Sacramento Homeless Response System Dashboard FAQ

1. What is a Continuum of Care (CoC)?

The Sacramento City and County Continuum of Care (CoC) is a 25 member Board that includes representatives from organizations serving individuals experiencing homelessness or who were formerly homeless and other interested, relevant organizations within Sacramento County. The Sacramento CoC covers all the cities, towns and unincorporated areas of Sacramento County.

The Sacramento CoC addresses critical issues related to homelessness through a coordinated community-based process promoting the communitywide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness. On behalf of the CoC, Sacramento Steps Forward provides planning, analysis and leadership for the homelessness response system, including managing grants for CoC-funded housing and services and coordinating access into Sacramento's limited housing resources for people who are experiencing chronic homelessness and considered to be the most vulnerable.

2. Where does this data come from, and what is HMIS?

The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), is a local information technology system used to collect and track housing and service data for people experiencing homelessness. In Sacramento County approximately 50 homeless service providers are using HMIS to track homelessness services and relationships with people experiencing homelessness. The Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires CoCs to maintain a local HMIS to track most federally-funded homeless services and housing. Many non-mandated service providers in Sacramento also choose to participate.

HMIS in Sacramento County is administered and managed by Sacramento Steps Forward, using guidance published by HUD.

3. Is homelessness increasing in Sacramento?

According to HMIS data, our overall count of people experiencing homelessness is increasing by a few hundred people per year, reflecting persons who are engaging with service providers and entering into HMIS. While outreach teams initiate engagement of unsheltered persons, we recognize that not all people experiencing homelessness are captured in HMIS.

We can also look at the Point-in-Time (PIT) Count for more information about trends in Sacramento's population experiencing homelessness. This differs from HMIS in that it captures homelessness on a single night counted every two years and does not count individuals experiencing homelessness over a longer period.

Based on the PIT, the number of people experiencing homelessness in Sacramento County effectively increased 19% between 2017 and 2019. The majority of the increase was from unsheltered people, and the rising homelessness reflects the continued challenges of housing affordability. The increase in Sacramento County was in line with statewide trends. For the full 2019 PIT report, click here. The next PIT Count will be conducted at the end of January 2021.

4. What is the difference between the number of people experiencing homelessness in the "Year" compared to the number of people experiencing homelessness "On One Day."

The "Year" and "On One Day" give you different snapshots on how many people have experienced homelessness throughout the course of a year as compared to how many people are experiencing homelessness on a particular day.

5. Why are so many people losing contact / leaving to an 'unknown' destination? What's the difference?

In our community and many others, both kinds of exits are very common in project types that are shorter-term crisis response such as:

- **Night-by-Night shelters:** Where a guest may stay intermittently and typically for just an evening at a time, so an official exit interview may not be possible.
- **Outreach programs:** Where caseworkers progressively engage with clients in the field, and sometimes those individual interactions do not result in an "official" case management relationship.

An "unknown" living situation status typically results from an exit from a program recorded in HMIS to an "unknown" destination. If a client leaves the program without conducting an exit interview, an "unknown" living situation will be selected. For outreach programs, if engagement with a client has not occurred in a while, clients are disenrolled from the program with an "unknown" destination.

"Lost contact" is when the program staff have not had contact with the client in 90 days or more and the client is automatically exited due to "lost contact".

6. Why are so many people "New" to the system?

In the "Entries and Exits" tab of the dashboard, you may have noticed that there is a substantial number of people entering the HMIS as "new" clients.

Part of this can be explained by increased use of HMIS by providers. Since 2014, the number of programs entering into HMIS has increased 181 percent, from 85 programs to 154. The number of active client records has increased substantially each year.

As for the reasons why more people are entering into homelessness, they are nuanced and varied. According to the 2019 PIT report, "The 2019 rise in homelessness reflects the continued challenges with housing affordability locally and across the state. A number of studies show that rental market conditions are the strongest predictors of community levels of homelessness; one of the most salient conditions is the proportion of renters who spend more than 50 percent of their monthly income on rent, representing nearly 30 percent of all renters in the county. Sacramento has seen major increases in rental rates in the context of a state-wide housing crisis. From January 2-17 to April 2019, the median rent in Sacramento rose 14 percent, compared to 5 percent nationally, from 2017-2018 Sacramento faced the highest rent increases among California cities."

7. How frequently will the dashboard be updated?

The dashboard will be updated quarterly. The information will be available a month after the end of each quarter.

8. Are more people experiencing homelessness coming into my neighborhood?

While we do not track the whereabouts of people experiencing homelessness in HMIS, generally speaking, those who are unsheltered are not fixed to one location and will not sleep in the same place every night.

9. Where can I find out more about what's being done to address homelessness in Sacramento?

Despite the elevated numbers, Sacramento localities and the Sacramento CoC have invested significantly in recent years and continue to invest and coordinate new resources to address the homelessness crisis. Visit these websites to learn more:

Sacramento Steps Forward
SSF COVID Response Page
Sacramento County
City of Sacramento
City of Elk Grove
City of Folsom
City of Rancho Cordova
City of Citrus Heights
Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency

10. What other data sets may be included in the Dashboard in the future?

We will continue to assess based on feedback on availability of data on how to improve the dashboard and provide additional data in the months ahead.