Not Alone

Keeping families together and singles safe.

Four shelters for single adults and four shelters for families with children provide not only food and a place to sleep, but also services to help people begin to address some of the issues that contributed to their homelessness. Often lack of employment, underemployment, the absence of job skills, mental illness, limited income, substance abuse, prior time in institutions and bad credit make finding permanent housing extremely challenging. Ultimately, the lack of affordable and appropriate housing is the reason why all of the shelters in our community are always full to capacity.

On the next page are the number of people served in the emergency homeless shelters in FY 2010 in the Fairfax-Falls Church community. On any given day there is space for 54 families and 144 individuals.

Although there is quite a bit of turnover in the shelters, very few leave the shelter and move into permanent housing due to lack of affordable housing options. Instead, possible outcomes may include:

- **Temporary housing**
  (emergency shelters, hotels or motels, staying with family and friends on a temporary basis)
- **Transitional housing**
  (any transitional housing program)
- **Institutional settings**
  (foster care, hospital, jail or substance abuse treatment facility)
- **Other places**
  (places not meant for habitation, or a person may be deceased)
- **Unknown destinations**
  (a person did not report where she or he moved)

Ultimately, the lack of affordable and appropriate housing is the reason why all of the shelters in our community are always full to capacity.

"My kids have never had a place to call home before now. It felt funny to say 'home' at first. I say it a lot now..."

Shelters for Families

546 people served exited the shelters.
280 of them moved into permanent housing.

Shelters for Single Adults

696 people served exited the shelters.
131 of them moved into permanent housing.

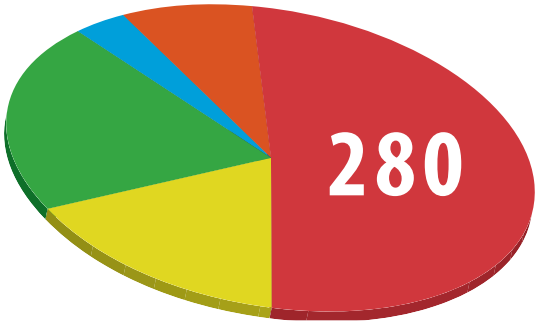
Number of people served: 780

- 226 families: 313 adults, 467 children.
- Average length of stay was 111 days.

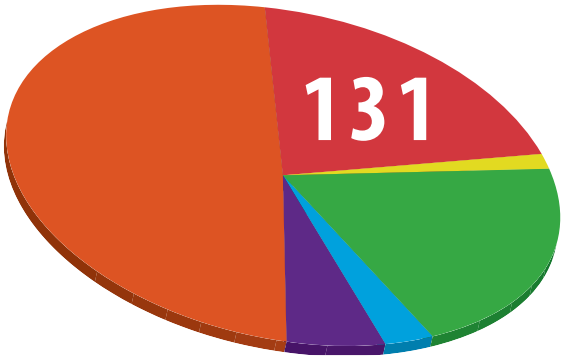
Number of adults served: 819

- Average length of stay was 52 days.

Exit destinations: Where did they go?



280	Permanent Housing	131
88	Transitional Housing	9
114	Temporary Housing	132
19	Other	19
0	Institutional Settings	38
45	Unknown	316

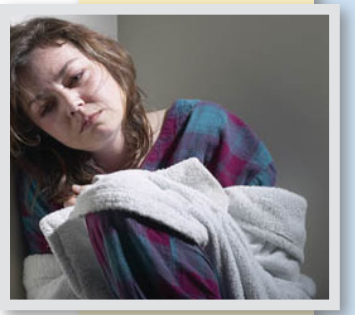


Success Story

A county resident was laid off earlier this year, but a month later he secured new employment. Shortly after, he was laid off again. As a result, he and his wife were evicted from their apartment. The day of their initial eviction they reached out to Fairfax County Coordinated Services Planning (CSP) and were assigned to a caseworker at the Katherine K. Hanley Family Shelter. She arranged a place for them to stay within 24 hours. With the guidance and resources provided by the caseworker, this family was able to find a home of their own.

Survivors of Domestic Violence

Overcoming domestic violence.



Two shelters and four transitional housing programs in the Fairfax-Falls Church area are dedicated to meeting the housing needs of survivors of domestic violence. However, many survivors end up in emergency shelters and transitional programs that are not designed to meet their unique needs. Even more survivors return to their abusers for reasons including an inability to access the shelter and housing they need.

Survivors of domestic violence often face a different set of barriers to overcoming homelessness than others who experience homelessness. For example, survivors of domestic violence often have physical injuries, such as permanent scars from physical violence, ulcers, high blood pressure, flashbacks, self-mutilation, drug and alcohol abuse, sexually transmitted diseases and psychological injuries including panic attacks, depression, phobias, denial, helplessness and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The number of people served in domestic violence shelters and domestic violence transitional housing (right) may seem low for a community of over 1 million people, but that reflects the limited space in domestic violence shelters and domestic violence transitional housing. Many survivors never get the housing support they need.

There is one domestic violence emergency shelter bed for every 31,000 Fairfax County residents — far fewer than other neighboring jurisdictions.

Programs for survivors of domestic violence do not have the capacity to serve the large number of people fleeing domestic violence.

Survivors of Domestic Violence

Number of people served: 522

- Total of 228 households: 231 adults and 291 children.
- 381 people were in domestic violence shelters.
- 141 people were in domestic violence transitional housing programs.
- 95 percent of people who participate in transitional housing programs for domestic violence survivors exited to safe and stable permanent housing.

These statistics include only those people who were served in programs designated specifically for survivors of domestic violence and may not be unduplicated numbers. These programs do not participate in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) for reasons of safety and confidentiality.

Helping youth who are homeless.

Youth who are homeless are often invisible in the Fairfax-Falls Church community. Yet there are youth (people under 18 or under 22 and still in school) in our community who do not have a permanent place to live, or a parent or a guardian who lives with them. Many drop out of school and are forced to take on adult responsibilities at a very tender age. In one of the wealthiest counties in the nation, is it okay for even one young person not to have a safe and stable place to call home?

The federal government's legal definition of homelessness, based on the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act, is anyone who is lacking a regular, fixed and adequate nighttime residence (sub-standard housing); sharing housing due to economic struggles (double-up); living in a shelter, hotel or motel; living in a public place not designed for sleeping (cars, parks); is an unaccompanied youth, a child or youth awaiting foster care placement; is a child or youth abandoned in a hospital; or is a migrant child who qualifies under any of the above.

The Fairfax-Falls Church community has three specialized programs for unaccompanied homeless youth (youth who are not living with a parent or a guardian):

- An eight-bed emergency shelter provides crisis shelter for up to three weeks for youth ages 13-17. Most youth return to their family or a relative once they complete the program.
- The Homeless Youth Initiative for ages 16-22 who are homeless and still in high school provides transitional housing assistance and other supports so that the youth can finish school without entering the shelter system.
- Assisting Young Mothers is an 18-month transitional housing program for ages 16-21 who are pregnant or have small children. The program provides housing and services to help these mothers become self-sufficient members of the community.

This past year, all of the 64 students enrolled in the Homeless Youth Initiative (HYI) program graduated high school. This is one of the three programs for unaccompanied youth. A total of 13 students were actually housed in the HYI program. A total of 11 out of the 13 went on to higher education after high school graduation.

As a community we are concerned about causes of youth becoming homeless in the Fairfax-Falls Church community. We will be exploring over the next year possible actions and additional solutions to build upon efforts currently being directed to this challenging issue.

Unaccompanied Youth

Number of youth served: 351 in the 2010-11 school year

- During the 2010-11 school year, 351 young people were identified by the Fairfax County Public School's Homeless Liaison's office as experiencing homelessness without a parent or a guardian.
- A total of 232 youth participated in one of the community's three specialized programs for unaccompanied homeless youth. Of those participating youth, 202 exited the programs during the year with 172 youth (85 percent) moving into permanent housing.

These statistics include only those people served in programs designated specifically for unaccompanied youth. The youth who are served in homeless programs with an adult are reported in the appropriate category.

Transitions

On the way to permanent housing.

Transitional housing programs provide a period of time – up to two years – for families and individuals to address issues that create barriers to moving into permanent housing. Services focus on specific issues, such as domestic violence, language barriers, lack of education or job skills, poor credit, substance abuse recovery or establishing a stable living environment for a person with serious mental illness.

More than 200 families (with nearly 500 children) and 100 single individuals in our community participated in transitional housing programs this past year, and 82 percent moved on to permanent housing. In the future, our community will look at how to use these more intensive programs to help those who can most benefit from time-limited intensive services, while providing ongoing support for those with long-term disabilities, and rapidly moving to permanent housing those able to achieve stability with less intensive support.

Although transitional housing is, by design, not a permanent place to call home, it is necessary for those in this community who face such high barriers to housing that transitional housing is the most appropriate option. Hundreds of people every year are assisted to become self-sufficient because of the high-intensity services available through transitional housing.

The 10-Year Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness identified a need to increase the supply of permanent supported housing for families who have highly disabled adults with histories of chronic homelessness and child welfare involvement. Responding to this need, in FY 2011 we transferred a 20-unit transitional program for families to a permanent housing program for persons with disabilities through the Reaching Independence through Support and Education (RISE).

82 percent of the people exiting transitional housing in FY 2011 moved to permanent housing.

People who participate in transitional housing programs are usually struggling with barriers to self-sufficiency, such as lack of employment or education, disability, limited English proficiency or poor credit.

Number of People Served: 859

355 people served exited the programs; 292 of them moved into permanent housing.

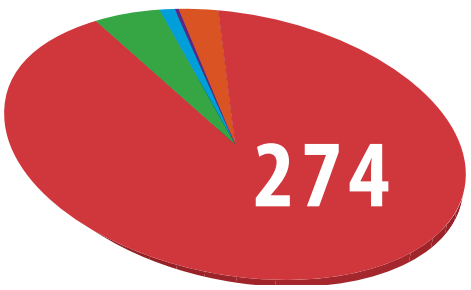
People in families: 751

- 213 families: 279 adults and 472 children.
- Average length of stay in transitional housing was 563 days.

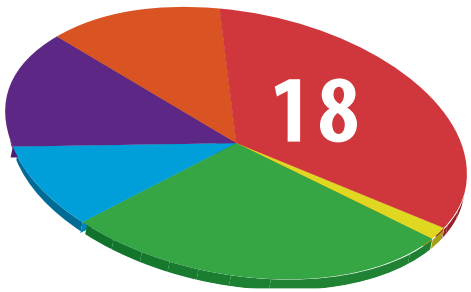
Single adults: 108

- Average length of stay in transitional housing was 281 days.

Exit destinations: Where did they go?



274	Permanent Housing	18
0	Transitional Housing	1
15	Temporary Housing	15
3	Other	5
1	Institutional Settings	8
8	Unknown	7



Success Story

A working grandmother unexpectedly gained custody of her grandson after her daughter died. Her expenses increased to the extent that she was no longer able to pay the rent on time for her basement apartment. She contacted Coordinated Services Planning and received financial assistance to pay her back rent, preventing eviction. In addition, the grandmother and her young grandson were assisted in finding an affordable rental unit. They moved into their new home this month. She also was referred to the Ways to Work program and is buying a car with assistance. Having a reliable car will help her get to her part-time job more conveniently and also allow her to spend more time with her grandson.

Support at Home

Receiving support in your own home.

Permanent supportive housing provides long-term residential support and services. People served in these programs are no longer homeless, but require ongoing support to prevent them from falling back into homelessness. Most are single individuals with serious mental illness or co-occurring disorders. Making sure that they stay housed as long as possible is a priority. Although more than 400 people were served in permanent supportive housing last year, hundreds more wait for their chance to call someplace home.

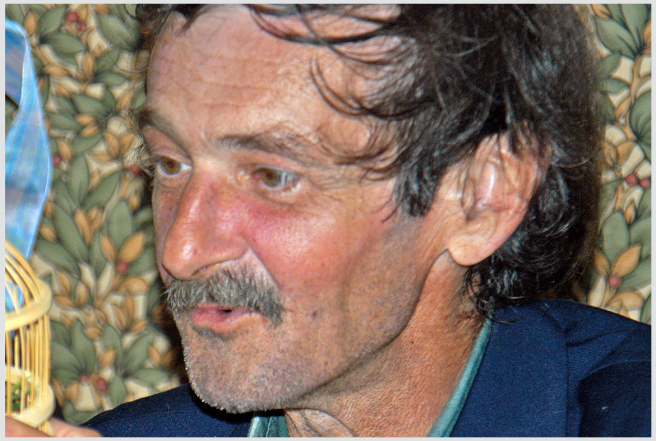
The 10-Year Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness identified a need to increase the supply of permanent supported housing for families of adults with disabilities and histories of chronic homelessness and child welfare involvement. Responding to this need, county agencies and nonprofit partners involved in administering a 20-unit transitional program for families agreed to convert the existing RISE transitional housing program to a permanent housing program for persons with disabilities.

This group met over several months to design new program eligibility and operating procedures, and asked the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for permission to replace the existing two-year transitional program with a permanent housing program. HUD approved the conversion and during the year, as existing two-year families graduated from the program, they were replaced with families who needed more intensive long-term stabilization and supportive services.

Success Story

Like numerous military veterans, Henry became homeless after a series of traumatic events. In 2004 he began living in a makeshift camp in the woods while working part-time jobs and keeping in touch with family. Henry would come to Reston Interfaith's Embry Rucker Community Shelter (ERCS) to have a meal, shower, wash clothes and receive medical care once a week. ERCS outreach staff who visited Henry at his camp site offered opportunities to stay at the shelter, but he resisted. Eventually, due to increasingly serious health issues, he accepted assistance to locate housing. In collaboration with the Community Services Board, ERCS staff helped Henry obtain disability benefits and secure a housing voucher that went toward the rental of a one-bedroom apartment.

For the first time in years, Henry has been able to sleep on his own mattress. He says that it has taken him little time to adjust to living indoors and having a bed to sleep. Most of all, he wants to share his story so other unsheltered homeless people will be encouraged to ask for help.



Families and individuals who enter permanent supportive housing programs often face some of the most challenging barriers to self-sufficiency. Making sure that our community provides this type of housing with supports plays a major role in our effort to end homelessness.

Number of People Served: 401

People in families: 99

- 27 families: 35 adults and 64 children.

Single adults: 302

Success Story

A real estate owner and builder made a special gift to Homestretch that will go a long way to helping families who are homeless. He rented 10 apartments to Homestretch for only $300 a month to house families who are homeless. Each of these apartments would be between $1,800 and $3,200 on the market — $300 a month will just cover his costs. This special donation means that Homestretch can rent apartments at such a low rate, they can increase their capacity at a minimal cost and house more families who are homeless. For example, to rent a three-bedroom apartment for a homeless family at market rate, approximately $1,300 a month, costs Homestretch $15,600 a year; 10 of these apartments would be $156,000 (not including utilities and maintenance). This donor's generosity means that Homestretch will be able to rent one apartment for only $3,600 a year; 10 apartments would only cost Homestretch $36,000. The savings to Homestretch are momentous.