

05.12.17

# HOMELESS IN A DAY: A SNAPSHOT OF HOMELESSNESS IN DENTON COUNTY

• COUNCIL ON THE SQUARE (109 N. ELM ST) •

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5:30PM - 7PM

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## A REPORT ON THE JANUARY 26, 2017 POINT IN TIME COUNT



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to our volunteers for donating your time to help count the number of people in your community who are experiencing homelessness. This can often be an emotionally overwhelming experience, so please know how much your time and service is appreciated. Your contribution was a tremendous asset to the community. You along with more than 100 others contributed a total of 462 hours that represented an \$11,682 contribution to the community in volunteer hours.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of the Point-in-Time count is to identify the number of people experiencing literal and chronic homelessness. Our community will use these results to determine effectiveness of existing services as well as gaps in services. The numbers are also used in securing funding and other resources for more supportive services within the community.

As you know, it is about more than the numbers. It's about truly seeing the homeless and engaging with those living on the street. You might remember most first time volunteers don't know what to expect. You may have wondered, "How many people would I see out on the streets? How many would agree to participate in our survey? And the question frequently asked, "Will I be safe?" As you can attest, those questions were answered on January 26, 2017, and the experience went much deeper.

You listened to people and began to identify with the parts of their stories that went beyond their life on the streets. Some spoke of their children - their ages, their accomplishments, how they wish they could be a part of their kids' lives. Maybe you thought about yourself and your own parents and what it would take for them to become homeless. The face-to-face encounters with people are a big reason the PIT count is so important.

Volunteers take away a better understanding of the **humanness of homelessness**. We can easily forget that the homeless are people, just like us, and they deserve to be treated as such. The PIT count is part of building a community in which the homeless truly count. Without you, our cherished volunteer, this effort would not have been possible.

Thank you for your time and your compassion in *MAKING EVERY ONE COUNT*.



With appreciation, the organizers would like to also THANK  
UNT on the Square for providing the space for this special event.

Printing provided by North Central Texas College (NCTC)  
Corith, Texas



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<sup>2</sup> Based on Independent Sector ([independentsector.org](http://independentsector.org)) "The Value of Volunteer Time Report" 2015 average rate of \$25.11 in Texas.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## HOMELESS IN A DAY: A SNAPSHOT OF HOMELESSNESS IN DENTON COUNTY

On January 26, 2017, volunteers from across Denton County came together in support of our most vulnerable neighbors, people experiencing homelessness. The annual Point-In-Time Count (PIT), a requirement under federal law, helps our community and the nation as a whole, identify and understand the extent and nature of homelessness, track changing trends, and measure our success in getting the homeless housed. This reporting gives us a snapshot of the unsheltered and sheltered persons experiencing homeless on one night.

Communities across America agree that if a person is experiencing homelessness, it must be a rare, brief, and nonrecurring event. A part of accomplishing this goal is to maintain a count of persons experiencing literal or chronic homelessness<sup>1</sup>. This is a rhetorical change from previous community goals to end homelessness because, under our current systems of care and culture, there is not yet a path to end to all homelessness. However, with more emphasis on a coordinated response system, we can create responses to homelessness that prevent individuals and families from staying homeless or entering into homelessness in the first place. Collecting valuable information like this directly from persons experiencing homelessness is an important part of creating evidence-based solutions.

### HOW WE COUNT

First, our volunteers were amazing! They signed up, attended training, packed incentives, collected surveys, and entered data all in support of persons experiencing homelessness in our community. Our trained volunteers surveyed persons experiencing homelessness in many parts of the County. Volunteers went to encampments, shelters, food banks, libraries, community centers and other places where persons experiencing homelessness were present. Second, by engaging with people experiencing homelessness, volunteers gathered critical information that will be used to inform the design of programs and allocate resources to evidenced-based solutions.

### WHY WE COUNT

The Denton County Homeless Coalition coordinates the PIT Count to fulfill the HUD requirement for federal funding of housing and supportive services. Yet, more importantly to gain an understanding of persons experiencing homelessness including:

- **WHO IS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS?**
- **WHY ARE PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS?**
- **WHAT SERVICES ARE NEEDED?**
- **UNDERSTANDING THEIR LIVED EXPERIENCE**

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<sup>1</sup> In 2016 the PIT Count methodology was revised to only count those experiencing literal or chronic homelessness and not other populations of homeless in supportive housing.

## IF YOU CAN'T BE WITH THE DATA YOU LOVE, LOVE THE DATA YOU'RE WITH.

We are current in the state of, "If you can't be with the data you love, love the data you're with." Homeless Data presents both challenges and opportunities. The PIT Count is not a perfect tool. The count is limited by the extent that volunteers can reach all areas of the county, plus fluctuations in services and funding, and even the weather can affect the survey. The transient nature of homelessness also makes year-to-year comparisons more challenging. There are also variations in methodology about what is collected each year. However, the PIT does afford us a key snapshot of what is happening on a given day in Denton County and it is a reliable estimate of people experiencing homelessness.

### 2017 POINT-IN-TIME COUNT<sup>3</sup>

<b>Number of surveys recorded</b>	<b>191</b>
<b>Number of adults in households</b>	<b>194</b>
<b>Number of children in households</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Total number of people</b>	<b>228</b>
<b>Chronically Homeless People*</b>	<b>39</b>

Figure 1: Count overview

### HOW 2017 COMPARES TO OTHER COUNTS<sup>4</sup>

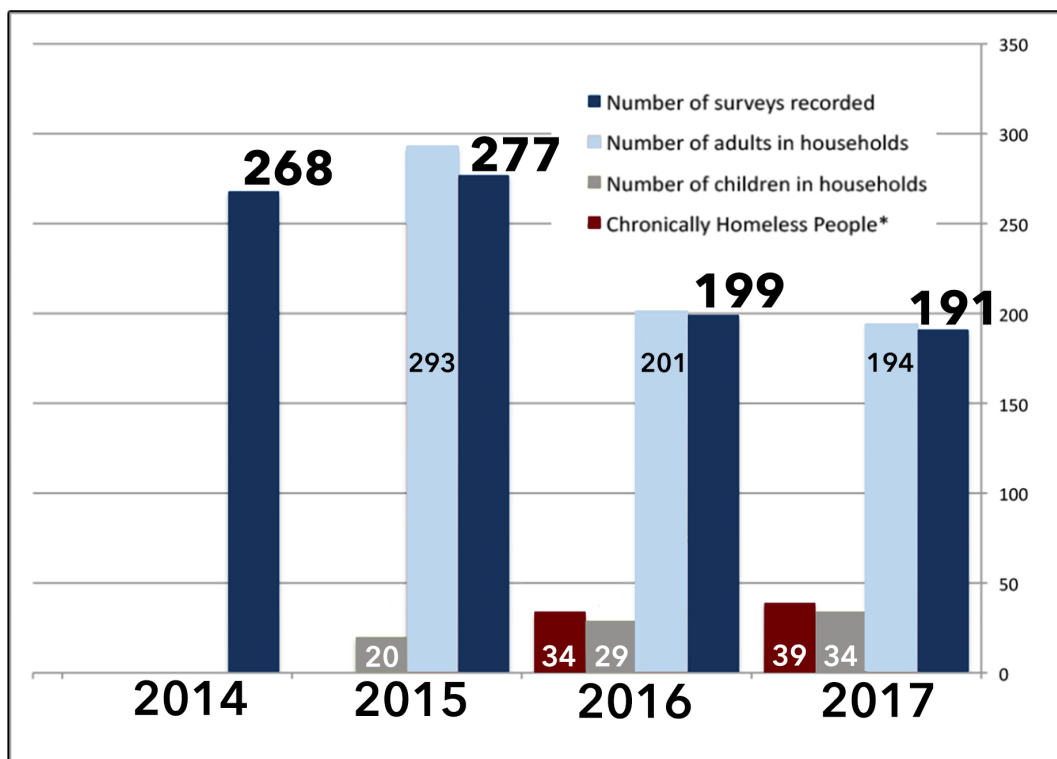


Figure 2: 2014-2017 Count Overview Comparison

\*HUD provided revised definition of chronically homeless in 2016; it was not reported in previous counts.

<sup>3</sup> Within a survey, a respondent may report multiple adults in the household (hh), which represents a higher number of adults in hh than total surveys.

<sup>4</sup> The 2016 methodology directly effects comparisons of total count from previous years as shown in *Figure 2* where 2014 and 2015 counts include 55 substance abuse treatment facility beds no longer eligible to be included in 2016 and later counts.



The historical data in *Figure 2* shows a slight trend toward reducing the number of persons experiencing homelessness in Denton County. It is important to note that the PIT count is limited to counting sheltered and unsheltered persons experiencing homelessness only. It does not include other homeless populations served in supportive housing programs as in previous counts. Consistency in the methodology used in future counts will help us be better positioned to analyze trends. Specifically, at the end of 2017, we will be able to analyze the 2017 PIT Count data, the 2017 homeless inventory Count (HIC), and an annualized count of those served in local programs (APR) to see how much change has occurred in reducing homelessness across all programs and homeless populations.

In the last year other neighboring communities have been dealing with immediate and urgent responses to homelessness. This has led to assumptions that more homeless are coming to Denton after being displaced from other communities.

### WHERE DID YOU BECOME HOMELESS?

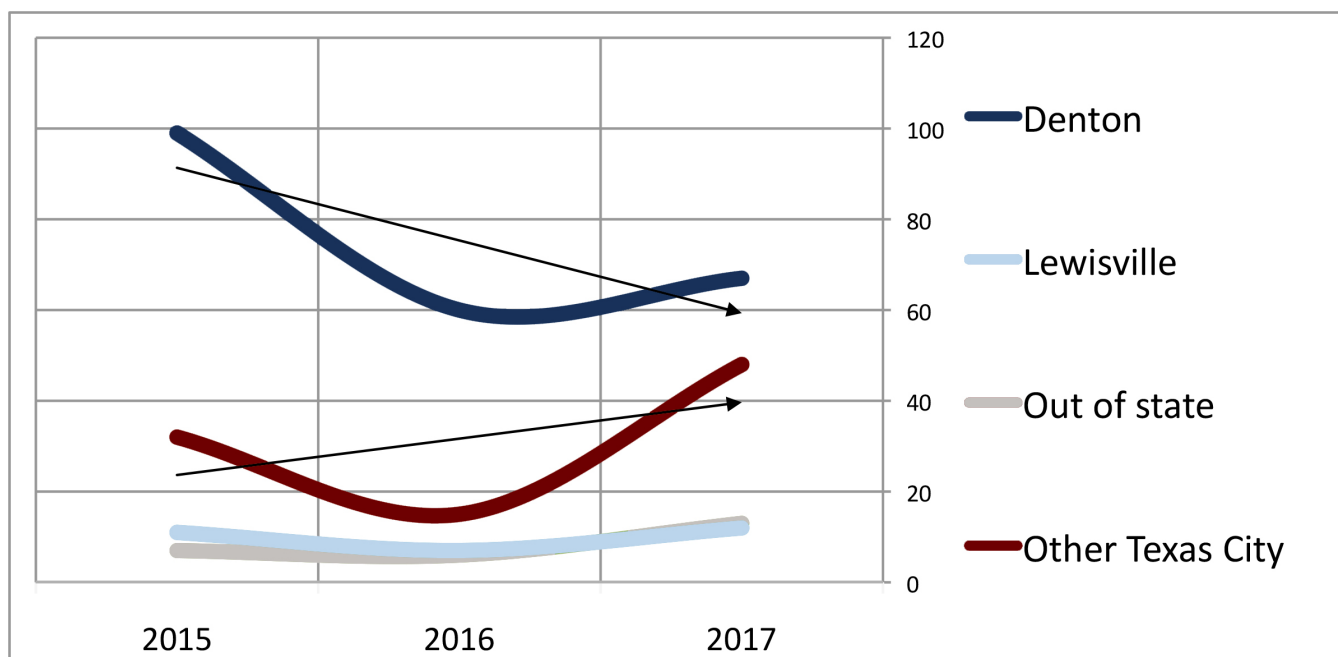


Figure 3: Location where you become homeless this time

The complexity of homelessness includes the issue that homelessness is **transient**. People come in and exit homelessness regularly. Without a fixed permanent address, people experiencing homeless move in to and out of Denton County frequently. Over the last three years, the survey consistently asked, “where did you become homeless this time”. PIT count data for 2017 are showing that more of the people experiencing homelessness on January 26, 2017, became homeless in another city than was recorded in previous counts. This is reported at a rate that is statistically significant as the data represented in this graphic does provide some evidence that more of the people experiencing homelessness in Denton County in 2017 became homeless in other Texas communities. Over time it will be monitored to determine if this is an anomaly for 2017 or an emerging trend.

## WHO IS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS?

Basic information about the homeless population and demographic composition are essential to the PIT Count survey. In order to work more strategically and have a better understanding of how to allocate resources, the PIT provides data on how many persons are chronically homeless, how many are Veterans, and how many are families with children.

### Gender Identity

	Frequency	Percent
Male	133	69.6
Female	57	29.9
Transgender	0	0.0
Doesn't Identify as M, F, T	1	0.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Age Category

	Frequency	Percent
17 & Under	1	0.5
18 – 24	25	13.5
25 – 64	154	83.2
65 & Older	5	2.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Figure 4: Gender Identity, Age Category<sup>5</sup>

The rate of homelessness in males continues to be at or above 70% of the total homeless population with women making up about 30% of the total.

It is not surprising that adults make up a vast majority of persons experiencing homelessness representing just over 96% of the total. However, 11% of those households reported having children. Another 5% were unaccompanied youth living homeless without a parent or guardian. We know the rate that people disclose they have children is low due to concerns with losing children to child protective services and is therefore **underreported**. Unaccompanied homeless youth are also typically **underreported** for similar concerns.

The three largest Denton County racial/ethnic groups are White (62.1%) followed by Hispanic (18.8%) and Black (8.7%). The 2017 PIT data revealed that for the first time Blacks were a significantly larger segment of the homeless population compared to the overall population percentages.

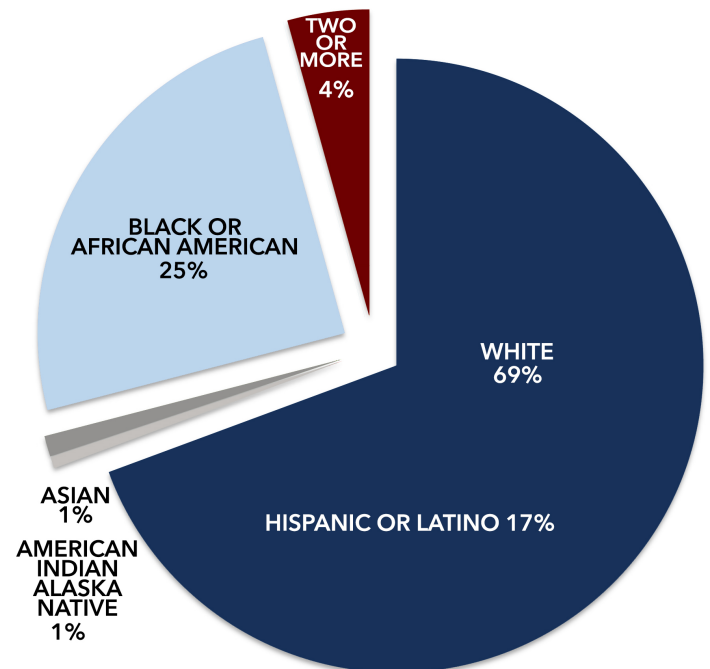


Figure 5: Race, Hispanic or Latino

<sup>5</sup> Frequency is defined as the number who responded to the questions, percentage is calculated on the total number of respondents in each question not the total of all surveys collected.

# WHY ARE PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS?

People experience homelessness for a variety of reasons. Homelessness is most often caused by emergency life occurrences like the loss of loved ones, job loss, domestic violence, divorce, and family disputes. Other impairments such as depression, untreated mental illness, posttraumatic stress disorder, and physical disabilities are also responsible for a significant portion of the homeless.

In the survey, there were 177 responses and they were able to pick more than one reason for becoming homeless. The number one reason identified was *Unemployment* at 18% followed closely with 14% being *Unable to pay rent/mortgage*. *Substance Abuse/Addiction* rounded out the top three reasons for homelessness at just over 9% reporting it as a cause of homelessness.

## REASONS FOR HOMELESSNESS

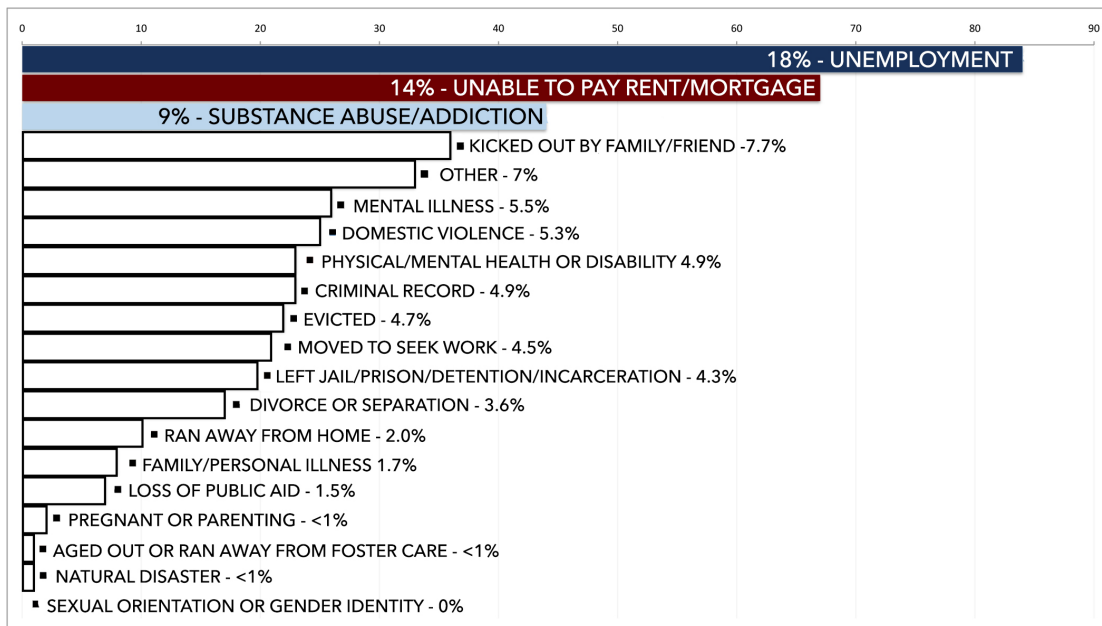


Figure 6: Reasons for homelessness (frequency & percent)

Evidenced-based practice teaches us that the **longer a person is experiencing homeless the more barriers the person has** to overcome to secure and maintain housing. The range of homelessness episode (time experiencing homelessness) reported was from 1 day to 20 years, while the medium *Length of current episode of homelessness* has been 12 months for two years consecutively. There is serious work to be done here to reduce the length of time people experience homelessness so they can be housed faster with fewer barriers faced by the chronically homeless.

Current Situation	Percent
1st time homeless in the past 3 years	41.6
2-3 episodes in the past 3 years	20.7
At least 4 episodes in the past 3 years	10.7
Continuously homeless for a year or more	27.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

More than 50% indicated they had been *Homeless another time in the last 12 months*. This matched with the *Current Situation* data gives us the number of people who meet the definition of chronically homeless (39) as defined by HUD.

Figure 7: How frequently is the person homeless over time.

## WHAT SERVICES ARE NEEDED?

While it is assumed that 100% of those surveyed need housing, it is also important to learn from those experiencing homelessness what other services are needed. This data can identify services that will help the homeless transition from homeless to housed.

In the 2017, 167 people responded. Those 167 people were able to pick more than one needed service. Transportation was identified as the highest *Service Need* at 19%. Close behind at 18%, *Clothing/Food* and *Food Stamps* tied for the second highest and, *Case Management* was identified by 17.4%.

### SERVICES NEEDED

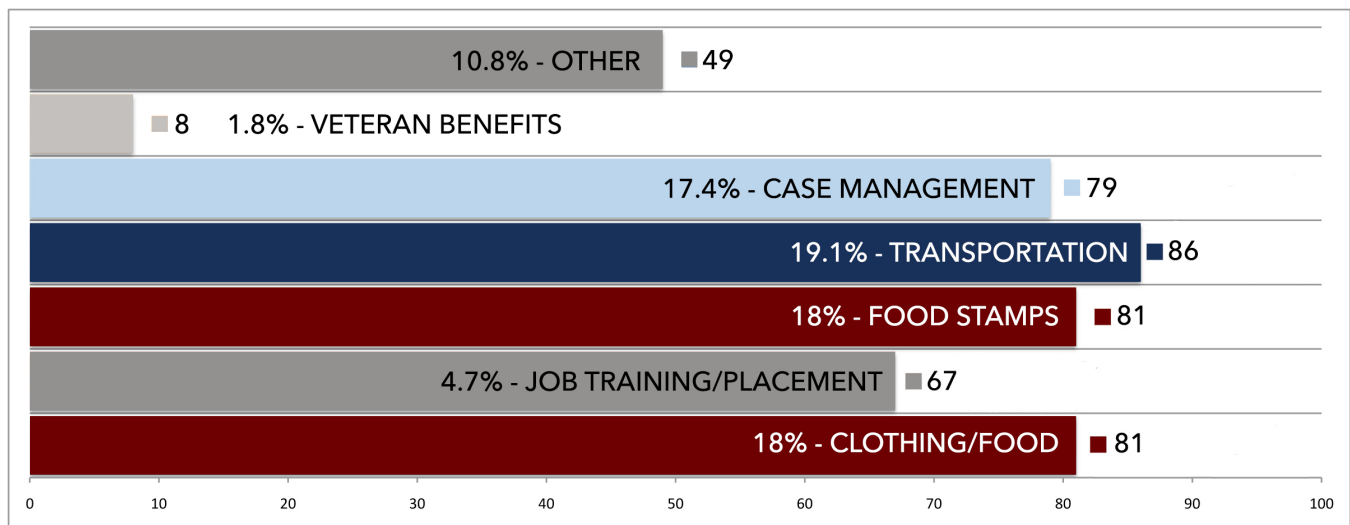


Figure 8: *Services Needed*

When we look at the *Services Needed* and *Reasons for Homelessness*, we begin to see the relationship of each data set. The data for transportation and case management services needed does demonstrate where services are linked to housing and housing stability. Transportation is both a necessity to access services and also for employment. Stable income is necessary for housing stability. With unemployment being the number one reason identified for the cause of homelessness and unable to pay rent/mortgage, **employment is identified as the primary contributor to homelessness**. This data can be used help providers prioritize services and help inform how programs are designed.

The data also begins to **debunk certain myths** of homelessness like substance abuse. In this data set, 9% reported Substance Abuse/Addiction as a reason for homelessness yet 23% of persons currently experiencing homelessness report it as a current health concern. This data would suggest that substance abuse is not a primary cause but more frequently a result of the homeless experience. This reinforces the need to reduce the length of time people experience homelessness. For example, rapidly rehousing people experiencing homelessness the first time will reduce the length of time of homelessness and can lead to lower the rate of substance abuse.

# UNDERSTANDING THEIR LIVED EXPERIENCES

There are no homeless people, only people experiencing homelessness. Through first-hand accounts, the PIT Count collected a snapshot of those lived experiences.

## HEALTH

In 2017, 96 people responded. Those 96 people were able to pick more than one disability.

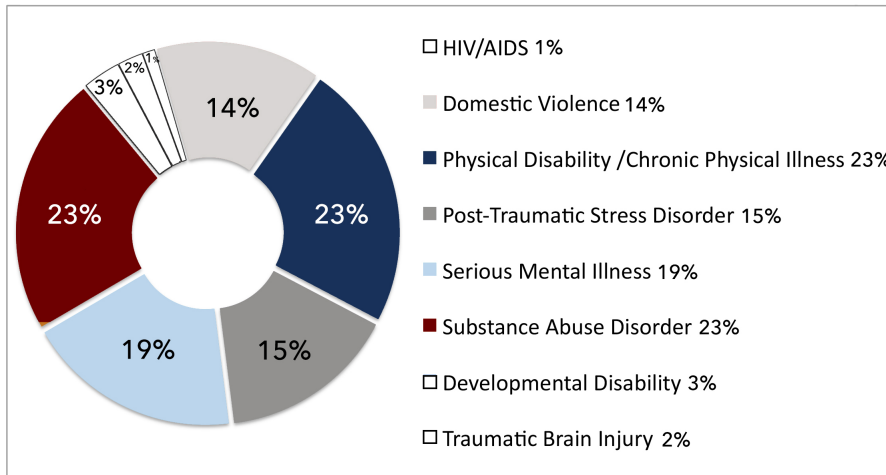
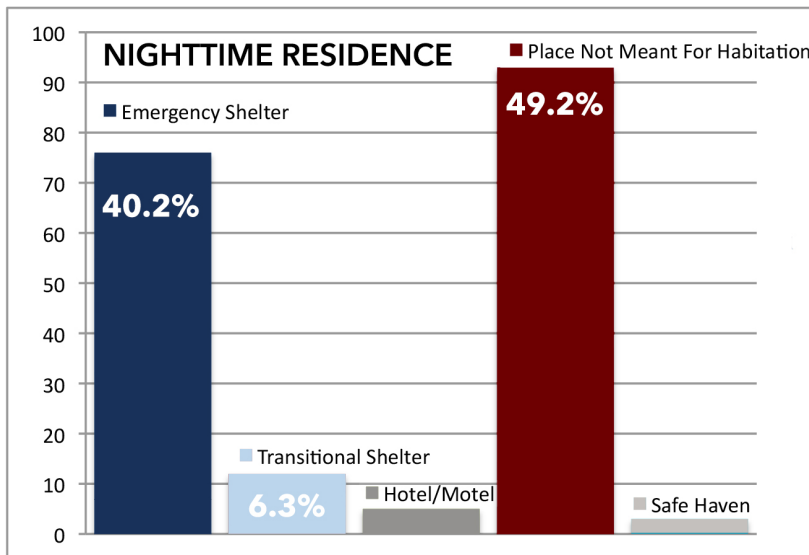


Figure 11: Physical/Mental Disability of Respondent

Experienced Physical or Sexual Violence While Homeless	
	Percent
Yes	15.3
No	84.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\*This indicator is underreported and Women and homeless youth are a high risk. In one study, the homeless were 35 times more likely to be a victim of assault compared to those who are housed.

## NIGHTTIME RESIDENCE



Job Status	Frequency	Percent
Unemployed	77	50.0
Regular full-time job	25	16.3
Regular part-time job	14	9.1
Temporary job	14	9.1
Day labor/Odd jobs	23	14.9
Retired	1	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Figure 12: Able to Work, Job Status

## EMPLOYMENT

### Able to work

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	157	84.0
No	30	16.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>100.0</b>

84% of those surveyed indicated they were able to work. In 2017 we did see a decline in reported *Regular full-time job*, dropping to 16.3% from 25% in 2016, but overall more people reported working. Almost **50% were employed in 2017** compared to 36% in 2016. If 50% of our homeless are working but are still homeless, this is an indicator of housing affordability and availability of housing to people with higher barriers.

## VETERANS

In planning for the 2017 PIT Count, our Veteran service providers identified a best practice in other communities that improved Veteran data collected in the count. Veterans are more willing to disclose their Veteran status when speaking to a fellow Veteran. This year service providers helped to recruit more Veterans survey volunteers resulting in a higher representation of Veteran volunteers for the count. In the 2017 count, the number of Veterans reported almost double going from 10 in 2016 to 16 in 2017.

### US Armed Forces Service

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Yes</b>	16	9.5
<b>No</b>	152	90.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Figure 9: US Armed Forces Service

### Tour of Duty - Change

In 2017 the data revealed a shift from Vietnam Veterans to 54% being Afghanistan and Iraq Veterans making up the largest recorded tour of duty for service members.

Nearly half of respondents (7) indicated they were receiving *Health Care or Other Benefits from the VA Medical Center* (Figure 10) while 8 reported a need for Veteran benefits in *Service Needed* (Figure 8).

### Health Care or Other Benefits from VA medical Center

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Yes</b>	7	41.2
<b>No</b>	10	58.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Figure 10: Health Care or Other Benefit from VA Medical Center

### Length of Service

	Years
<b>Median</b>	3

A group of community service providers recently identified Veterans as a priority population for housing and services. This will allow for the prioritization in housing placement and pilot projects toward the goal of housing 100% of our Veterans experiencing homelessness.

Just like battlefield triage, doctors don't prescribe the same treatment to patients on a first-come-first-served basis and without regard for their particular injuries or ailments, neither should we function this way to reach a goal toward ending homelessness. **Prioritizing** our most vulnerable chronically homeless Veterans lets us focus **evidence-based practices** on one population and when successful, scale services up to serve more people, more efficiently.

In our current system, those who were first in line for housing assistance have been the first to receive help, regardless of factors like length of time homeless or health status. This was a reasonable approach based on available resources but we are learning from the data this isn't the most effective way to make long-term improvements for housing persons experiencing homelessness. The system changes we are undergoing in Denton County are focused on prioritizing people for housing options that best fit their needs and that are the most likely to end their homelessness permanently.



# THANKS!

We are sincerely appreciative and deeply grateful for the people and organizations who volunteered their time and services during the 2017 Point-in-Time Count. For their hard work, dedication and leadership, we offer our recognition to these organizations and individuals:



**CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHILDREN'S HOME**

**JOURNEY TO DREAM**

**THE SALVATION ARMY LEWISVILLE**

**UNITED WAY OF DENTON COUNTY AND ITS DEDICATED INTERNS**

**RSVP - DENTON COUNTY VISTAS**

## TOGETHER WE CAN...

Make homelessness a **rare, brief and non-recurring** experience in Denton County. All of us who work to provide stable housing for people experiencing homelessness know the incredible toll that homelessness takes on the well-being of children, families, and individuals. As we work together to improve outcomes for those experiencing homelessness, we'll know we are serving people to the best of our collective ability.



**We are not short on talent**

**We are not short on champions.**

**We are not short on effort.**

**But we are short on homes.**

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### WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW! PARTICIPATE IN THE SOLUTION

VOLUNTEER for the PIT Count in 2018

#### DENTON COUNTY HOMELESS COALITION

Download and share a copy of this report and the Data Report at:

<https://endhomelessnessdenton.com/infodata/point-in-time-count/2017-pit-count/>

Like the Denton County Homeless Coalition on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/PointInTimeCount/>

What to learn more? Sign-up for our email list:

visit [EndHomelessDenton.com](http://EndHomelessDenton.com) or email [dchcinfo@gmail.com](mailto:dchcinfo@gmail.com)

*Become a Member of the Denton County Homeless Coalition...  
where you can join 60 other Community Agencies and Individuals  
working toward finding a permanent solution to homelessness.*

<https://endhomelessnessdenton.com/get-involved/>

Learn more about Denton County's homeless community impact initiative:

**Denton County Homeless Leadership Team**

<https://www.unitedwaydenton.org/DCHLT>