

Colorado Springs/El Paso County Continuum of Care

# 2015 PIT/HIC Report

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Annual Point In Time and Housing Inventory Count

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## Executive Summary

The following pages present the results of the 2015 Colorado Springs / El Paso County Continuum of Care (CoC) annual Point In Time (PIT) count of people experiencing homelessness and the Housing Inventory Count (HIC) of dedicated beds available to serve them. There are a few noteworthy highlights and mitigating factors to mention before getting to the numbers. Additional details and explanations are provided in the rest of the report.

- This report covers the required HUD PIT count which encompasses people in emergency shelters and transitional housing as well as people who are unsheltered. It also covers additional categories in our Community PIT count, including permanent supportive housing, rapid re-housing, and homeless prevention. This provides a broader picture of the people served or needing to be served by the CoC.
- Outreach efforts were significantly expanded in 2015. This enabled us to survey many more people by meeting them where they were, in addition to the traditional survey-taking at service provider locations. The data suggests that the result was a more complete count of our unsheltered population than we have achieved in past years.
- The expansion of the low barrier winter shelter beds (from 42 to 187) provided an option for people who would otherwise have been outside. The report covers some of the results from this effort.
- We had a significant temporary decrease in transitional housing beds (see page 25) which impacted our count of sheltered people. At least 120 of these beds are either full again or will be before the 2016 PIT.
- Data collected through the paper surveys is entirely voluntary and self-declared (not verified). This can impact areas such as the determination of chronic homelessness (in particular disabling conditions), gender identity, age, and race and ethnicity. We mitigate this impact through training and having trusted outreach workers engage where needed.

### By the numbers.....

- The HUD PIT count for 2015 is **1,073** compared to **1,219** in 2014. If adjusted for the temporarily closed transitional housing beds, the number would have been about flat with 2014.
- The Community PIT count for 2015 is **2,107** compared to **2,142** in 2014. If adjusted similarly, the number would be higher than 2014. It still accurately reflects the additional permanent housing resources that were made available.
- The number of unsheltered people **decreased from 269 to 243**.
- The percent of people who were **sheltered rose from 87.4% to 88.5%**, with a corresponding decrease in the percent of people who were unsheltered (from 12.6% to 11.5%).
- The percent of people in some form of permanent housing program **continues to rise**: from 35.7% in 2013, to 43.1% in 2014, **to 49.1% in 2015**.
- The number of chronically homeless people (unsheltered and in emergency shelters) **dropped from 327 to 291**.
- The number of unsheltered veterans **rose from 46 to 54**, but this reflects the concerted outreach effort.
- The number of veterans in some form of permanent housing program **rose by 66.7% from 285 to 475**.
- The **unsheltered population continues to be local**, with 72% from El Paso County and 83% from El Paso County or elsewhere in Colorado.
- The number of **beds available across categories continues to rise**, from 1,616 in 2014 to 1,719 in 2015, and **utilization of the beds remains high at 93.7%**. Most of the openings continue to be move-out/move-in timing or specific populations (women only, veterans only, domestic violence). However, some of the openings were instances of clients being qualified for vouchers but having difficulty finding places that will accept the vouchers. Refer to the City & County Affordable Housing Needs Assessment for a picture of the shortage of affordable housing: <https://coloradosprings.gov/resident-services/planning-development/housing/housing-community-initiatives>.
- 10 school districts reported their homeless school-aged children compared to 5 districts last year. Their definition of homelessness is broader (includes at risk/unstably housed) and they don't supply identifying information so we can't compare directly, but it is another piece of information. They reported 922 homeless children. Comparing the 5 districts that reported in 2014 and 2015, the number was nearly flat at 883 and 878 respectively.
- The winter shelters **served 188 people** on the night of the point in time. From 11/1/14 through 4/16/15, together they **served 1,582 unduplicated people** and **provided 29,479 nights of shelter**, serving an **average of 176 people each night**. Most stayed 1-7 nights (918 people or 58%), but 48 people (3%) stayed between 112 and 159 nights.

Many lives have been and continue to be improved through the efforts of all involved in the Continuum of Care!

## What is a Continuum of Care?

Per HUD definition, the Continuum of Care (CoC) Program is designed to promote communitywide commitment to the goal of preventing and ending homelessness; provide funding for efforts by nonprofit providers, and State and local governments to quickly rehouse homeless individuals and families while minimizing the trauma and dislocation caused to homeless individuals, families, and communities by homelessness; promote access to and effective utilization of mainstream programs by homeless individuals and families; and optimize self-sufficiency among individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

The Colorado Springs/El Paso County Continuum of Care covers the geographic area of all of El Paso County. El Paso County lies in east central Colorado and encompasses more than 2,158 square miles - slightly more than twice the area of the state of Rhode Island. While the western portion of El Paso County is extremely mountainous, the eastern part is prairie land where dairy cows and beef cattle are the main source of ranchers' income. The altitude ranges from about 5,095 feet (1569 m) on the southern border at Black Squirrel Creek to 14,110 feet (4301 m) on the summit of Pikes Peak, near the western boundary. The county seat is located in Colorado Springs.

The homeless population is more concentrated in Colorado Springs where higher concentrations of agencies offering services to help are also located. The western, "live off the land" ideology is not uncommon, especially in the more rural or wild-land interfaces of the city, which allows a perception from some that they had shelter in a "home" on the night of the PIT when the perception of HUD is that a tent or shed with no electricity or running water is not a "home".

While in this report we discuss numbers, percentages, statistics, we fully embrace that these words represent people, citizens, neighbors. Our community.

## Methodology

Annually, during the last 10 days of January, the Colorado Springs/El Paso County COC conducts a HUD Point In Time (PIT) count of all people in emergency shelters and transitional housing projects, plus those who are considered unsheltered. In addition, we expand our count to cover people in permanent supportive housing, rapid re-housing, and homeless prevention programs. This additional information is used to produce a "community" count which gives a broader picture of the needs and the people being served by the CoC. To complete the picture, this year we have included data from El Paso County school districts, our winter shelter programs, and community conversations we held with clients during the winter months. Sun-down on Sunday January 25<sup>th</sup> to sun-up on Monday January 26<sup>th</sup> was our official count night.

HUD's definition of Homeless:

*"An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning: (i) an individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground; OR (ii) an individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, or local government programs for low income individuals); OR (iii) an individual who is exiting an institution where he or she resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution."*

HUD's definition of Chronic Homeless:

*(a) An individual who: (i) Is homeless and lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter; AND (ii) has been homeless and living or residing in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter continuously for at least one year or on at least four separate occasions in the last 3 years; AND (iii) can be diagnosed with one or more of the following conditions: substance use disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability, post-traumatic stress disorder, cognitive impairments resulting from brain injury, or chronic physical illness or disability; OR (b) An individual who has been residing in an institutional care facility, including a jail, substance abuse or mental health treatment facility, hospital, or other similar facility, for fewer than 90 days and met all of the criteria in paragraph (a) of this definition before entering that facility; OR (c) A family with an adult head of household (or if there is no adult in the family, a minor head of household) who meets all of the criteria in paragraph (a) of this definition, including a family whose composition has fluctuated while the head of household has been homeless.*

The process this year began with a cooperative effort by outreach staff to map known camping and day-time hang-out spots throughout the area. The group also indicated which locations could safely be visited by volunteers and which would be better suited to trained outreach and/or law enforcement staff, as well as best times of day to survey. The information was used to determine how many volunteers were needed in order to assure good coverage.

In order to collect the data, PIT forms were distributed to trained provider staff and volunteers. Interviews with sheltered and unsheltered homeless people were conducted. All surveys required the same information to be filled out and submitted. The survey form contained the same information collected in our Client Management System (CMS) which is our local system meeting HUD's standard for a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). The interviews were done at service provider locations and the places identified through the mapping process. These were conducted mostly on the day following the designated night (so Monday January 26<sup>th</sup>), but extended throughout the week for the outreach crews (always asking where people stayed on the night of the 25<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup>). Data for sheltered persons enrolled in programs using CMS was pulled from the system. We have a few housing providers who do not enter data into CMS. They provided paper forms with the necessary information. To remove duplicate clients between surveys and CMS data, a comparison of personally identifying information (PII), such as name, date of birth, and Social Security Number was used. There was no statistical adjustment or extrapolation to account for the CoC's entire geography; only actual data collected was used for reporting.

The steps taken to obtain the highest quality count of the sheltered and unsheltered homeless population included: a review of HUD guidance and/or trainings on conducting a PIT count; written instructions to providers; written instructions to interviewers; pilot testing of the data collection forms and process prior to the PIT count; training of interviewers on the data collection requirements/forms; training of providers on the data collection requirements/forms; reminders to and follow-up with providers about the count to maximize participation; comparison of the counts to other internal data sources and resolution of inconsistencies; and comparison of the counts to last year's counts and analysis of the changes.

In conjunction with the PIT the Colorado Springs/El Paso County CoC also conducts a Housing Inventory Count (HIC) of all beds available for people experiencing homelessness in our community. This also examines bed usage and informs the assessment of unmet need. The HIC includes beds in Permanent Housing projects in addition to Emergency Shelters and Transitional Housing projects so the universe for the HUD HIC is different from the universe for the HUD PIT. However, the additional HIC data does inform our community PIT. To ensure the strongest data available was captured, contact was made with all known agencies providing housing for homeless people and the agencies were asked how many beds they had on the night of January 25<sup>th</sup> and how many of those beds were occupied. The number of occupied beds was cross referenced with the CMS database for those agencies participating in CMS.

## Acknowledgements

This report would not be possible without the collaborative efforts of a large group of people. Our sincerest thanks go to all of the following:

- The team who put together the map of locations
- Marian House Soup Kitchen and Penrose Library for accommodating the new Vulnerability Index surveying
- All outreach staff who reached the hard to reach: HOT, RMHS, Urban Peak, Homeward Pikes Peak, AspenPointe
- All organizations who participated
- All organizations who enter data into our Client Management System
- Over 100 volunteers who gave generously of their time and compassion
- Donors who provided socks, candy, gift cards, and outdoor heaters
- Pikes Peak United Way staff and interns for their love of data
- The community for their continued support of this effort

**Thank you for making people count!**

## General Census Information

Colorado Springs and El Paso County have very similar demographic breakdowns. The demographic breakdown is also similar between the HUD PIT count and the Community PIT count. For purposes of this section we will compare our Community PIT data to the 2010 census data for El Paso County.

- El Paso County gender breakdown shows 49.8% males and 50.2% females. The people represented in our 2015 Community PIT population look very different with 65.2% males, 34.6% female and .2% transgender.
- El Paso County ethnicity breakdown shows 15.1% Hispanic/Latino and 84.9% non-Hispanic/non-Latino. The Community PIT shows 17.7% Hispanic/Latino and 82.3% non-Hispanic/non-Latino.
- The race breakdown shows a higher proportion of homeless minorities than the general population.

|                                          | El Paso County | Community PIT |
|------------------------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| White                                    | 79.8%          | 70.7%         |
| Black/African American                   | 6.2%           | 20.9%         |
| American Indian / Alaska Native          | 1.0%           | 2.8%          |
| Asian                                    | 2.7%           | 0.7%          |
| Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander | 0.4%           | 0.05%         |
| Other                                    | 4.9%           | --            |
| Multiple Races                           | 5.1%           | 4.8%          |

## Acronyms

Throughout the rest of this document, we may use common acronyms from time to time. Here’s what they mean.

- CoC = Continuum of Care
- ES = Emergency Shelter
- HIC = Housing Inventory Count
- HP = Homeless Prevention
- HUD = Housing and Urban Development (US Department of....)
- PIT = Point In Time
- PSH = Permanent Supportive Housing
- RRH = Rapid Re-Housing
- TH = Transitional Housing

Other acronyms will be explained where used.