

The Kalamazoo County Continuum of Care partners with members to increase coordination and find solutions to the gaps, inequities, and challenges they experience when working to reduce homelessness. Resources provided under this special NOFO will provide outreach and assistance to those who are underserved and most vulnerable in our community. Information was gathered through survey of unhoused residents in Kalamazoo County. The Kalamazoo County Continuum of Care will collaborate with stakeholders to continue to review this plan and made adjustments as needed to serve the community.

The plan was developed with input from those with lived experience. The Kalamazoo County Continuum of Care participated in the Kalamazoo County Housing Survey, which informed the development of the 2022 Kalamazoo County Housing Plan. The intent of this survey was to document the housing characteristics and preferences of unhoused residents of Kalamazoo County. Survey questions focused on the impacts of programs and services, needs that are not being met, clarifying past and present housing challenges, getting feedback on housing priorities, and determining how different demographic groups are impacted by the housing crises. Information gathered from this survey was used to inform content in the Kalamazoo County Housing Plan.

The target population for the survey was unhoused residents living in Kalamazoo County. For the purposes of this survey, unhoused individuals were self-identified. As of 2020, Kalamazoo County had a population of 264,322, according to the American Community Survey 5 year estimates. At least 2,112 individuals experienced homelessness in Kalamazoo County in 2020, Kalamazoo County Continuum of Care Annual Report. The unhoused survey received 169 responses.

The Continuum of Care worked with multiple organizations to reach those who are experiencing homelessness. The target population was category one: literal homeless. This is defined as an individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning: (i) Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation; (ii) Is living in a 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, and local government programs); or (iii) Is exiting an institution where (s)he has 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. An individual or family has to meet only one of the above criteria to qualify as literal homeless.

Partner organizations volunteered their time and energy to administer the survey through computers, phones, and tablets. The organizations serve or work with those who are unhoused in different capacities, including street outreach, case management, shelters, and transitional housing. These organizations included the Disability Network, Cope/Kalamazoo Homeless Coalition, Ministry with Community, Open Doors Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo Gospel Ministries, Recovery Institute, South County Community Services, the Vine Neighborhood Association, YWCA Kalamazoo, Integrated Service of Kalamazoo, and Housing Resources Inc.

The survey instrument was implemented via Survey Monkey on March 20, 2022 and concluded on May 31, 2022. The compensation for unhoused individuals' time to complete the survey was a \$10 gift card.

The majority of those surveyed are evenly distributed within the ages of 25 and 54 years. The survey suggests that the proportion of 55-to-64-year-olds within the unhoused population is greater than the proportion within the population of Kalamazoo County overall. In contrast, the group of unhoused 18-to-24-year-old respondents is proportionally less than that age group for the county.

Nearly half of the unhoused individuals surveyed identify as White. Although individuals identifying as White are the majority in both the unhoused population and that of Kalamazoo County overall, the scale is skewed as approximately 80% of the county's population identifies as White. Meanwhile, close to 40% of the unhoused individuals surveyed identify as Black, while just over 10% of the county's population does, calling attention to racial equity concerns.

Across all individuals who experienced homelessness in 2020, as captured by HMIS data and outlined in the CoC's 2021 Annual Report, the majority of individuals (56%) experiencing homelessness in Kalamazoo County identify as Black or African American, while 40% identify as white. An additional 2% identify as American Indian or Alaskan Native and less than .5% identify as another non-white race. Additionally, approximately 4% identify their ethnicity as Hispanic/Latin(a)(o)(x), compared to nearly 96% who identify as non-Hispanic/non-Latin(a)(o)(x).

The disparity in the number of individuals identifying as Black or Indigenous become more pronounced when examined in the context of the racial demographics of Kalamazoo County, which is majority white (81%), with only 12% identifying as Black or African American and 0.5% identifying as American Indian or Alaskan Native.

Furthermore, these racial disparities manifest differently across household types. Homeless single adults are more likely to be white, with 51% of this population identifying as white compared to 45% identifying as Black or African American, while adults and children in families and unaccompanied youth are more likely to identify as Black or African American. Crucially, the largest disparity is found among homeless children, with Black or African American children making up over 80% of both children in families and unaccompanied youth under the age of 18.

Prior to becoming unhoused, half of the individuals surveyed rented their home, some of which included renting individual rooms. Another quarter stayed with friends or relatives. Of note, several of the open-ended responses to survey questions mentioned domestic violence, breakups, or other similar situations as factors in why the individual is no longer housed. Examples of institutional settings the survey asked about include residential medical facilities, jail, prison, juvenile detention facilities, and foster care or group homes. Within the "other" category, several

respondents indicated that they were unhoused for years; a few mentioned previously having jobs where they traveled that included accommodation.

The two barriers to securing housing most identified by respondents include a lack of affordable housing and insufficient income. Examples of barriers respondents wrote in the “other” category include disability, complications due to the Covid-19 pandemic, immigration status, inability to find affordable childcare, lack of knowledge or funds to start the process, and increases in the cost of rent.

The survey instrument asked what additional programs or support individuals and their households would need to become rehoused. The greatest number of respondents marked rental financial assistance as a need, followed by pre-rental programs to improve the likelihood of landlord acceptance of their applications. Shorter-term supports were also emphasized; more than 20% of respondents highlighted emergency shelters and transitional housing, along with resources to meet basic needs as necessary assistance in becoming rehoused. Within the “other” category, respondents wrote in transportation, specifically mentioning reduced bus fares, help filing taxes, assistance with the mortgage process, and peer supports.

No single group or strategy can solve the housing crisis; a problem this large requires coordinated action among those who provide and fund services. As such, many individuals and organizations were asked to contribute to the creation of this housing plan, including local landlords, realtors, developers, employers, municipalities, nonprofit agencies, university, and school staff, and residents. Partners and stakeholders have contributed critical direction and innovative ideas to the planning process, which has, in turn, shaped the strategies of this plan. Stakeholder input on these strategies is vital as their knowledge of local conditions and politics helps determine which are likely to succeed.

Strategies include:

- Expanding outreach efforts in people and coordination.
- Supporting the creation of programs and services that will move households into permanent housing
- Supporting zoning changes that promote inclusionary housing
- Increasing fair housing protections and enforcement
- Supporting and advocating for Right to Council policies

Outreach efforts are paired with Coordinated Entry so the experience of a person moving through the CoC Coordinated entry system is seamless. Currently, the CoC has three points of entry for our Coordinated Entry system (CES): Housing Resources Inc, Integrated Services of Kalamazoo, and Catholic Charities, Diocese of Kalamazoo. Efforts are being made to streamline the CES to better incorporate the work of all groups and organizations who do outreach and case management in Kalamazoo County as well as improve the by-name lists associated with various segments of our community. As a first step, the CoC has created an outreach coordination workgroup to increase collaboration among various organization who conduct street outreach, including our largest street outreach provider Integrated Services of Kalamazoo, which is funded through the CoC. This workgroup has helped to ensure that all outreach organizations help to

connect clients to our CES. Additionally, the HMIS Systems Administrator is currently working to create new pathways for organizations to use our HMIS and Coordinated Entry system.

The current outreach strategy relies on partners such as Integrated Services Kalamazoo who conduct street outreach throughout Kalamazoo County. Throughout the height of the Covid 19 pandemic, Kalamazoo County saw many grassroots groups and organizations, some who had been active for years, step up to provide services to those during outreach efforts, such as HOPE thru Navigation. These groups go out daily, weekly, semi-weekly to various locations in Kalamazoo County where unsheltered homelessness is concentrated to connect, build, and maintain relationships. This is when connections to temporary, permanent, and permanent supportive housing are made. Currently the Kalamazoo County CoC is working to coordinate the efforts of all of outreach in Kalamazoo County to increase collaboration and sharing of information. Through conversation it was realized that no one organization is able to meet all needs of an individual or family.

P-1c Landlord Recruitment

1 a.b. The Kalamazoo County Continuum of Care (CoC) current structure of landlord recruitment is under review and being updated. The former structure relied heavily on ESG/CoC and other funded partners and members to address landlord recruitment within their programs. Integrated Services Kalamazoo and Housing Resources Inc both have offered incentives to landlords for renting to individuals and families that utilities rental assistance. Each program maintained their own list of landlords. The strategy of depending on programs worked well as each program was able to maintain their own list and develop/maintain relationships.

2. Over the past 3 years the CoC has transitioned in significant ways. Part of that included moving from LISC to the United Way of Battle Creek Kalamazoo Region. Through merger the CoC is now housed at the United Way of South Central Michigan. The transition occurred in 2020 at the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic. Much of the work was done in response to ensure community needs were met during that time. A new practice the CoC has identified is that the CoC should have a strategy and plan for landlord recruitment and retention. Part of the CoC 3 year strategic plan creating a landlord recruitment strategy, which the CoC is currently in the process of developing.

3. The CoC will use data from the Kalamazoo County Housing Survey and information partners have received from their individual programs to help create new strategy of landlord recruitment and retention. The CoC is still reviewing and deciding on what data points will be used. To date it has been determined that the data around time it takes to house a person once they receive assistance. In Kalamazoo County, individuals are waiting on average 120 days to secure housing once a voucher has been issued. Elements of the strategy will include creating and sharing standardized marketing materials and identifying new referral sources. The CoC currently does not have a centralized system level tracking tool, but hopes to accomplish such a tool in 2023/2024.

P-3a Current Street Outreach Strategy

1. The CoC established and operates an Outreach Coordination Workgroup- an interagency network of CoC members and partners who provide supportive services and housing assistance to individuals and families identified as the unsheltered subpopulation of HUD's Category 1 Homelessness Definition. The goal of this workgroup is to identify, provide support, and connect unsheltered households to the CoC's coordinated entry system, various forms of sheltering, and other mainstream services needed to obtain and stably remain in permanent housing.

To accomplish the goals, each represented committee member shares a pool of unique services and resources within their origin organization or network. If there are no supports available within the collective committee, together members will strive to identify services or resources to assist the household.

The Workgroup has adopted a Care Coordination Model.

The four elements of coordinating care are:

Easy access to a range of housing, services, and providers.

Good communications and effective care plan transitions between providers.

A focus on the total holistic needs of the client to prepare for better housing stabilization.

Clear and simple information clients can understand.

2. Together the CoC Outreach Workgroup and participating outreach teams serve the entirety of the CoC geographic region. Outreach is conducted daily, weekly, and multiple times a week by various members of our CoC Outreach workgroup. Members convene weekly to review progress and/or evaluate the approach to the coordinated care plan.

3. The CoC is currently reviewing and updating its strategies around increased availability of permanent housing and creating more temporary housing options. The CoC has been supportive of projects such as HRI's mod pods which are 50 individuals temporary housing units for those unsheltered or living in places not meant for human habitation.

of projects such as HRI's mod pods which are 50 individuals temporary housing units for those unsheltered or living in places not meant for human habitation.

4. Housing Resources Inc, Project Upward serves unsheltered individuals and families on the coordinated entry by name list using the prioritization of those most in need, living outdoors, in vehicles, or other places not meant for human habitation. The project is expected to accommodate up to 100 individuals and 50 families. The project may serve more as participants exit the program and additional households are served, keeping the caseload at 150. While the pod project is in development the project will serve 66 individuals. All participants will be served in the community they are staying and services will be provided where they are located. The CoC is reviewing and evaluating the CES to create more responsible prioritization schemes that can better assess vulnerability in a culturally responsible manner.

5. The CoC's largest outreach team is operated by Integrated Services of Kalamazoo (ISK), an agency which also provides shelter, transitional housing, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing. ISK also acts as an access point to our coordinated entry system (CES) to connect individuals and families to permanent housing opportunities. All other members of the Outreach Coordination Workgroup are required to refer clients to the CES.

In addition to identifying unhoused residents through methods utilized by their organization of origin, the workgroup adopted a process to respond to community-member sightings of unhoused residents, which increases the opportunity for the CoC to engage with those who may otherwise have not sought housing and supportive services. In the response to the notification of sighting of unhoused residents, members of the group elect a representative to meet with the household to assess their needs and provide necessities. If an unsheltered household declines shelter or housing assistance but is interested in supportive services, our providers will continue to engage the household and build rapport. Since October 2021, collectively, the CoC Outreach Coordination has successfully housed 16 households.

6. As part of reviewing and updating the strategy using information from people with lived experience, it will now be a focus of the CoC to ask grant recipients if they hire from those with lived experience to serve as outreach workers.

P-3.b Current Strategy to Provide Immediate access to low barrier shelter and temporary housing for individual and families experiencing unsheltered homelessness

1. The Kalamazoo County CoC (CoC) is currently reviewing its strategy aimed at providing access to low-barrier and culturally appropriate temporary accommodations.

2. In prior years the CoC relied on its providers of TH to incorporate that into their programs. It was effective, however, both members and partners of the CoC desire for the CoC to have more of a comprehensive strategy that the partners and members can be accountable to. The CoC is applying learning from the C4 work mentioned previously to inform this strategy. Throughout Covid 19 pandemic the issues and need for culturally appropriate temporary accommodations was highlighted.

3. New practices the CoC has implemented over the past 3 years and lessons learned are being more intentional about including the voices and thoughts of those with lived experience of unsheltered homelessness. The CoC has learned that it's important to define lived experience in a way that includes a length of time. Not to minimize the value or significance of those with experiences older than 5 years, however to keep current on present service delivery and programs, it's important to define the timeframe of those with experiences that are present day to 5 years.

P-3.c Current strategy to provide immediate access to low barrier permanent housing for individuals and families experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

1. The Kalamazoo County Continuum of Care (CoC) current strategy is under review. The current strategy involves getting individuals and families experiencing unsheltered

homelessness into the coordinated entry system (CES) and triaged through the appropriate services and programs until they are moved into permanent housing or permanent supportive housing. The current strategy utilizes a housing first strategy as all permanent housing projects connected to our CES follow housing first principles, including no housing readiness requirements, promoting consumer choice, providing - but not requiring- individualized and client-driven supports, and supporting social and community integration. The strategy is connected to the permanent housing resources identified in leveraging housing resources part of the CoC plan for serving individuals and families experiencing homelessness with severe service needs as providers such as Housing Resources Incorporated have programs and services that utilize a housing first approach. There is no requirement in order to receive services and housing. The CoC requires that all projects applying for CoC competition funds follow a housing first approach, and rate projects on the extent to which they address the specific strategies each project employs in alignment with housing first principles. Furthermore, the CoC generally prioritizes applications for projects which provide permanent housing - especially permanent supportive housing - over projects that provide shelter, transitional housing only, or supportive services only.

Due to the shortage of housing units as demonstrated in the Kalamazoo County Housing Plan, the CoC supports the development of new affordable housing within the County. The 2022-2024 CoC Strategic Plan emphasizes the development of new housing units and projects, along with additional supportive services, as key strategies to address barriers to permanent housing across all population types. The CoC supported a county-wide housing millage which was passed in the November 2020 election in order to create more affordable housing within the county. The CoC also support specific development projects, most recently efforts to renovate a former motel into 60 studio apartments for unhoused individuals. The Lodge House development opened in October 2022.

While the CoC recognizes the ultimate importance of increasing permanent housing stock, the CoC also support shorter-term solutions to quickly provide low-barrier shelter and transitional housing options while permanent housing is being developed. To that end, the CoC supported the passage of a City of Kalamazoo Emergency Housing Ordinance which allows for the development of temporary housing in the City of Kalamazoo. Under this ordinance, CoC partner Housing Resources, Inc has plans to implement a new pilot project providing 50 ModPod units which offer a secure, waterproof, lighted, heated, and air conditioned space as a new solution for unsheltered individuals who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to benefit from the shelter and housing options currently available. Housing Resources, Inc's application for funding for supportive services under this special funding opportunity is designed in part to provide additional supports for these clients.

2. Using System Performance Measure data, from 2020 to 2021, the CoC significantly improved the percentage of clients who successfully exit street outreach, with 71% of clients exiting to positive destinations, compared to 36% in 2020. The majority of those positive exits (63%) were

to permanent housing destinations in 2021. Furthermore, permanent housing projects in the CoC demonstrate exceedingly high positive outcomes, with 99% of clients in non-rapid rehousing permanent housing programs (permanent supportive housing and other permanent housing) either exiting to a permanent destination or remaining in the permanent housing project in 2021, compared to 95% in 2020. For rapid rehousing projects alone using the 2021 system performance measures reporting period, the CoC saw a successful exit rate of 100%. Clients who exit from permanent housing within the CoC also experience relatively low rates of return to homelessness, with a total of 9% returning to homelessness within two years, based on 2021 system performance.

The CoC is currently in the process of making changes to our coordinated entry system (CES) that will allow the CoC to use CES data to better understand how the system is specifically performing at providing access to permanent housing for households that are unsheltered. Additionally, the CoC is working to improve the length of time that individuals remain homeless, in part by working to increase the availability of permanent housing resources within the County. Given the increase in the number of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness, and the continued availability of open shelter beds, the CoC is also working to better understand the preferences and cultural considerations of unsheltered individuals and families in order to better tailor low-barrier and culturally appropriate services and housing opportunities. The CoC has seen recent success with projects like Lantern House, which provides low-barrier rapid rehousing to unsheltered individuals and is operated by Integrated Services of Kalamazoo.

3. The Kalamazoo County Housing Plan provides evidence that supports the CoC's current strategy. Over 15,000 households are in rental units that do not meet their budget, and an additional 2,112 individuals experienced homelessness in 2020. The majority of overburdened renting households make below \$35,000 per year and would need rental units below \$875 per month.

Meanwhile, the population in the county is growing, and housing construction is not keeping pace; it is anticipated that 7,750 new units are needed to appropriately house new households within the County. Furthermore, housing prices in Kalamazoo County have risen steadily since 2011, and started to increase drastically in 2021, while wages have not kept pace. Together, this data points to the need to develop more affordable housing options.

While HMIS data supports efforts to increase access to permanent housing resources, given the positive outcomes experienced by households in these projects, the CoC is also working to use CES data to better understand how the CES system is currently working to connect households, particularly high needs and unsheltered households, to these resources.

4. New practices the CoC has implemented over the past 3 years and lessons learned are being more intentional about including the voices and thoughts of those with lived experience of unsheltered homelessness. The CoC has learned that it is important to define lived experience in a way that

includes a length of time. Not to minimize the value or significance of those with experiences older than 5 years, however to keep current on present service delivery and programs, it's important to define the timeframe of those with experiences that are present day to 5 years.

P-4 Updating the CoC's Strategy to Identify, Shelter, and House Individuals Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness with Data and Performance

1. HMIS and By-name list data will be used to examine and improve the performance of street outreach and expand the scope of street outreach within the CoC. Currently our Outreach Coordination Workgroup maintains a By-Name list of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness, in addition to the By-Name list of all individuals experiencing homeless created through our coordinated entry system (CES). The CoC is working to improve CES data collection activities in order to better utilize CES data to examine system performance, including to better understand the effectiveness of street outreach and other services in connecting households to housing resources. The CoC will also use APR and CAPER data and System Performance Metrics to better understand best practices within our community and use data to improve performance. The Michigan Data Warehouse allows the CoC to regularly examine system performance by sub-population to better understand disparities in the performance of street outreach programs in placing clients in shelter and permanent housing situations.

Street outreach activities are currently connected to our CES through the Outreach Coordination Workgroup. Our largest provider of street outreach acts as an access point agency to connect clients to CES directly, while all other providers are required to refer clients added to the By-Name list to our CES. We are also working to improve access to HMIS for smaller organizations that conduct street outreach activities.

In addition to identifying unhoused residents through methods utilized by their organization of origin, the workgroup adopted a process to respond to community-member sightings of unhoused residents, which increases the opportunity for the CoC to engage with those who may otherwise have not sought housing and supportive services. In the response to the notification of sighting of unhoused residents, members of the group elect a representative to meet with the household to assess their needs and provide necessities. If an unsheltered household declines shelter or housing assistance but is interested in supportive services, our providers will continue to engage the household and build rapport.

2. The CoC has previously and will continue to seek out survey data to better understand the needs of unsheltered households, including current barriers to accessing shelter and the type of shelter or housing services that these households would be interested in pursuing. This information was used to support new programming, including Integrated Services of Kalamazoo's Lantern House - a low-barrier rapid rehousing program using Master Leasing for individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness and connected to outreach services. The CoC is currently supporting the development of Housing Resources Inc.'s Kzoo POD

Community, a project to include 50 ModPod units to provide another low barrier option for up to 66 individuals as they move from unsheltered homelessness to permanent housing. If awarded these funds, HRI will be able to provide supportive services to residents in this program.

3. HMIS and CES data will be used to improve the CoC's ability to rapidly house individuals and families experiencing unsheltered homelessness in permanent housing. As with street outreach, the CoC is engaging in work to improve our CES data collection and analysis efforts to create a more responsive CES system. Project and system performance will be examined on a regular basis, including through use of the Michigan Data Warehouse which allows the CoC to examine HMIS data on system performance by sub-population, as well as dashboards providing an overview of permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing program performance. County Housing Plan data will also be used to support the development of new affordable housing opportunities for individuals experiencing homelessness, as the current housing shortage continues to act as a significant barrier to permanent housing for households experiencing homelessness.

P-6 Involving Individuals with Lived Experience of Homelessness in Decision Making• Meaningful Outreach.

1. The CoC has taken many approaches and will continue to new approaches to engage those with lived homelessness experience to develop a working group. Emails to partners who engage with those with lived experience, Social Media posts, in person, and electronic attempts are made to engage individuals. The CoC is moving away from a check the box approach.

2. The CoC is working to include individuals and families with lived experience into the CoC decision making structure. The newly hired current CoC Director is someone who has recent experience (5 years or less) of being homeless. The Allocations and Accountability team who is responsible for funding recommendations includes individuals with direct experience of homelessness. The CoC is continuing to review and update policies with an equity lens and create clear paths for those with lived experience to not only participate but lead in the work of the CoC. Currently the CoC has formed a CoC Equity Results Team as part of an opportunity provided by the Michigan Coalition to End Homelessness and C4 Innovations.

3. The CoC encourages projects to involve individuals and families with lived experience of unsheltered homelessness by asking on the local application how many people with lived experience serve on their Board of Directors and whether or not the organization has a relational process for receiving feedback from people with lived experience.