



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

510 NORTH BROADWAY, 4TH FLOOR, PO BOX 1178
BILLINGS, MONTANA 59103



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor's Committee on Homelessness
FROM: Brenda Beckett, Community Development Manager
DATE: March 11, 2009
SUBJECT: Final Data Findings

Please note the following regarding the data contained in this memo:

Continuum of Care: All Continuum of Care data was downloaded manually from the websites noted below. Staff does not have the capability to download specific information unless it is programmed into the Continuum of Care website tool (for example, all questions on the survey are not available on the website for review). Some of the questions asked in the 2005 survey were changed for surveys conducted in 2006, 2007 and 2008. As a result, some of the charts in the data workbook reflect available information for all four survey years, while others only reflect 2006, 2007 and 2008. Additional information was downloaded on specific cohorts such as American Indian and Veteran populations, resulting in a few more charts.

Continuum of Care data simply delivers characteristics of the homeless individuals willing to participate in the survey at the time it was administered. The total number of homeless individuals is a "point-in-time" measurement for those interviewed and is not designed to reflect the total number of homeless individuals in Billings, nor does it represent absolute characteristics for all homeless individuals. Averages were utilized in many of the charts and Excel may "round up" to whole numbers, causing some small discrepancies in data charts and labels.

If you have additional questions regarding the data, the Continuum of Care website can be accessed online:

- 2005: <http://nth-degree.com/mthomeless/index2.html>
- 2006: <http://nth-degree.com/mthomeless/svg06.html>
- 2007: <http://nth-degree.com/mthomeless/svg07.html>
- 2008: <http://mthomeless.org/2008/hud/index-2008-hud.html>

Billings Addendum: This survey was delivered to the homeless population in conjunction with the MT Continuum of Care survey in January 2007. It is important to note the survey was completed by homeless individuals who may not have accurate data regarding length of stay and services utilized. With this assumption, the estimated cost of services (limited to the list in the survey) in Billings is thought to exceed \$30,000,000 per year, over \$15,000 per individual. If the costs are adjusted to account for average length of stay for those surveyed in Billings, the cost would exceed \$22,000,000 per year.

Project Homeless Connect: Data was gathered during Project Homeless Connect on March 31, 2007 and March 28, 2008 and was tabulated using a database called “Pathways” which is sponsored by the United Way and utilized by the Yellowstone City-County Health Department.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions at beckettb@ci.billings.mt.us .

CONTINUUM OF CARE DATA - 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008

Overall Homeless Population:

- 26% of the state’s homeless population in Montana is in Billings.
- On average, there are 600 homeless individuals willing to be surveyed on one day.
- 63% of the homeless surveyed meet HUD’s definition of homelessness.
- Substance abuse (1st cause), lack of employment (2nd cause) and mental health issues (3rd cause) are the leading primary causes of homelessness in Billings.
- As with all of the subsets, there is a direct correlation between years of education and the risk of homelessness.
- 13% of those surveyed need to find alternative living situations within one week.
- Although we have a highly visible American Indian homeless population (or those who visit Billings from neighboring Reservations), the majority of our homeless (55%) are Caucasian.
- Our highest ethnic population is American Indian at 29%, which is disproportionate to the 8-10% of the general population in Billings.
- Men outnumber women overall in Billings: 56% men to 44% women.
- Most of the homeless surveyed in Billings sleep outside, in shelter care, or with others.
- 61% of the homeless surveyed were homeless not more than once during the last year.
- Even though 55% have at least a high school education, the homeless may have learning disabilities or other impairments and have great difficulties with basic skills such as reading / writing (interpreted by Healthcare by the Homeless).
- 18% of the homeless have some college, and a few have a graduate degree.
- 6% of the homeless were homeowners before they became homeless.
- Only 10% of the homeless population was homeless three or more times in the last year, which may represent our chronic homeless population.
- 27% of our homeless are employed!
- 21% of the homeless have lived in Billings their entire life.

Individuals – Unaccompanied Adults:

- 365 individuals are in Billings at any one time.
- 69% are male and 67% are aged 30-59. This data can be utilized as a basic profile for homeless individuals in Billings.
- 18% went to college, and 23% are employed (similar to overall).

- A smaller percentage of individuals are American Indian than the overall population (21% compared to 29%).

Families – Individuals Accompanied by Family Members:

- There are at least 80 homeless families in Billings, on average, at one time! Most of these families are female head of household (69%).
- 35% of families respondents are 18-29 years old, and 55% are 30-59.
- 8% of the families were expecting a child when surveyed.
- 54% of accompanying children are under 13 years old.
- There are more American Indian families in Billings than any other race! 42% of the homeless families in Billings are American Indian and 40% are Caucasian.
- Mental health issues are the number one cause of homelessness for families. Substance abuse is the second cause, and lifestyle choice is third.
- Domestic abuse affects 12% of our homeless families and is the 4th cause of homelessness compared to the 7th cause overall¹.
- A higher percentage of the homeless families have lived in Billings their entire life (24% compared to 20% overall).
- Families more often stay with others followed by shelter care.
- 16% of our homeless families have been asked to leave their current living situation within one week compared to 13% overall.
- 21% went to college (compared to 18% overall) and 24% are employed (compared to 27% overall). This cohort is more educated and less employed than the overall homeless population.

American Indian:

- 29% of the homeless population are American Indian and represents the largest minority population in Billings.
- 52% of the American Indian population is female compared to 44% overall.
- 9% of the American Indian homeless are pregnant compared to 3% overall.
- 20% of American Indians are 18-29 compared to 26% overall (6% less).
- 70% of American Indians are 30-59 compared to 63% overall (7% less).
- 32% of accompanying family members are under 5 years old compared to 28%.
- 60% of accompanying family members are under the age of 13 compared to 51% overall.
- Substance abuse is the number one cause, job loss is number two, and eviction is the third cause.
- 20% of American Indians are being asked to leave within one week (13% overall), which is 7% higher than the overall population.
- American Indians (AI) are more likely to remain in Billings longer than the overall population:

¹ Healthcare for the Homeless employees believe domestic violence may be under-reported, and may also correlate with the first two causes of homelessness (mental health and lifestyle choice).

- Up to 4 months (27% overall, 29% AI)
- 2 – 10 years (26% overall, 31% AI)
- 10+ years (34% overall, 39% AI)
- Lifetime (20% overall, 27% AI)
- American Indians are less likely to be employed (22% AI, 27% overall).

Disabled:

- 44% of respondents indicated a disability.
- Almost 60% are male, and the largest age group is between 30-59. This data can be utilized as a profile.
- Mental illness is the first cause of homelessness, followed by substance abuse followed by physical disability.
- The disabled are more likely to be homeless for more than two years (12% overall, 19% disabled).

Veterans:

- 11% of the population in Billings responded that they served in the military.
- 21% reported length of time homeless exceeding 2 years.
- 36% of veteran respondents reported they went to college, compared to 19% overall.
- 26% are employed.
- A very low percentage of veterans receive veteran's benefits (9%).

Temporarily Homeless (*Definition: Not previously homeless and homeless for a short period of time - less than six months*):

- First cause of homelessness is eviction followed by lack of employment and substance abuse which is unique to the cohort.
- This cohort is more evenly distributed by gender: 49% female; 50% male.
- The temporarily homeless are slightly more likely to have attended college (23% compared to 18% overall).
- This cohort is less likely to report a disability (44% overall, 37% temporary).
- 83% are not lifetime residents of Billings. 46% have been in Billings less than a year.

Chronically Homeless (*Definition: An unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more OR has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years*):

- The chronically homeless population in Billings is about 12%, compared to the national average of 10%.
- More likely to be male (76% compared to 56% overall).
- The chronically homeless are less likely to have lived in Billings 10+ years than the overall population (28% compared to 34%).
- 24% indicated they've lived in Billings their entire life compared to 20% overall.

- 9% of the chronically homeless owned a home at one time.
- The chronically homeless are more likely to have less than a 9th grade education (21% compared to 10% overall). 51% of the chronically homeless do not have a high school education compared to 37% overall.
- 13% of the chronically homeless are employed, and 14% went to college.
- 97% of the chronically homeless have a disability.
- 15% of the chronically homeless indicated military service, but most were unable to identify the military era in which they served.
- We can estimate the life expectancy of the chronically homeless to be approximately 60 years compared to the national average life expectancy of 77.8 years².

BILLINGS ADDENDUM / COST OF SERVICES

- Ending homelessness will take: rental and utility assistance; employment; and transportation.
- Almost half of the homeless are actively seeking housing. Those who aren't seeking housing indicate financial and treatment as primary reasons.
- 58% of those surveyed chose permanent or permanent supportive housing as a first choice for living arrangements!
- Homelessness costs the citizens of Billings a tremendous amount of money.
- The homeless indicated they spent the most days in emergency and transitional shelters and in jail.
- \$15,534 cost per individual per year is a staggering number! Can you imagine what we could do with that money if we channeled that money into housing individuals?

The Billings Addendum stimulated the following questions:

- It would be interesting to know what the highest service cost per individual was compared to the lowest cost individual (lowest would be zero).
- What are the types of offenses people are being charged with to obtain “three hots and a cot”?
- Were the ambulance calls minor issues that could be handled in a less expensive manner?
- Does the number of ambulance calls look low?
- Can prevention efforts decrease the funding amounts expended on emergency services?
- We should conduct a longitudinal study for each service implemented to estimate cost of services prior to intervention and cost of services post intervention.

² <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/lifexpec.htm>

PROJECT HOMELESS CONNECT

- 60% of the participants found Project Homeless Connect helpful - we should continue!
- 59% lived in Billings during the past 12 months.
- 29% lived with others older than 18 and 71% do not live with others older than 18, which indicates most of the attendees are individuals.
- 27% of the participants served have children!
- 22% of the participants were not homeless, making this event effective as a prevention effort.
- Word of mouth and posters are the most effective way to get the word out about the event.
- More men came to the event than the overall percent of male homeless individuals in Billings.
- More chronically homeless individuals came to the event than the overall percentage in Billings.
- More American Indians came to the event than overall homeless percentage in Billings.
- Most people came for clothing, medical care, rent and job assistance, not the food!
- Increase advertising efforts to families through the School District.

PATH ANNUAL / QUARTERLY REPORTS

- American Indians may be less likely to engage in the PATH program (or less likely to report race / ethnicity), as they are under-represented in the data (13% AI, 75% Caucasian, 10% Hispanic).

CHAP / HEALTHCARE FOR THE HOMELESS

- A higher percentage of non-homeless people accessed Project Homeless Connect than CHAP (13% compared to 22% in Project Homeless Connect).
- American Indians may be less likely to report race / ethnicity or may not utilize Healthcare for the Homeless, as they are under-represented in the data (8% AI, 69% Caucasian, 3% Hispanic). 18% of the users did not report race / ethnicity.

PROVIDER SURVEY / MATRIX / HOUSING INVENTORY

- What is the most important service need in Billings?

BILLINGS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- 400 children in Billings may be homeless by the end of the school year.