

A Snapshot—Executive Summary

THE 2006 COMMUNITY REPORT ON HOMELESSNESS

The Community Shelter Board (CSB) is a non-profit umbrella organization that coordinates community-based efforts, fosters collaboration, and funds services to assist families and individuals in Central Ohio to resolve their housing crises. CSB is funded by the City of Columbus, the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, the United Way of Central Ohio, The Columbus Foundation, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the State of Ohio and other public and private donors.

Columbus' system of emergency services assists men, women and children who experience homelessness in our community. A network of agencies, coordinated by CSB, provides shelter and services that are aimed at meeting individual needs and diminishing future homelessness. There are two separate emergency systems: services for families and services for single adults. A separate system of transitional and supportive housing is also available. For the first time, this report includes data on permanent supportive housing and the Rebuilding Lives program.

Emergency Shelter System for Individuals and Families

Comprised of 417 beds for single men, 97 beds for single women, and space for up to 50 families on a daily basis, the emergency shelter system follows a “no wrong door” or “front door” philosophy—meaning any client presenting a need for shelter is assessed and admitted, referred to another shelter if appropriate, or diverted to alternative, safe housing and prevention assistance. A critical component of the emergency shelter system is a “Housing First” approach to assessment and referral to the next stage of housing, with a focus on quickly moving single adults and families to housing and ensuring that appropriate supports are in place to ensure long-term housing stability.

Highlights of emergency shelter client data from FY2006, including utilization, demographics and outcomes, are presented below.

- The shelter system **served** 3,684 men, 1,252 women and 731 families (2,601 members).
- The **average family size** was 3.6 members with the majority (85 percent) of families headed by women.
- The **number of children** who experienced homelessness and received emergency shelter was 1,637, and over half of the children were seven years old or less.
- All population types had substantially less **monthly income** than the amount needed to rent a typical apartment in Columbus. In Franklin County, the Fair Market Rent for a two-bedroom unit is \$674.
 - For families with children, the average monthly income per family member was \$109/month at the time of intake to emergency shelter.
 - Single men and single women, respectively, had an average monthly income of \$314 and \$279.



- Those experiencing **successful housing outcomes** were lowest among the men, at 19 percent and slightly higher among women, at 24 percent. Remarkably, 62 percent of family households exited emergency shelter to stable housing.
- Recidivists are those individuals who leave the shelter system with a successful housing outcome and return to shelter within two weeks to three months. The family system experienced the most positive outcome for this measure, with the lowest percentage of **recidivism**, at only two percent. Recidivism was six percent for men and four percent for women.

Permanent Supportive Housing for Individuals and Families

Permanent supportive housing links residents—who have experienced long-term homelessness and have one or more disabilities—to a range of support services designed to maintain stable housing and improve the quality of their lives.

In Columbus and Franklin County, permanent supportive housing for persons who qualify consists of nearly 800 units of housing operating within 16 different supportive housing programs, all part of a program called Rebuilding Lives. An additional 90 units of supportive housing have been planned and are in various stages of development to be completed over the next two years.

Supportive housing programs typically use a “blended management” model of housing operations and supportive service management, through which property management and service staff coordinate efforts beginning with initial unit leasing. The services offered by supportive housing providers vary depending on the needs of the residents and may include any combination of the following: case management; health care; employment services, training and job placement; recovery services and support groups; and independent living skills training, such as money management and housekeeping.

Highlights of FY2006 utilization, demographics and outcomes are presented below.

- Supportive housing **served** 542 men and 256 women.
- Both men (at \$221) and women (at \$195) averaged substantially less **monthly income** than the amount needed to rent a typical apartment in Columbus. In fact, 61 percent of the clients had no income upon intake. Only 11 percent of the clients served were working at admission into housing, with little variation between women and men.
- **Housing stability** averaged 21 months overall. The number was higher for men, at 22 months, compared to 17 months for women.
- Men and women residing in permanent supportive housing achieved **successful housing outcomes** of 87 percent and 90 percent, respectively.
- **Recidivism** was seven percent for men and six percent for women.

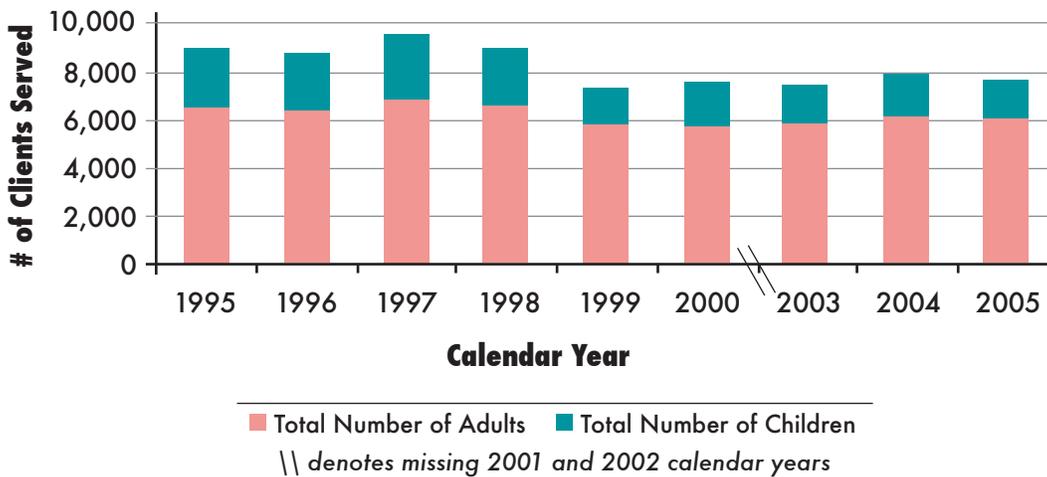


Trends

Trends over the last decade are encouraging, but are not definitive due to missing data from 2001 and 2002. Below is a summary of key indicators across the ten-year period.

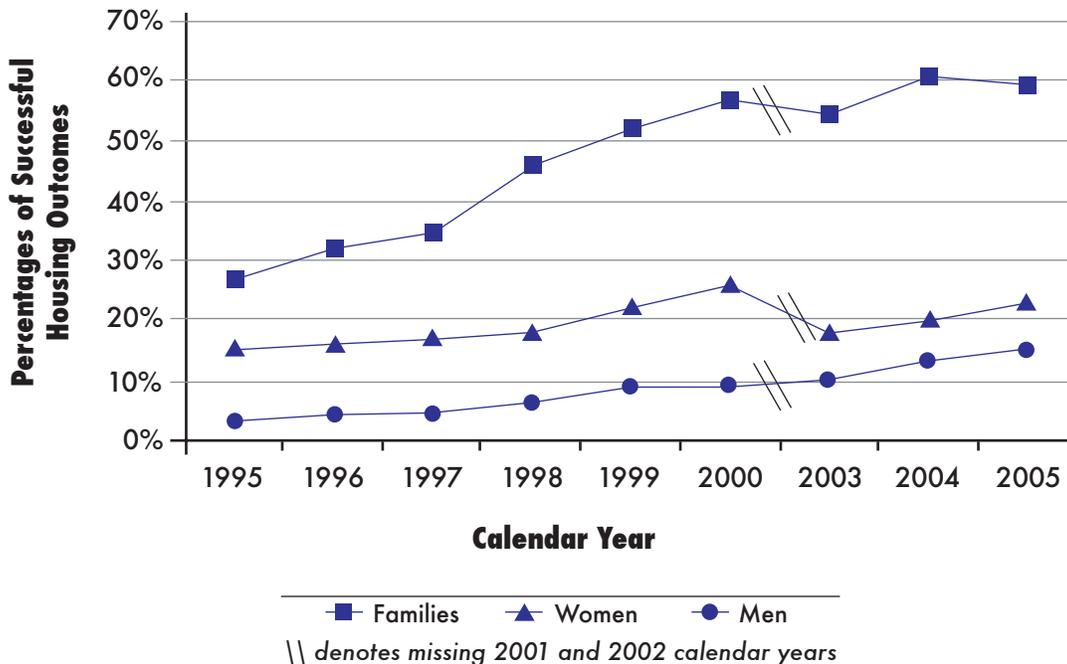
- Overall, the **demand for emergency shelter appears to have decreased**, from a high of 9,414 people sheltered in 1997 to 7,609 in 2005. Figure 1 illustrates the trend.

**Figure 1—Total Number of Clients Served in Emergency Shelter System
CY 1995–2005**



- **Declines in family shelter demand** drive this overall decline in demand. A high of 1,217 family households were sheltered in 1997 compared to 678 family households in 2005. The number of families experiencing homelessness and admitted to shelter in 2005 was only 58 percent of the number in 1995. Encouragingly, the number of children sheltered in 1995 (2,456) has decreased in 2005 (1,578).
- An area for concern is the **increase in single adult women** experiencing homelessness and accessing shelter. The number of women appears to be steadily increasing since 1995.
- The **rate of positive housing outcomes for families also more than doubled from 1995 to 2005**. (See Figure 2.) Although not as dramatic, the men's and women's shelter systems have seen an increase in percentage of successful outcomes as well. In 2005, the men's shelter system achieved a 12 percent increase in successful outcomes when compared with 1995. The women's shelter system also achieved noteworthy improvement, with an eight percent increase from 1995 to 2005.

**Figure 2—Successful Housing Outcomes by Shelter System
CY 1995–2005**



Conclusion

Overall, the demand for emergency shelter—as shown by the number of clients served—has decreased from a high of 9,414 people sheltered in calendar year 1997 to 7,609 in calendar year 2005. This is promising, but the quantity of individuals in the system persists, and our efforts to address the root causes of homelessness must continue.

Overarching conclusions from these data mirror those established in previous years, as follows:

- Homelessness is a serious problem in Columbus and Franklin County, and it affects men, women and children.
- The emergency shelter system continues to improve the services provided to those who experience homelessness.
- While there are indications of progress, such as improving housing outcomes, there are still areas in which improvement is needed.