Homeless Solutions for Boulder County

2020 Annual Report
Dear community members,

It is our pleasure to present our Homeless Solutions for Boulder County (HSBC) 2020 Annual Report. HSBC is an innovative approach to addressing the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness that includes multiple government entities including Boulder County and the Cities of Boulder and Longmont, nonprofits working to impact homelessness, and other external partners.

In 2020, HSBC and its partners implemented a variety of changes to the system including expansion of outreach efforts, incorporation of Diversion services into the Coordinated Entry system, and greater inclusion of diverse voices in the planning processes to improve service delivery. In addition, we added a new landlord recruiter position to increase opportunities for individuals to exit into permanent supportive housing and other housing options. We believe that taking these steps better ensures our ability to meet the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness and, ultimately, will result in better outcomes.

Last year also presented us with unprecedented challenges in addressing the COVID-19 public health emergency. In response, HSBC and partners established the “COVID-19 Recovery Center” in March 2020 to serve the most vulnerable members of the community in need of a safe place for respite, rest, or to be quarantined should they show symptoms of the virus. In this work, we recruited staff, repurposed spaces, allocated emergency use funds, and hired volunteers to help operate the center during the pandemic.

Through “Housing First” service efforts, we helped 321 individuals experiencing homelessness resolve their housing crisis in 2020. Furthermore, we completed 1,170 Coordinated Entry screenings for individuals in Boulder County, which means that 27% of those screened experienced some form of housing resolution. These outcomes include the combined efforts of all programs: Navigation, Diversion, and Housing-focused Shelter services.

Looking ahead, we will continue to make improvements to the system based on learning and reflection. In 2021, this includes refining data and evaluation methods to better measure our system impacts, removal of barriers for individuals with lengthy criminal backgrounds to housing, piloting a bridge housing model focused on housing stabilization and retention outcomes, and implementing efforts to address veteran homelessness. Through these efforts, HSBC remains committed to improving our work in reaching and delivering homeless solutions for individuals in Boulder County.

For more information about HSBC programs, our executive board meetings including agendas, meeting notes, and up-to-date data briefings, please visit Boulder County’s website at: www.bouldercounty.org/departments/community-services/homeless/. There, you will also find links for the City of Boulder homeless services data dashboard and the City of Longmont’s homeless services pages.

We hope you find this annual report informative about our systems-level partnership work and our accomplishments in 2020.

Sincerely,

Homeless Solutions for Boulder County
Executive Board

Letter from HSBC Executive Board
Coordinated Entry Screenings

Homeless Solutions for Boulder County’s local Coordinated Entry (CE) is the system entry point for single adults experiencing homelessness. At CE, service needs are assessed using a screening tool that matches individuals experiencing homelessness with the most appropriate service. Individuals are screened to either Diversion, Navigation, Housing Focused Shelter, or to other community services.

<table>
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<table>
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In 2020, a total of 1,170 Coordinated Entry (CE) screenings were completed in Boulder County. Of these screenings, 68% (799) were completed in the City of Boulder, 32% (369) were completed in the City of Longmont, and less than 1% was completed in “other” locations. Two of these were re-screens (from prior year’s Coordinated Entry), which resulted in a total of 1,168 unique individuals screened in 2020.

Diversion Services are provided to individuals experiencing homelessness that are new (less than six months, self-reported) to Boulder County. In this service, individuals receive assistance to keep them from entering long-term homelessness and sheltering systems. While anyone assessed at CE is eligible for Diversion Services, this is the primary resource for individuals who have not been residents of Boulder County for six months or longer.

Navigation Services are provided to individuals experiencing homelessness who have lived in the county for six months or longer and do not report a disabling condition. These individuals typically receive short-term case management, sheltering, and limited assistance to obtain permanent housing.

Housing Focused Shelter (HFS) is provided to those experiencing homelessness who have lived in the county for six months or longer, report a disabling condition, and require long-term case management and housing stabilization supports. Overnight shelter is available to those referred to HFS and many will receive a Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) solution or other well-supported housing options.
In 2020, 30% (346) of those screened self-reported being in Boulder County for two years or more; 5% (58) self-reported being in Boulder County for at least one year; 9% (105) self-reported being in Boulder County for at least six months; 12% (138) self-reported being in Boulder County for one month but less than six; and 45% (523) self-reported being in Boulder County for less than one month. Thus, a total 56% (661) individuals reported being in the county six-months or less.

Of the CE screenings, 33% (391) were referred to Housing Focused Shelter, 17% (203) to Navigation, 48% (566) to Diversion, and less than 1% (10) to “other” services (e.g., Attention Homes, domestic violence shelters, Emergency Family Assistance Association).

The Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines homelessness as a) individuals residing in a place not meant for human habitation, in emergency sheltering, transitional housing, or exiting an institution where they temporarily resided, b) individuals who are losing their primary nighttime residence within 14 days, c) individuals fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence and have no other residence or support networks for permanent housing. Of the 1,170 screenings, 85% (998) met this definition, while only 15% (172) did not meet the identified definition.

Of the 998 individuals screened that met the federal definition of homelessness, 90% (895) reported staying in emergency sheltering or a place not meant for human habitation, 6% (64) met the federal definition of homelessness from an institutional setting, and 4% (39) met the federal definition from a transitional and/or permanent housing situation.
Participant Demographics

During the CE process, individuals experiencing homelessness are asked standardized questions to ensure they are connected to the most appropriate services for their needs. The following graphics reflect key characteristics and demographics of those screened in 2020.

Disabling Condition

Of the 1,170 screenings in 2020, 71% (831) participants reported a disabling condition that may prevent them from remaining stably housed, whereas 29% (333) did not report any disabling condition.*

*Note: not all data elements reported will equal the total number of screenings as some individuals decline to answer specific questions.

Race Reported at Screening

Information is also collected on the race and ethnicity of participants. Of the 1,170 screenings in 2020, 73% (859) identified as White/Caucasian, 11% (131) identified as Black/African American, 8% (93) identified as "other" race, 5% (62) identified as Native American/Alaskan Native, 2% (25) identified as Asian, 2% (17) identified as Pacific Islander/Hawaiian Native, and 84 declined to report.*

*Note: individuals can choose more than one category, so total percent can be greater than 100%

Disabling Condition

No Disabling Condition 333
Disabling Condition 831

Gender Identity

Gender identity is also captured and results show that 70% (819) identified as Male, 28% (329) as Female, 1% identified as Gender Nonconforming, and less than 1% identified as Transgendered.

Age at Screening

Finally, of the 1,170 screenings in 2020, 7% (77) were ages 18-24, 24% (284) were ages 25-34, 26% (304) were ages 35-44, 22% (258) were ages 45-54, 16% (185) were ages 55-64, and 5% (62) were 65 and older.

Disabling Condition

Race Reported at Screening

Ethnicity

79% (694) individuals identified as Not Hispanic/Latinx and 21% (186) identified as Hispanic/Latinx.*

*Note: these figures are lower than the number of screenings completed because some (5%) individuals declined to respond and 21% responded to the question with "Unknown".

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*Note: individuals can choose more than one category, so total percent can be greater than 100%.
Participant Outcomes

HSBC, a Housing First model, connects individuals experiencing homelessness with housing solutions. An outcome of “housed” reflects either Permanent Supportive Housing, Other Subsidized Housing, or Market-Rate Housing exits. “Reunification” connects individuals experiencing homelessness with social networks that end their experience of homelessness, and “Other Exit” reflects connection to long-term programs that incorporate housing. These include, Ready-to-Work and substance use disorder treatment programs. In 2020, a fourth exit category was included to reflect efforts designed to reconnect individuals to resources they had been previously receiving.

A total of 321 (27% housing exit rate) individuals experiencing homelessness resolved their housing crisis in 2020. Of the 321 individuals who resolved their experience of homelessness, 33% (108) were served through Diversion Services, 35% (111) were served through Navigation Services, and 32% (102) were served through Housing Focused Shelter Services.

Of those who exited into housing, 49% (156) exited through a housing solution (market rate, permanent supportive housing and other subsidized housing resources), 45% (146) exited through Reunification, 5% (15) exited through Other Program, and 1% (4) exited through Resource Navigation and Connection to prior services.

Of those who ended their experience of homelessness, 69% (221) completed their assessment in the City of Boulder and 30% (100) completed their Coordinated Entry assessment in the City of Longmont.
COVID-19 Response

As with the rest of the country, the COVID-19 pandemic brought several challenges, requiring innovation and out-of-the-box thinking, especially in efforts to serve unhoused individuals. HSBC and its partners worked strategically to address many of these challenges in 2020.

COVID-19 Recover Center

In March 2020, with the first confirmed COVID-19 case in Boulder County, HSBC partners (Boulder County, the City of Boulder, and the City of Longmont) and Boulder County Public Health opened the COVID Recovery Center (CRC) through the countywide Emergency Operations Center (EOC) system. This 24-hour facility supported individuals experiencing homelessness who were either symptomatic, tested as positive, or were exposed to an individual who tested positive with COVID-19.

Prior to entry into an existing shelter, individuals experiencing homelessness underwent a health screening. Those experiencing COVID-19 symptoms were transported to the CRC to be tested and, if positive, provided space to be quarantined. Individuals at the facility received meals and telehealth services (as needed), and symptom monitoring through the Medical Reserve Corp.

Additionally, 25 hotel rooms were provided to persons who were not symptomatic but designated as highest risk (advanced age, specific pre-existing health conditions) for COVID-19 to decrease census at shelters in compliance with Public Health social distancing guidelines.

As of December 31, 2020, the CRC had been open for 287 consecutive days and had served 184 individuals experiencing homelessness.

CARES Act Funding

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding provided critical support to the community, helping to ensure that those most vulnerable were not left behind. HSBC was able to use these dollars to provide the following services to individuals experiencing homelessness:

- Distributed 400 cell phones with 500 prepaid minutes to ensure the ability to connect with county-wide resources and access Coordinated Entry.
- Funded motel stays as bridge housing for individuals in Longmont while searching and securing housing placements.
- Conducted additional outreach efforts in Boulder and Longmont to provide resources to unhoused and unsheltered individuals.
- Installed port-a-lets and sanitation stations to improve hygiene and reduce spread of the virus in the City of Boulder.
- Increased number of housing vouchers to support Rapid Rehousing efforts in partnership with Boulder County Housing Authority and County Housing and Human Services Department.
System Enhancements

Since its inception in 2017, HSBC has continued to learn and adapt efforts to improve its response to meeting the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness. A system-wide review led to a number of changes to improve services and partner engagement.

These included:

• Integration of Diversion Services into the CE system and changes in Navigation criteria to include those in the county at least six-months who do not report a disabling condition.

• Expansion of a collaborative Outreach and Engagement Work Group to address the needs of those not connected to HSBC services.

• Restructuring to address gaps in system management (see updated organization chart) including:
  ° Creation of a Community Forum to increase opportunities for community engagement
  ° Creation of an Innovation and Design Work Group to improve system efforts
  ° Incorporation of Individuals with lived experience in HSBC groups

• Becoming a regional partner with Veterans Affairs through Community Solutions (through Metro Denver Homeless Initiative) to address veterans experiencing homelessness.

• Funding of a Landlord Recruiter position with Boulder Shelter for the Homeless to build relationships with landlords and expand acceptance of housing vouchers.

What’s in the works for 2021

A number of efforts are planned for 2021 including:

• Data and Evaluation work: HSBC partners will augment evaluation efforts to better measure the various impacts of system services and to guide ongoing refinements.

• Housing individuals with lengthy criminal backgrounds: HSBC is actively reviewing barriers to housing for individuals with significant criminal histories. This will lead to improved coordination and integrated programming between HSBC and justice system providers.

• Evaluation of Bridge Housing: As mentioned in the COVID-19 section, the City of Longmont is piloting a bridge housing model. The evaluation will focus on housing stabilization and retention outcomes.

• Ending Veteran Homelessness: HSBC will continue to work with both regional and local partners to end homelessness for service veterans using the Built for Zero framework.
We want to express our deepest and most sincere sense of gratitude to all the partners and providers throughout the county. Their partnership, commitment, and collaboration have led innovation, system enhancements, and successful outcomes for the most vulnerable in our community.

Our Government Partners
Boulder County Community Services
Boulder County Housing and Human Services
Boulder County Public Health
Boulder County Housing Authority
Boulder County Jail
Boulder Housing Partners
City of Boulder Housing and Human Services
City of Boulder Municipal Court
City of Boulder Police Department
City of Longmont Community Services
Longmont Housing Authority
Longmont Public Safety Department
Metro Denver Homeless Initiative
Veterans Affairs
20th Judicial Probation

Our Regional Partners
Agape/Safe Haven
Attention Homes
Boulder Community Health
Boulder County AIDS Project
Boulder Shelter for the Homeless
Bridge House
Clinica/Peoples Clinic
Friends for Life Couriers
Focus Re-Entry
Harvest of Hope
HOPE Longmont
Mental Health Partners
Mother House
Nederland Interagency Council on Homeless Encampments
Recovery Café Longmont
The Inn Between
TRIBE Recovery Homes