



Homeless Crisis Response System Statement of Needs-Fall 2021

Mission: The Homeless Leadership Alliance of Pinellas (HLA) strives to prevent, divert, and end homelessness in Pinellas County by providing leadership to community partners and stakeholders in the planning, implementation, and alignment of the community-wide crisis response system

Vision: The vision of the HLA is to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and a one-time experience.

There are currently 1,738 people in the crisis response system in Pinellas County - 938 are in shelter or transitional housing and 800 are unsheltered. Last fiscal year, 18,566 unduplicated residents were provided services to address or prevent homelessness.

Crisis Response System

So far this fiscal year (October 2020 - July 2021), 2,387 families and 4,962 individuals have called 211 seeking shelter services. 211 metrics show 18.3% of housing calls were from clients keeping shelter. In the past 30 days, this jumped to 25.5% of all housing calls. This equates to 633 calls in 30 days, of which almost 73% are female callers.

In the past 180 days, 38.3% of Housing calls were for low-cost housing. In the past 30 days, this has decreased to 30.3%. This negative trend shows that people are moving beyond looking for low-cost housing and are now facing homelessness. Additional investments for the crisis response system “**front door**” will be required to handle calls, assessments (VI-SPDAT, etc.), and navigation, especially now that the eviction moratorium has ended

Since October 2020, 189 families have been placed in hotels due to a lack of capacity at family shelters. Additionally, 507 individuals have been served using hotel vouchers at a total cost to the system of \$4.4 million dollars. Family congregate shelters have been at capacity the entire year. The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) currently shows 165 homeless families in Pinellas County and connected to the system of care, with 76 of those families in hotel, 45 in congregate shelter, and 44 families on the street. With only 45 family units in the County, **the need for additional family shelter continues to be a concern.**

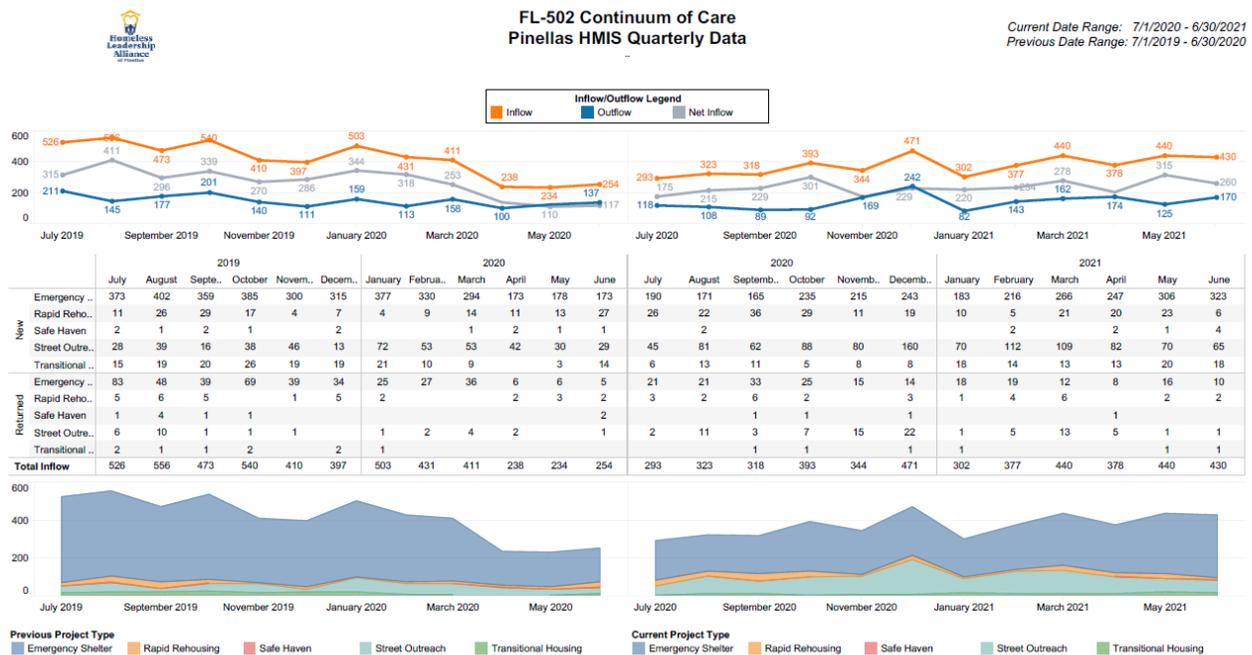
St. Vincent de Paul Family Call Line has received 74 calls just this month from families in need of shelter. HLA call volume has increased and just this week we have done work to sure up our own internal tracking system to be able to quantify the need in our community and understand if callers are simply pushing on any system door to find limited resources.

The chart below summarizes clients by type of intervention required. The 292 individuals who are being served through SSVF and are not represented in the chart below.

Population	Intervention Needed	Currently Being Served	Awaiting Services	Total	Avg. Monthly Inflow	Avg. Monthly Housed Rate
Individuals	Self-Resolution or Navigation	2	99	101		
Individuals	Rapid Rehousing	86	584	670	36	16
Individuals	Permanent Supportive Housing	11	194	205	7	2
Families	Self-Resolution or Navigation	0	1	1		
Families	Rapid Rehousing	137	31	168	21	15
Families	Permanent Supportive Housing	3	4	7	2	.5

Even with a historic level of investment in our system, at our current rate of housing individuals (if no other individuals entered the system), it would take more than 3 years to serve just those currently awaiting services. I'm sure you can agree there is nothing rapid about that rehousing rate. In **permanent supportive housing**, we are averaging a gap each month of 6.5 units, or 78 new units needed each year to meet the current level of need. The system needs to explore implementation of the **Moving On Strategy** (which requires investment in **case management**) and **Scattered Site Permanent Supportive Housing**. The recent addition of 219 Emergency Housing Vouchers from HUD is a significant opportunity, but without **case management services** and **housing navigation**, the impact will be limited.

The following chart shows current and pre-pandemic system inflow and outflow. Our system's average inflow decreased from 267 households in 2019-2020 to 239 households in 2020-2021. These numbers show the historic national investments in poverty reduction (through stimulus payments, child tax credits, additional SNAP benefits, etc.) have had a significant impact on individuals and families in our community. However, the average time from enrollment in Rapid Re-housing to housing move-in date has dramatically increased. Pre-pandemic, this took around 50-60 days. Currently, it takes an average of 100+ days.



During the special Funder's Council meeting on July 16, it was noted that while there is some support for Rapid Re-housing through CDBG-CV and ESG-CV, there continues to be a need for additional **case management services** to more rapidly rehouse both individuals and families, as well as other wrap around services and **housing navigation**. Follow ups with clients who previously received ERA or other rental assistance, shows continued financial instability which indicates a need for **short term housing stabilization case management and workforce training and development**. Other items of note from this discussion, include the need for **dispatchable non-jurisdictional street outreach** and **housing navigation for seniors** who are being priced out of their current living situation. While the system usually has more than enough beds for individuals, emergency shelters have reduced capacity due to the current surge of the Delta variant and multiple shelters have had to stop intakes all together. Creative solutions for **reconfiguring spaces in congregate shelter and bathroom amenities** that can provide for social distancing and other mitigation measures will also require investment.

Crisis Response System Summary of Investments Needed:

- **Family Shelter or More Non-Congregate Shelter Alternatives**
 - Consider pulling in code enforcement or a real estate professional to help identify eligible properties

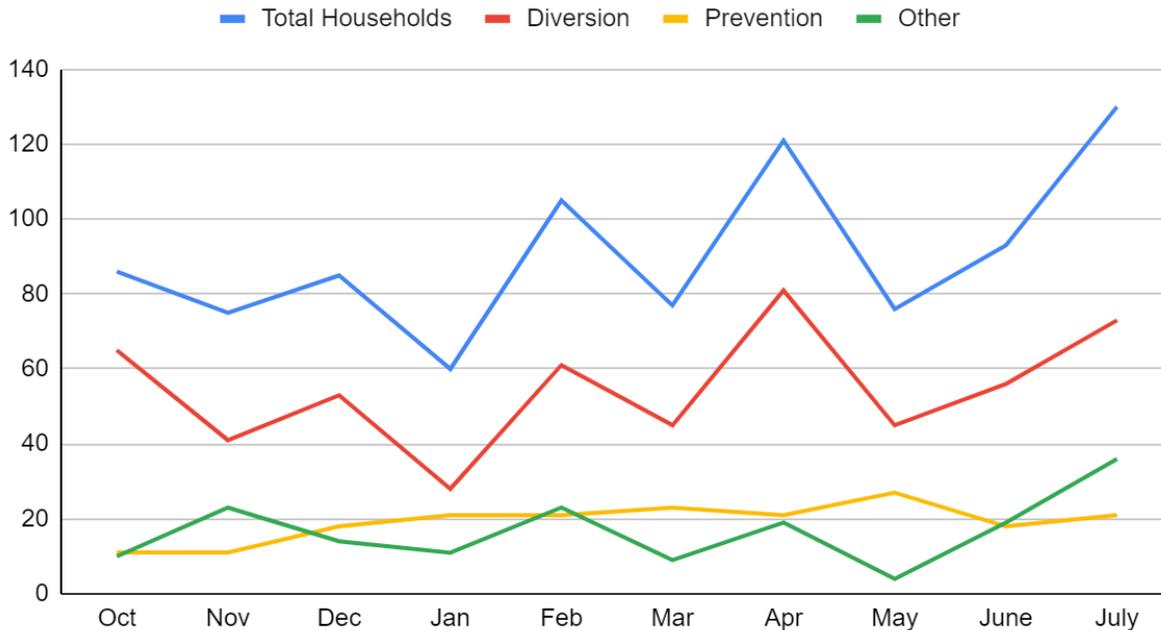
- **Additional Case Management for Moving On, RRH, and Prevention (Housing Stabilization Case Management)**
- **Front Door Resources: Hotline, Assessment Needs, Dispatchable Street Outreach, and Navigation**
- **Housing Navigators**
- **Workforce Training and Development**
- **Rehabilitation Funds for Mitigation Strategies at Congregate Facilities**
- **Allow for Hazard Pay & Incentives to Recruit/Retain Staff**

Prevention & Diversion

Homelessness Prevention programs aim to keep people in their current housing situations by providing services and financial assistance. Diversion addresses the needs of people at the point when they are seeking shelter. Effective diversion helps the individual or family stay housed where they currently reside or helps them identify immediate alternate housing arrangements. When necessary, diversion may help by connecting household with services, mediation, and/or financial assistance to keep them from entering the homeless system. Thanks to both national and local investments, we believe effective and efficient Homelessness Prevention and diversion programs are one reason that net inflow to the system has decreased. This investment strategy should continue in future years as it is less costly to provide these early interventions than it would cost to rehouse them. In addition to the negative mental and physical impacts of eviction, it costs the homeless services system an **average of \$6,500 to rehouse** someone compared to an average cost of **\$3,300 per household for eviction prevention services**.

Since October 2020, more than 30,000 calls requesting adult emergency financial assistance have been received by 211. The National Equity Atlas shows that Pinellas is amongst the top 10 counties in the state for number of households behind on rent at 13,410 households owing more than \$43.76 million dollars. The average amount of rent debt owed by household is \$3,330. The Pinellas court system has a backlog of 5,300 nearly completed evictions. When the moratorium expires, tenants will be served with writs that give them just twenty-four hours to vacate their homes and the backlog will be cleared all at once. Twenty-four hours is hardly sufficient time to find alternative housing. In Pinellas County, households need an average of 96 days to relocate. And since there are only 28 available and affordable units for every 100 low-income families, many will be forced to seek help. Last fiscal year, 820 households were provided with Homelessness Prevention & diversion services through HLA Diversion Specialists. So far, this fiscal year (October 1, 2020-August 17, 2021), Homelessness prevention and diversion services have been provided to 975 households. This is almost 20% increase from the previous year. In addition, 144 households have been assisted by housing navigators to find new housing prior to eviction when their landlord is unwilling to mediate with legal aid organizations.

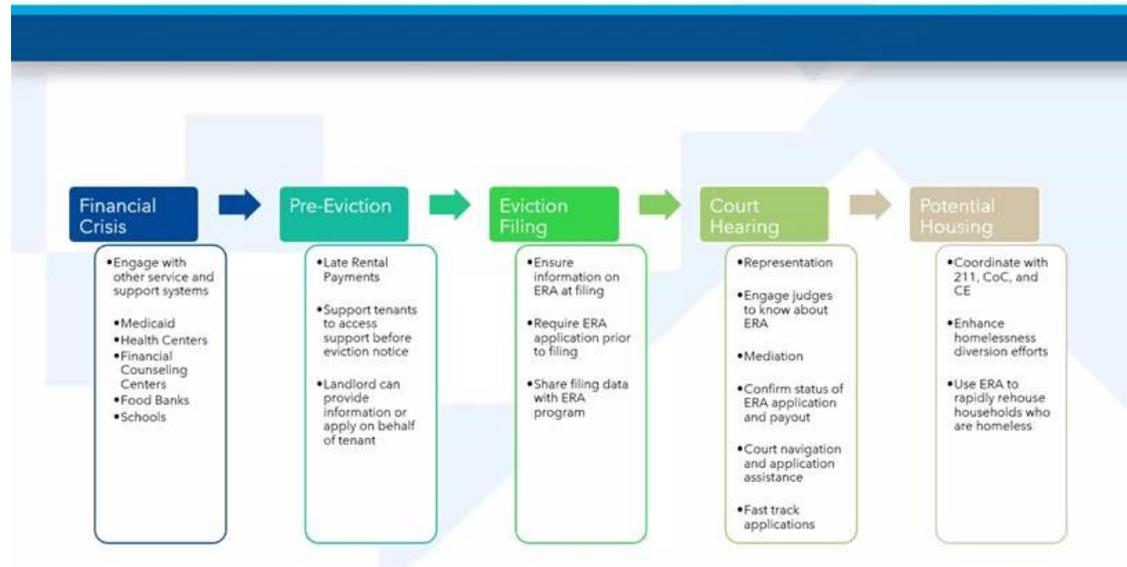
Prevention and Diversion - October 1, 2020 to July 31, 2021



During the special Funder's Council meeting on July 16, much discussion was given to ways to enhance household protections and increase emergency housing assistance. There was also significant discussion on ways to increase accessibility to the programs already available as well as targeting the most vulnerable areas to ensure equitable access to resources. **Funding for rent and utilities** needs to continue as well as **unrestricted landlord funds** that allow for incentives and other enhanced deposits to help tenants overcome past evictions and criminal histories. Continued **legal mediation services** are essential to keep people from coming into the crisis response system and **legislative action** at the county or municipal level is needed to **strengthen protections for people displaced through redevelopment**. Hosting **expungement clinics** for criminal history and evictions as well providing **rental unit rehabilitation funds** may also be important investments. Rehab funds will prevent current affordable units from being sold or any further deterioration. If the system sees the projected influx of households now that the moratorium has lifted, the homeless workflow should be altered to consider all households being screened for diversion and prevention to keep them accessing more costly limited resources. This will require additional investments in **diversion**, not only in staffing but also in **flexible funds for rapid solutions like groceries and bus tickets**. Other discussions included the need for **database system upgrades** to enhance inter-agency coordination and **supportive services like childcare, transportation, and mental health services**.

The slide below from the National Low Income Housing Coalition summarizes other process recommendations that can also enhance our prevention/diversion efforts.

Ensure Multiple Streamlined Ways for Assistance



Prevention/Diversion Summary of Investments Needed:

- **Funding for Rent and Utilities**
- **Legislative Protections**
- **Rehabilitation Funds for Rental Units**
- **Diversion Services-Staffing and Flexible Funds**
- **Legal Mediation Services**
- **Expungement Clinics & Other Legal Services**
- **Database System Upgrades for System Coordination**
- **Supportive Services**
- **Unrestricted Landlord Funds**
- **Expedite payments to Providers for reimbursement**
 - This was identified as one barrier to getting funds/services to those in our community quickly b/c Providers are not able cashflow large sums of client assistance without timely reimbursement

Affordable Housing

There is a significant need for additional affordable housing resources in our community, but historically there has been scarce public resources to address these competing needs. In the United States, there is a shortage of 7 million rental homes available and affordable to extremely low-income renter households. The solution to this problem is increasing capital investments and rental assistance programs and subsidies. In Pinellas County alone, there are 86,000 units needed for households making 0-50% AMI. Recent data from the Shimberg Center

for Housing shows that more than 50% of renters in Pinellas are cost-burdened (61,383) and 23.5% of owners are cost-burdened (63,910). Creating more affordable housing can prevent these cost-burdened families from falling into homelessness when medical or financial issues arise. Funders agree that the most significant investment needed in our community to address homelessness is access to affordable housing and **longer-term subsidies** that keep rents affordable. A variety of strategies will need to be deployed in this area. The entire County should meet, rather than municipalities planning independently, to consider how to leverage ARPA funds to meet our current. Current investments using CDBG-CV do not include **acquisition of property or units** and should be considered in future conversations.

Affordable Housing Summary of Investments Needed:

- **Land Acquisition**
- **Property/Unit Acquisition-See Funder Council Slides on 8/27/21 for ideas working in other communities**
- **Land Trusts**
- **Long Term Subsidies**
- **Streamlining Regulatory Processes for Affordable Housing County Wide**

Income/Wages/Jobs

The unemployment rate in Pinellas County is currently 4.9%, compared to 3% in January 2020. That means 25,201 individuals are unable to earn income to help pay their housing costs. As of June 27, 2021, employment rates in the bottom wage quartile dropped 28.2% when compared to January 2020. This data shows that low wage workers and those in the hospitality and service industry may no longer be willing to accept low pay considering COVID-19 risk exposure. In comparison, Tampa, which has historically less hospitality and service industry employment, this decrease is only 6.7%. In our recent racial disparity study, client after client mentioned that housing without a job was not meeting their needs. Many stated that the current workforce development programs are also not meeting their needs. Clients indicate they need programs who can meet them where they are at and understand their unique needs and challenges. The CoC is piloting this approach using ESG-CV funds for Rapid Rehousing Clients and is using an assessment to determine if clients need connection to **SOAR** for long term SSI and SSDI benefits, help finding a job, and/or increasing their skill set to obtain a higher paying job. If we are going to solve the root cause of homelessness we must focus our efforts on **equitable economic development, job training**, and using **flexible funds to help clients pursue certifications** and other trainings that can lift them out of poverty. Since 1960, rent has risen 60% while wages have only increased by 6%. Additional **advocacy around livable wages** is needed in our community as well.

Income/Jobs Summary of Investments Needed:

- **Job Training**
- **Equitable Economic Development Strategies**
- **Flexible Funds for Certifications**
- **SOAR Staffing/Resources**
- **Advocacy for Livable Wages**