

## Council Homelessness Discussion Questions

Please understand that there are more in-depth responses to these questions and that Ramsey County would encourage future in-depth discussions to further address the various questions in this document.

**Question:** How do newly homeless people access county services and housing assistance? (Continuum of Care)

**Response:**

Direct or online contact with various Ramsey County programs and services.

Referrals from partner agencies who provide programs and services, conduct outreach and provide emergency shelter and/or prevention and homeless assistance services.

1. Ramsey County Emergency Programs
2. Ramsey County Social Services
3. Ramsey County Public Health
4. Ramsey County Corrections
5. Outreach workers
6. Federal and State Programs
7. Emergency Shelters
8. Coordinated Entry Systems
9. Online resources, such as United Way 211, Heading Home Ramsey website, and various agency resource lists

**Question:** What is the definition of homeless used by Ramsey County and why?

**Response:**

Many definitions are currently used. The specific definitions used varies and is often determined based on funding streams used to provide assistance.

**HUD Definitions:**

1. Literally Homeless: People who are living in a place not meant for human habitation, in emergency shelter, in transitional housing, or are exiting an institution.
2. Imminent Risk of Homelessness: People who are losing their primary nighttime residence, which may include a motel or hotel or a doubled-up situation, within 14 days and lack resources or support networks to remain in housing.
3. Homeless under other Federal Statutes: Families with children or unaccompanied youth who are unstably housed and likely to continue in that state.
4. Fleeing/Attempting to Flee Domestic Violence (DV): People who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening situations related to violence; have no other residence; and lack the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing.
5. Chronically Homeless: A homeless individual with a disability who lives either in a space not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter, or in an institutional case facility

More information is available online (including requirements for documenting homelessness):

[https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessDefinition\\_RecordkeepingRequirementsandCriteria.pdf](https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessDefinition_RecordkeepingRequirementsandCriteria.pdf)

Minnesota Definitions:

1. Homeless (Minnesota) definition: A household lacking a fixed, adequate night time residence (includes doubled up).
2. Households Experiencing Long-Term Homelessness (LTH) (Minnesota) definition: Persons including individuals, unaccompanied youth, or families with children who lack a permanent place to live continuously for a year or more or at least four times in the past three years.
3. Doubled up/couch hopping: Doubled up or couch hopping is considered an episode of homelessness if a household is doubled up with another household (and duration is less than one year) and couch hops as a temporary way to avoid living on the streets or in an emergency shelter.
4. Transitional Housing: Time spent in transitional housing is a neutral event. It is not considered time housed or time homeless when determining LTH eligibility.
5. Institutions: Time spent in an institutional care (treatment, hospital, foster care, etc.) or correctional facility (jail or prison) is a neutral event. It is not considered time housed or time homeless except in the case where an individual was in a facility for fewer than 90 days and was homeless at entry to the facility. That time can be considered time homeless.

More information available online: [www.mnhousing.gov/get/MHFA\\_011066](http://www.mnhousing.gov/get/MHFA_011066)

**Question:** What are RC estimates of the number of homeless in the county and city?

**Response:**

In Federal Fiscal Year 2017 (October 1, 2016 – September 30, 2017) a total of 3,951 individuals were in shelters. The attached *2017 Sys PM Charts-2018.3.12.pdf* demonstrate this count disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, and age. It is important to keep in mind how the availability of shelter bed may impact these demographics. Most notably, there are significantly less shelter beds for youth under age 18 and for families.

This measure only includes shelters using the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) thus only counts 58% of shelters in Ramsey County. This count does not include Domestic Violence Shelters or homeless individuals who are doubled up. Although there are several limitations, it does offer a significantly more accurate count of those using shelters in Ramsey County over the time span of one year.

More information and data is available online:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B1uxubiRbMOyNEdVRmw2bGRTOW8>

Alternatively, the Point In Time Count (PIT), which counts all homeless on one is also used to measure homelessness.

**4. Question:** What are the services and housing assistance can people access? How do they differ across different populations of homeless? (Shelter beds, transitional housing, etc. – Catholic Charities also presenting.)

**Response:**

There are a variety of housing assistance and/or services that people can access, based on funding types and definitions.

1. Rapid Re-housing is an intervention designed to help individuals and families to quickly exit homelessness and return to permanent housing. Rapid re-housing assistance is offered without preconditions (such as employment, income, absence of criminal record, or sobriety) and targets the unique needs of the household. Rapid re-housing programs assist households to find and secure appropriate rental housing, provides time-limited assistance to cover move-in costs, deposits, and the rental and/or utility assistance, provide case management services to help households stabilize in housing.
2. Street Outreach & Engagement with the Homeless System which provide emergency services and engagement intended to link households who are homeless by either HUD or Minnesota definition and in need of shelter, housing and support services.
3. Prevention (& Diversion) a set of strategies to assist people in maintaining permanent housing and/or divert them from entering the homeless system. Service strategies are focused on addressing the immediate housing crisis and can be integrated with other mainstream services to address long term needs.
4. Drop-In Centers which serve as day space (only open during limited day-time hours) with programs providing basic need, information, and connection to resources for persons experiencing homelessness.
5. Short-term shelter that provides a safe, temporary place to stay with focus on initial housing assessment, immediate housing placement and linkage to other services.
6. Emergency Shelter programs providing stabilization and assessment; focusing on quickly moving all persons to stable housing, regardless of disability or background.
7. Voucher programs providing reimbursement for temporary motel stays to stabilize homeless persons and families with a focus on quickly moving all persons to stable housing, regardless of disability or background.
8. Programmatic shelter programs providing housing focused case management and linkages to mainstream systems and community-based supports.
9. Medium-term stabilization beds for households (who cannot be diverted from shelter) prior to placement into permanent housing.
10. Transitional Housing – Facility-Based or Scattered Site usually safe, temporary apartments located in project-based or scattered site housing that focuses on housing planning, addictions treatment, stabilization, and/or recovery for individuals and families with temporary barriers to self-sufficiency.
11. Permanent Supportive Housing –Scattered-Site clustered and scattered site permanent housing linked with supportive services that help residents maintain housing. Targeted to persons with significant barriers to self-sufficiency.

**Question:** Are there currently gaps in service for particular populations? Thinking about homeless “demographics” and what we’ve learned from point in time counts and the “tri-annual” Wilder Research survey, what are your thoughts about who would be better served in our area?

**Response:**

All aspects of our homelessness system are in need of expansion and prioritization based on specific definitions or populations many not be the most effective way to view the gaps.

1. Affordable housing stock in Ramsey county is does not meet the demand. High demand and short supply in all sectors of the housing market drive rents higher.
2. Rapid Rehousing (RRH) Landlord Recruitment has been a persistent issue impacting our community. RRH is supportive housing type that offers two years of progressive rent subsidies and services. Housing for those with criminal backgrounds, sex offenses, and difficult housing histories.
3. Community landlords and facility-based housing programs those with felonies, and other crimes regardless of how long-ago clients were charged and convicted. Clients who go through the criminal justice system are encouraged to exit from facilities to shelter to make themselves eligible for

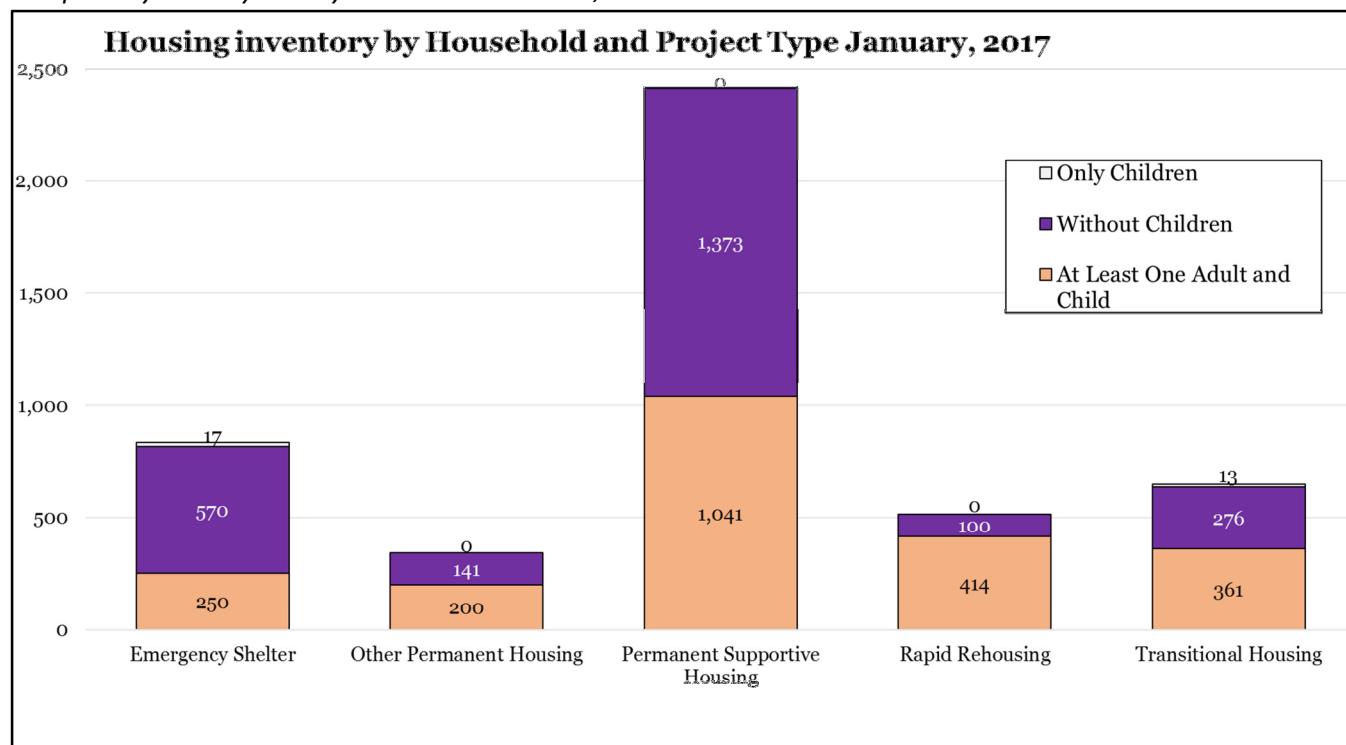
coordinated entry. These clients are then forced to remain on the priority list, waiting for openings from the few programs which do not exclude them in their eligibility.

4. Employment services for people needing “soft employment” is a gap within our continuum. Soft employment refers to work opportunities that may be inclusive to those who may not be able to manage full time traditional work styles. Workforce programs designed to serve previously homeless clients and clients with disabilities, are limited.
5. Housing options for homeless youth in Ramsey County are extremely limited with only 17 emergency shelter beds and 17 Transitional Housing beds for unaccompanied minors.

*Chart 3: Ramsey 2017 Housing Inventory Count- Project Type & Households*

*Source: Ramsey 2017 Housing Inventory Count*

*Compiled by Ramsey County Health and Wellness, Research and Evaluation*



Wilder Research survey results could help gain a more accurate picture of the antecedents of homelessness and points to ‘who’ but also suggests some of the ‘how’ unique homeless populations could be better served.

Many homeless adults in the Wilder survey experienced homelessness before they reached adulthood, sometimes with their parents. Others were in out of home settings, such as foster care, juvenile detention, or correctional facilities. Trends indicated by the data including an increasing proportion of families with children who are unstably housed. Research and surveys indicate poor health, lack of sufficient care for mental illness and substance abuse contribute to housing instability and homelessness. Taken together a clear picture of the need to address issues of housing and homelessness with a multi-system and multi-generational approach comes into view as we attempt to move upstream to develop a coordinated response.

Multiple collaborative efforts are underway in the County, including Outside In and Heading Home Ramsey. In addition, the County is one of the partners in the St Paul Promise Neighborhood’s 2-Gen initiative. The County also recently established an Interdepartmental Council to work across departments to address housing stability.

**Question:** Are there areas where the county and city can work more effectively together to serve the homeless population? Are there additional areas where the city and county could partner on this issue?

**Response:**

Better coordination of available resources including Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and other HUD funds should be a goal for local government, state and federal partners. Community partners working together as part of the Ramsey County Continuum of Care/Heading Home Ramsey (HHR), local businesses working together as part of St Paul Chamber of Commerce, non-profits seeking to partner and lead these efforts will all benefit from increased clarity on where they can best lead and contribute to this work.

**Question:** Are there specific activities or services provided by the city which could be improved?

**Response:**

1. Saint Paul administers approximately \$500,000 annually in Emergency Solutions Grant funds. This grant process could benefit from integration into the Heading Home Ramsey processes to better align priorities.
2. The city plays also integral role in conversations determining affordable housing development. Greater awareness of specific needs and more inclusive partnerships could improve how developers respond to need for affordable housing.
3. St Paul creates and enforces a broad spectrum of regulations and standards that impact landlords in many ways. A system wide review of existing regulations with the view of improving how landlords work with all populations in need of housing could motivate more people to consider renting to those most in need.

**Question:** What is the current on characteristics that put people at greater risk of homelessness?

**Response:**

Research that lists characteristics that cause people to be at risk for homelessness can change over time. Here is a list of characteristics that have been tracked by data and experience over the last couple of years:

1. Childhood homelessness
2. Youth homelessness
3. Poor rental history/evictions
4. Lack of employment/lack of living wage
5. History of felonies/sex offender/arson
6. Untreated mental illness
7. Drug addiction/chemical dependency
8. Victim domestic violence
9. Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, language