

denver and the west

HUD rates Denver a national model for helping homeless

[By Colleen O'Connor](#)

[The Denver Post](#)

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Denver is a national model for helping the homeless get better access to mainstream services like Medicaid and food stamps, according to a study released Thursday by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

"Denver is among those places around the country that do a pretty darn good job," said HUD spokesman Brian Sullivan.

Six other cities were included in the 287-page study: Albany, N.Y.; Albuquerque; Miami-Dade County, Fla.; Norfolk, Va.; Portland, Maine; and Pittsburgh-Allegheny County, Pa.

"We wanted to study these places that do it very well, even if they experience some obstacles, and all of them are," Sullivan said. "By identifying where it's being done right, we hope we can export (the solutions) elsewhere, so others can replicate them."

The study examined how the communities responded to HUD's 2000 policy shift to emphasize providing housing over services.

But the data collection for the study was finished before the financial crash of 2008, and some of the programs lauded in the HUD study no longer exist, such as the Stout Street Mobile Medical Clinic.

This February, to help stem the loss of \$3.4 million in state funding, the van that provided care on the streets and at shelters was shut down.

"That's my only caution," said Jamie van Leeuwen, director of Denver's Road Home, about the gap between when the study was conducted and released. "We're even being cautious about the 2009 point-in-time survey because so much happened between 2007 and 2009 in terms of the economy."

The point-in-time survey counts the number of homeless on one day each year.

What has not changed, however, is the collaborative approach to the problem.

"The city has taken on significant responsibilities surrounding the elimination of homelessness while also bringing in more private service providers, including those that are faith-based, and raising a substantial amount of private funding," the report said.

A partnership with the Mile High United Way, which allowed Denver's Road Home to achieve its fundraising goal of \$46.1 million in the first four years of the plan, is also emphasized in the study.

Denver also has "prevalent" programs to make sure that homeless people receive benefits, according to the study. Among the best examples was the Benefit Acquisition and Retention Team run by the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless.

It's "one of the most successful teams" for getting homeless people access to programs such as Aid to the Needy Disabled, Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance, the report said.

"Using a total of 4.5 full-time case managers to process claims, the BART (Benefit Acquisition) team members are experts at putting together disability applications," it said.

In general, the study found that the umbrella structure of Denver's Road Home makes it "a strong mechanism for expanding, changing and smoothing access to mainstream benefits, with its ability to raise funds in the private sector, bring the provider community together, and advocate for policy changes."

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HUD RELEASES GROUNDBREAKING STUDY ON COSTS OF FIRST-TIME HOMELESSNESS FOR INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES

*Two additional studies look at life after transitional housing and access to
mainstream benefits*

WASHINGTON - When an individual or a family becomes homeless for the first time, the cost of providing them housing and services can vary widely, from \$581 a month for an individual's stay in an emergency shelter in Des Moines, Iowa to as much as \$3,530 for a family's monthly stay in emergency shelter in Washington, D.C. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development today released three studies on the cost of 'first-time' homelessness; life after transitional housing for homeless families; and strategies for improving access to mainstream benefits programs.

HUD's cost study is the most comprehensive research on the price tag associated with first-time homelessness and creates a foundation to compare the costs of various homeless interventions. Taken together, HUD's three studies released today will inform policy discussions on what are the most effective strategies for assisting homeless persons and families in the future.

"These studies expand our knowledge of the true costs of homelessness and raises other questions that go far beyond dollars and cents," said HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan. "Now we need to have a serious discussion over what strategies are not only most cost effective, but how we can help individuals and families from falling into homelessness in the first place."

HUD's study, [*Costs Associated with First-Time Homelessness for Families and Individuals*](#), examines how much it costs to house and serve nearly 9,000 individuals and families in six areas of the country. The report studies the cost of first-time homelessness among individuals in Des Moines, Iowa; Houston, Texas; and Jacksonville, Florida. In addition, the Department looked at the cost of first-time family homelessness in Washington, DC; Houston, Texas; Kalamazoo, Michigan; and a large area of upstate South Carolina.

HUD is currently investing \$1.5 billion in funding through the Recovery Act's [*Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program \(HPRP\)*](#), to prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless and help those who are experiencing homelessness to be quickly re-housed and stabilized.

This report reveals that most of those individuals and families studied experience homelessness only once or twice and use emergency shelter for a limited period of time at fairly low cost. However, HUD also found that some of these households experience longer periods of homelessness and use more expensive programs. While overnight emergency shelter for individuals have the lowest costs, these shelters offer the fewest services in the least private settings and are often open only during evening hours. By contrast, transitional housing is the most expensive model for individuals, frequently offering more privacy and a comprehensive range of on-site services.

HUD's cost study found:

- Average costs for individuals are much lower than for families, with overnight stays at an emergency shelter for individuals having the lowest daily costs;
- For individuals, transitional housing proves more expensive than permanent supportive housing largely because services for transitional housing were usually offered directly by on-site staff than by mainstream service providers;
- For families, emergency shelters are usually equally or more expensive than transitional and permanent supportive housing because family shelters often offer 24-hour access and private units;
- In the three sample areas studied, first-time homeless individuals were predominantly male averaging between 39-41 years old; and
- Female individuals had fewer stays, but used homeless programs 74 percent longer than their male counterparts.

Average Monthly Cost by Homeless Program Type

Individual Sites	Emergency Shelter	Transitional Housing	Permanent Supportive Housing
Des Moines	\$581	\$1,386	\$537
Jacksonville	\$799	\$870	\$882
Houston	\$968	\$1,654	\$966
Family Sites			
Houston	\$1,391	\$3,340	\$799
Kalamazoo	\$1,614	\$813	\$881
Upstate S.C.	\$2,269	\$1,209	\$661
Washington, DC	\$3,530	\$2,170	\$1,251

HUD also released two additional homeless studies today:

[Life after Transitional Housing for Homeless Families](#)

This study follows 195 families in 36 transitional housing programs in five communities for three, six and 12 months after leaving the program. Given the significant investment HUD makes in transitional housing programs, and in light of the program's costs mentioned above, it is important to understand the effectiveness of these programs. The five study communities were Cleveland/Cuyahoga County, Ohio; Detroit, Michigan; Houston and Harris and Benton Counties, Texas; San Diego City and County, California; and Seattle/King County, Washington. Among the study's findings:

- Participants in smaller transitional housing programs were more likely to have their own place to live after moveout and more likely to live with the same household members at the beginning and end of the follow-up year. Participants in larger programs experience higher levels of educational attainment at moveout.
- In some respects, longer stays in transitional housing produced important benefits including higher levels of educational attainment and employment and a greater likelihood of continued employment during the follow-up year. Families spending more months in transitional housing were significantly more likely to have a place of

their own for an entire year after leaving the program. – Model citi

- While transitional housing programs produced increasingly positive outcomes for families with longer stays, HUD found the number of barriers facing families did not impact outcomes. Given the significant costs associated with service-intensive transitional housing programs, HUD's report brings into question whether this housing model is the most appropriate intervention for those families who do not have significant barriers to housing.

[Strategies for Improving Homeless People's Access to Mainstream Benefits and Services](#)

HUD studied seven communities (Albany/Albany Co., NY; Albuquerque, NM; Metropolitan Denver; Miami-Dade Co., FL; Norfolk, VA; Portland, ME; and Pittsburgh/Allegheny Co., PA) to document how communities mobilized to improve homeless people's access to mainstream benefits and services in light of HUD's goal of dedicating a larger portion of HUD homeless assistance funding to housing.

Communities that experienced the greatest success had a strong central organization intent upon improving access of homeless individuals and families to mainstream service. Typically, communities were successful at reducing structural barriers to benefits, such as physical access, complexity and length of application processes, and rules for documenting eligibility. In addition, the study finds evidence that people exiting HUD-funded programs were likely to be connected to mainstream benefits at rates that exceeded national rates for 2007. These communities had the most success enrolling persons and families for food stamps and General Assistance. However, communities struggled with overcoming barriers that were beyond their control, such as eligibility requirements of programs, such as TANF and Medicaid, and capacity barriers, such as an insufficient number of slots available in mainstream treatment programs for substance abuse or mental health services.

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HUD is the nation's housing agency committed to sustaining homeownership; creating affordable housing opportunities for low-income Americans; and supporting the homeless, elderly, people with disabilities and people living with AIDS. The Department also promotes economic and community development and enforces the nation's fair housing laws. More information about HUD and its programs is available on the Internet at www.hud.gov and espanol.hud.gov.

Read more: http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_14760778#ixzz0jffTW54j