THE STREETS DON'T LIE
VETERANS SURGE

Northeast Florida

November 9, 2017

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Executive Summary

Changing Homelessness leads, advocates and manages funding to end homelessness for Duval, Clay, and Nassau Counties. In partnership with local, state and federal agencies, we administer and monitor programs as well as collect and report on data for the tri-county area, which includes the federally mandated annual Point-in-Time count. We are one organization in a Continuum of Care with numerous partners that are focused on ending homelessness in Northeast Florida.

While each agency's mission and strategic plan drive the day-to-day activities, collectively we are working on our corner of the nation to meet four key overarching national goals(1) :

1. Finish the job of ending chronic homelessness by 2017
2. Prevent and end homelessness among veterans by 2015
3. Prevent and end homelessness for families, youth and children by 2020; and
4. Set a path to ending all types of homelessness

Northeast Florida has made significant progress on goal #2.

In 2012, the Veterans Administration (VA) selected Changing Homelessness as the grantee for the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF). The SSVF program funds virtually all services needed to confront veteran homelessness: from street outreach to the coordinated entry system and from rapid rehousing to prevention. Fully integrated with the SSVF program, Changing Homelessness understands serving the mission of veterans who are homeless and recognizes that our progress did not happen on an empty battlefield. Together with our allies, we have the fortitude and momentum to end veterans homelessness in our community.

After witnessing an 80% reduction in veteran's homelessness from 2009 to 2017, we determined it was time to survey the streets to validate the numbers. The VA defines "functional zero" as "a well-coordinated and efficient community system that assures homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring and no veteran is forced to live on the street." For the data-minded – it is when the number of people experiencing homelessness is equal to or less than the number of available permanent housing units. Is our community preventing or close to ending veteran homelessness?
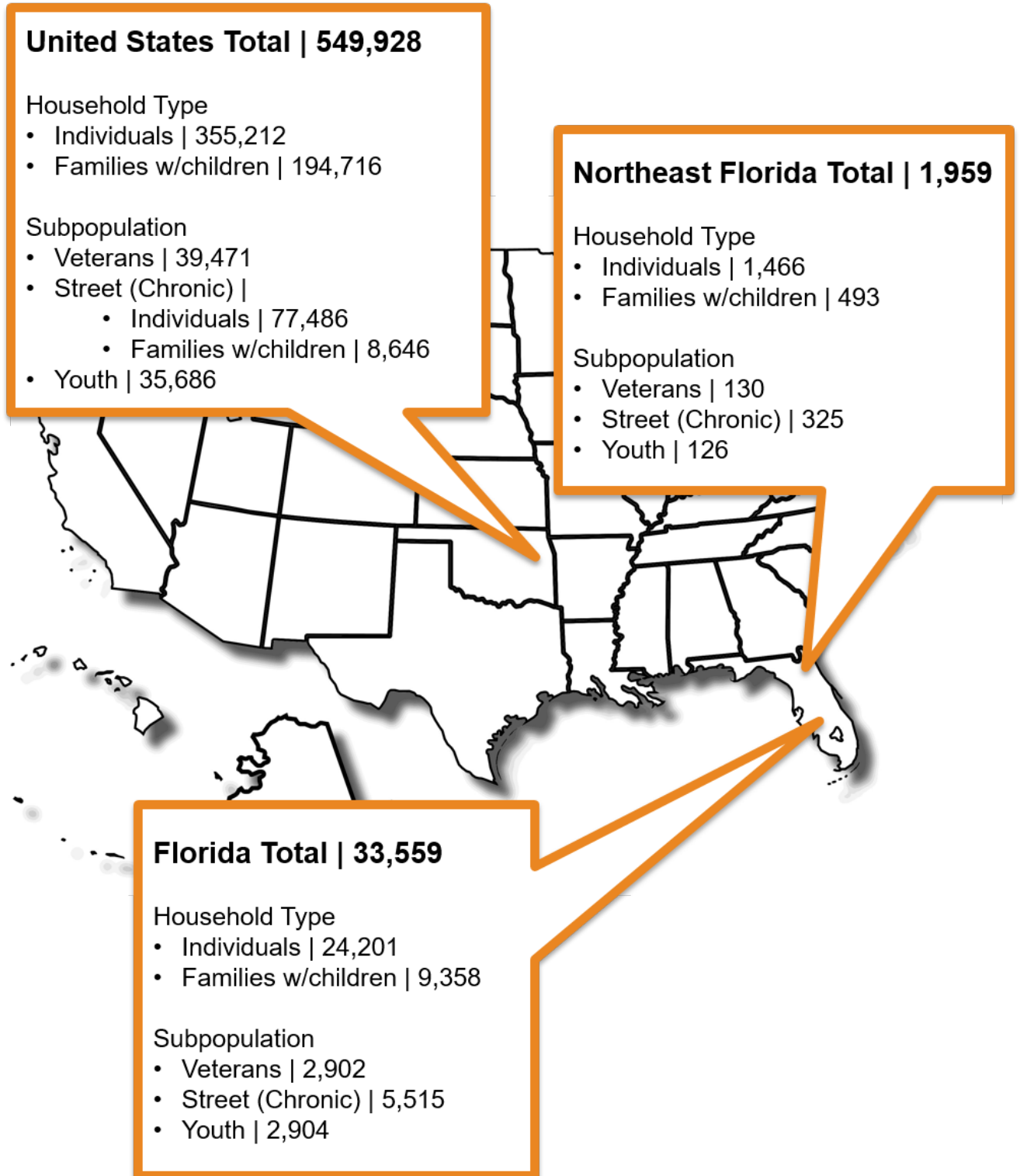
On August 16, Changing Homelessness joined forces with our partner agencies and conducted the community's first-ever Veterans Surge. Over 125 volunteers conducted interviews and collected data in three key areas, the Urban Core, the Beaches and Orange Park to help confirm our efforts with our unsheltered veteran population.

Why? Because hard data drives what we do and we know the streets don't lie.

Ending homelessness is not a bureaucratic activity to improve local statistics; it is a moral campaign that impacts the lives of real people. The data, insights, and conclusions that follow are the outgrowth of those life-changing encounters experienced during the Veterans Surge.

Point-In-Time, January 25, 2016

United States Total | 549,928

Household Type
- Individuals | 355,212
- Families w/children | 194,716

Subpopulation
- Veterans | 39,471
- Street (Chronic) |
    - Individuals | 77,486
    - Families w/children | 8,646
- Youth | 35,686

Northeast Florida Total | 1,959

Household Type
- Individuals | 1,466
- Families w/children | 493

Subpopulation
- Veterans | 130
- Street (Chronic) | 325
- Youth | 126

Florida Total | 33,559

Household Type
- Individuals | 24,201
- Families w/children | 9,358

Subpopulation
- Veterans | 2,902
- Street (Chronic) | 5,515
- Youth | 2,904

Homelessness in Northeast Florida

In Jacksonville, the population of people who are homeless comprises four categories: veterans, street (chronic), families with children, and other homeless persons, which includes youth. While each group increases and decreases, the total number of people who are homeless has declined over the past decade. But there is still much work to do.

In 2009, a total of 2,442 people reported living on the streets and in shelters. In 2010, the number of people increased significantly to 3,241, however in 2017, the number of people who were homeless decreased to 1,869. We surmise that the 23.5% decrease in the total number, which includes an 80% drop in the homeless veterans subpopulation, was due to an increase in federal funding as well as several key initiatives implemented by the Northeast Florida Continuum of Care.

In addition to increased funding through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Veterans Administration (VA) over the past few years, we have launched three national best practices:

   1. The "Housing First" model, which addresses the most basic need of someone who is homeless, secure a home then respond to secondary needs, but only if the individual is willing;

   2. Coordinated Entry, to evaluate and ensure that "all people experiencing a housing crisis have fair and equal access"; and

   3. Veterans By-Name List, to collect and access "the real time, up-to-date list of all veterans experiencing homelessness."

In June of 2017, we implemented a Street (Chronic) By-Name List and are working through refining it.

Federal Funding Targeting Veterans

•2008: HUD-VASH, Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing
o HUD and VA partnership
o 85,000 vouchers since 2008
o Funding includes
  – Rental assistance plus case management
  –Clinical services provided by the VA

• 2011: VA, SSVF, Supportive Services for Veteran Families who are homeless and are at risk
o More than $1.3 billion awarded (2012 to 2017)
o Awarded $343 million to 288 nonprofit organizations for 2018
o Funding includes
  – Outreach
  – Case management
  – Assistance with VA benefits
  – Support with other public benefits
  – Other support such as rent, utility, etc.
 – Temporary Financial Assistance services

Veterans Homelessness in Northeast Florida

With more than 50,000 military personnel serving in seven installations across the first coast, veterans are an exponentially large portion of our community.

In 2009, Changing Homelessness counted 647 veterans who wer homeless. Since then the number of veterans who are homeless declined. On January 25, 2017, our Point-in-Time Count revealed veterans, or a dramatic 80% reduction in the number of veteran are homeless in and around Jacksonville.

Veterans Surge
# of Veterans
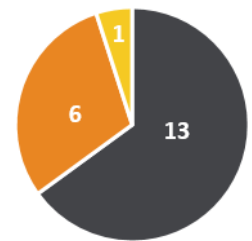
■ Urban Core   ■ The Beaches   ■ Orange Park

The Veterans Surge Results

On August 16, Changing Homelessness joined forces with our partners to conduct The Streets Don't Lie Veterans Surge. We surveyed the Urban Core, the Beaches, and Orange Park to confirm reaching the national goal of "preventing and ending homelessness among veterans." During the surge, we counted a total of 291 people who were homeless. Of these individuals, 164 people agreed to be interviewed. And among them, 20 identified themselves as veterans. However, the Veterans Administration only verified 11 veterans. The remaining nine individuals did not provide enough information to confirm their veteran status.

In an article published by WJCT's Cyd Hoskinson on August 9th, Volunteers Prep For Jacksonville's First-Ever Summer Homeless Count, she spoke with one of the volunteers, Ted Ralston, a retired Detroit construction superintendent. When Ralston reflected on his journey working with a homeless organization, he said, "I did not expect to see that many veterans on the street." If we look back to six years ago, we have to agree. In Northeast Florida, there were 345 veterans who were homeless in 2011.

The Veterans Surge findings validate our official January 2017 Point-in-Time Count. The number of veterans who are homeless today has significantly declined and we are closing in on functional zero for our veteran population.

The Streets Don't Lie

Street (Chronic Homelessness)

Chronically homeless people are those individuals who have a disabling condition and have been continuously homeless for one year or more, or have been homeless four or more times in a three-year period. In other words, these people are the most vulnerable members of the homeless population and without intervention could literally die on our streets.

In 2009, there was a total of 756 people defined as chronically homeless peaking at 1,104 in 2011 and steadily decreasing by 42% to 319 people in 2017. The Veterans Surge Count revealed a total of 46 people experiencing street homelessness.

If we are to achieve national goal #1 "finish the job of ending chronic homelessness," this population needs more time and money now, not only for the sake of the nation, but also for the sake of every individual who calls Northeast Florida home.

According to Shaun Donovan, a former Secretary of HUD, "it costs about $40,000 a year for a homeless person to be on the streets."(2) While it was reported that Donovan was referring to a 10-year old study, and other estimations range from $35,000 to $150,000 depending on the community, providing services in shelters, hospital emergency rooms and jails repeatedly throughout the year impacts all tax payers.

Veterans Surge # of Street (Chronic)

3
15
28
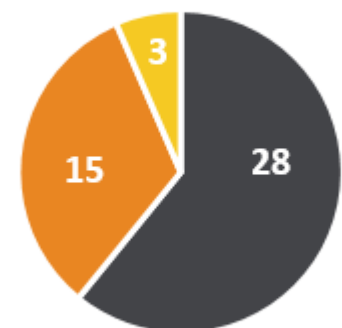
■ Urban Core   ■ The Beaches   ■ Orange Park

(2) The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, March 5 2012

Youth

The next generation of homeless is emerging. Young men and women ages 18-to-24 years old are one of the fastest growing segments of individuals living unsheltered on our streets.

During our 2017 Point-In-Time Count, we found 126 youths.

What we are finding – the majority of these youth were part of the Foster Care System and may need additional support with basic life skills as well as help with transitioning into adulthood.

HUD and its federal partners will utilize the January 2017 Point-In-Time as the baseline to measure future trends for the youth population. As counting methodologies will evolve and numbers will likely increase.

Veterans Surge # Youths
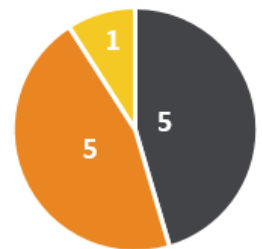
- Urban Core
- The Beaches
- Orange Park

Families with Children

While the families with children subpopulation was not counted during the surge, the number of families with children in Northeast Florida that are homeless is cause for concern.

The 2009 Point-In-Time Count identified 150 families with children, however in 2014 that number peaked at 714. In 2017, the Point-In-Time recognized 425 families with children that were homeless. While that number decreased from 2014, it is still a significant increase from 2009 to 2017.

National goal #4 calls for us to "prevent and end homelessness in families, youth and children by 2020.

Recommendations

It is the whole system working together that will create a visible difference in our community – just as it takes multiple agencies collaborating to serve the most vulnerable populations and move them into housing.

To mirror the success we have demonstrated with the veteran population, which included collaboration and best practice initiatives, we must build or strengthen the following elements of Northeast Florida's system:

1. **Diversion**
Access to flexible spending that diverts and keeps people out of the homeless system of care.

2. **Rapid Re-housing Assistance**
Approach to housing for persons who are not veterans and do not have minor children in their households.

3. **Permanent Supportive Housing**
Expand this type of housing stock to quickly move the most vulnerable individuals and families off the street.

4. **Expanded Outreach** Coupled with **Low-barrier-shelter**
Engage with people who are experiencing a housing crisis after hours or on the weekend with a safe place for them to go.

Definitions

Chronic homelessness—homelessness that involves an unaccompanied person with a disabling condition who has been continuously homeless for one year or more or has been homeless four or more times in a three-year period.

Coordinated Entry—standardization of the entry process for individuals and families at risk of or experiencing homeless to ensure quick and easy access.

Continuum of Care (CoC)—community-wide collaboration committed to ending homelessness which includes local government staff/officials, law enforcement, jails, hospitals, mental health service organizations, substance abuse service organizations, affordable housing developers, disability service organizations, public housing authorities, youth-focused organizations, school administrators, domestic violence organizations, LGBTQ organizations and other community representatives and advocates.

Functional zero for homelessness—creating the systems and structures and providing the resources that make it possible for homeless individuals who do not want to be homeless or homeless individuals still living in temporary shelters or transitional housing to be quickly housed in permanent, private residences.

Housing First—an approach to ending homelessness that focuses on providing housing as quickly as possible. Once housing is secured supportive services are added as needed and agreed upon. The guiding principle of the "housing first" model is that people are better able to overcome problems in their lives if they are housed first.

Point-in-Time Count (PIT)—an annually mandated count of both sheltered (sleeping at night in temporary shelters) and unsheltered homeless people on a single, designated night in January. The Department of Housing and Urban Development requires that Continuums of Care conduct an annual PIT count.

Veterans Surge—a non-mandated population-specific Point-in-Time count to validate the number of unsheltered veterans who were homeless at a specific time.

Youth Homelessness—impacts individuals between the ages of 18 and 24 who lack a fixed, regular, nighttime residence or who have primary nighttime residences that are public shelters or facilities providing only temporary shelter.