Department: _____

7 d. To what extent do you collaborate with city and county officials?

7 e. Organizations in Another County? ____ Yes _____ No

If Yes Please List Organizations: _____

8. What issues do you see in Adams County regarding homelessness?

9. What suggestions/solutions do you have to address these issues?

THANK YOU!

Questions for Adams County Officials

1. What department are you with and what is your title?
2. Do you or your department have contact with people experiencing homelessness? If yes, describe.
3. Do you or your department provide any resources for people experiencing homelessness? If yes, what resources?
4. Do you or your department have any contact/provide resources for homeless service providers?
5. To what extent do you work with other county departments to address the issues of homelessness?
6. Why do you think individuals would be camping rather than seeking other forms of services/shelter?
7. What are the biggest issues that you see in terms of homelessness in the county?
8. What solutions do you suggest in regards to these issues?