Sustainable Housing

Sustainable Housing is safe, stable, and accessible living accommodations that all individuals and families—including those at risk of homelessness, persons with disabilities, older adults, and individuals in the local workforce—can afford along with other basic necessities. Factors which Fairfax County addresses that determine the ability of individuals and/or families to be housed include: financial stability; literacy; accessibility modifications; housing options which meet the economic capacity of individuals and families as well as physical, behavioral and cognitive needs; access to safe and stable accommodations with resources that promote housing permanency; and housing which complies with fair housing laws.

GOALS:

- ***Increase safe, affordable, and accessible housing***
- ***Prevent and end homelessness***

Why Does This Matter?

The high cost of living in Fairfax County makes it difficult for very low income households to obtain and remain in stable housing conditions. Illness, job loss, and other factors may lead individuals and families into a downward spiral that may result in the loss of housing. Many people who become homeless could have remained in their homes and returned to self-sufficiency with some limited assistance. Prevention efforts seek to intervene sooner and mitigate the damage that homelessness causes. The majority of people without homes in our community are children and working families. Additionally, households with disabilities are more likely to live in segregated and more costly settings such as nursing facilities, residential placements and group homes which limit personal choice, self-determination and community participation.

From 2003 to 2014, the median market value of owned homes in the county increased by nearly 46% (from $307,630 to $447,541) and the average monthly rent paid for a unit in a rental housing complex increased by 40% (from $1,168 to $1,640). A generally accepted definition of affordability is for a household to pay no more than 30 percent of its annual income on housing. Families who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care.

What is happening in our county? — Representative Indicators of Fairfax County

Population Indicator	Baseline	2014	Most Recent
# of people experiencing homelessness in the Fairfax-Falls Church area*	**1,350** (2013)	**1,225** (2014) **1,204** (2015)	**1,059** (2016)
% of households spending 30% or more of income on housing**	**24%** owners (2012) 62,892 / 262,050	**23%** owners (2014) 60,223 / 263,530	**23%** owners (2015) 60,076 / 263,100
	45% renters (2012) 58,343 / 129,651	**44%** renters (2014) 56,530 / 127,949	**43%** renters (2015) 55,195 / 129,722

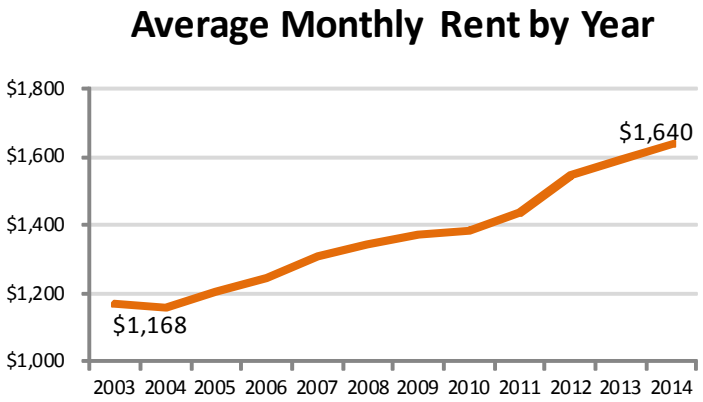
Source: *2016 Point-in-Time Count **U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

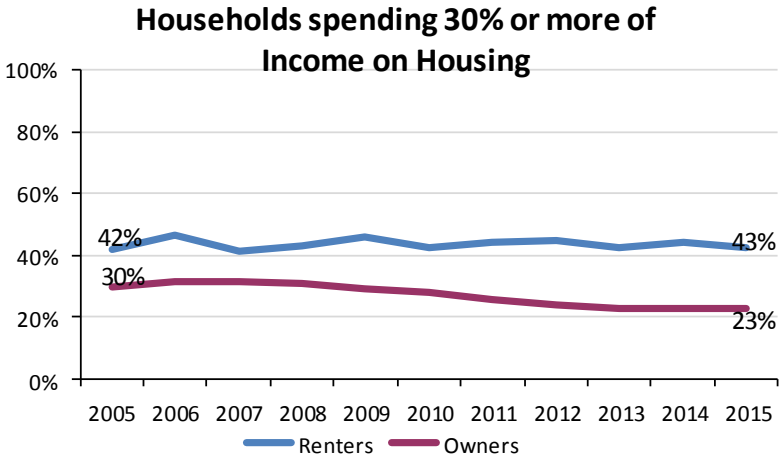
Sustainable Housing

What is happening in our county?

The cost of rental housing in Fairfax County increased 40% between 2003 and 2014. *(Source: Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services)*

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition's *Out of Reach 2015* report, the **annual income needed in FY 2014 to afford a two-bedroom fair-market rent in Fairfax County was $58,320**, well above the means of thousands of Fairfax County residents to afford. Between 2005 and 2014, the number of subsidized rental units increased from 4,696 to 10,779 units. This represents an increase in subsidized units from 7.3% of all available rental units in 2005 to 15% in 2014. *(Source: Rental Housing Complex Analysis, Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services)*

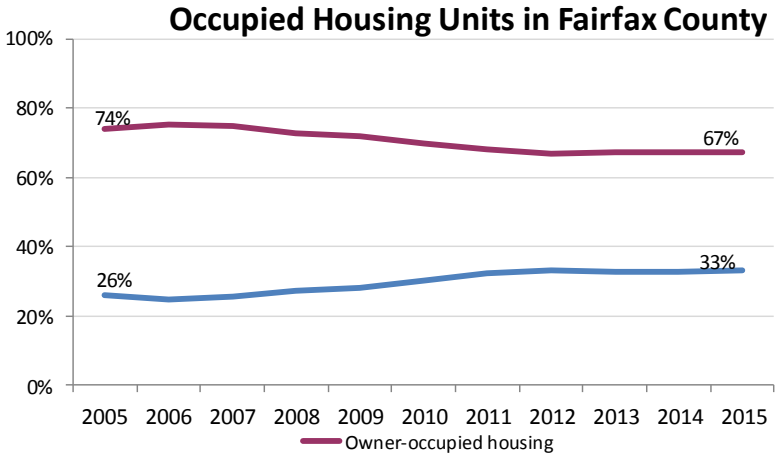




While the number of owner households which are cost burdened has dropped, the rate of renter households which are cost burdened has remained fairly stable.

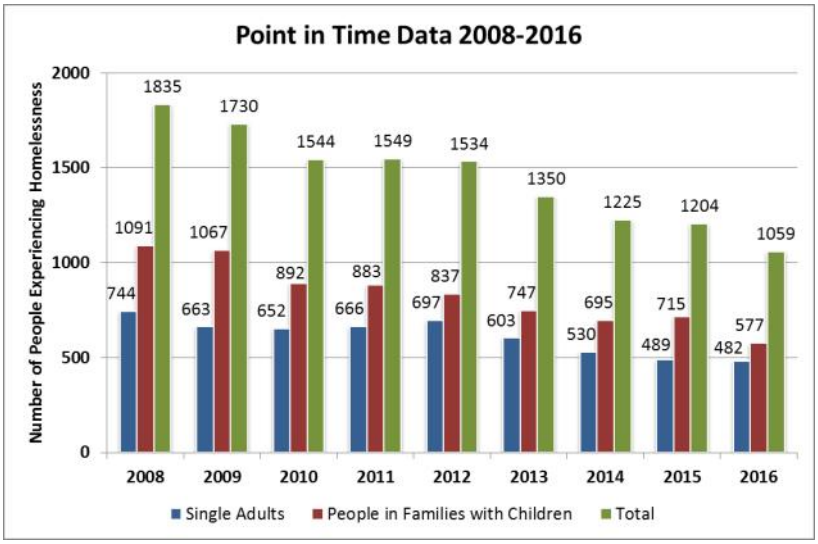
The 2015 American Community Survey estimated 43% of renter households in the county are "housing cost burdened" or spend 30% or more of household income on housing.

In 2015, Fairfax County had 403,934 occupied housing units, of which 67% were owner-occupied and 33% were renter-occupied . **The proportion of renter-occupied units has increased and the proportion of owner-occupied units has decreased in the county since 2005.** *(Source: Demographic Reports 2014, Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey)*



Sustainable Housing

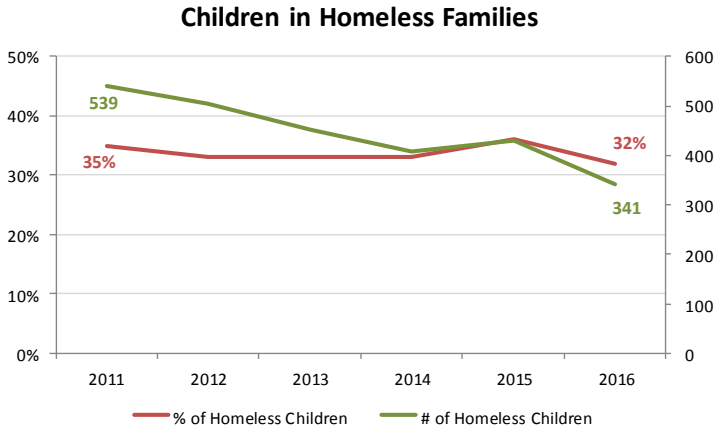
What is happening in our county?

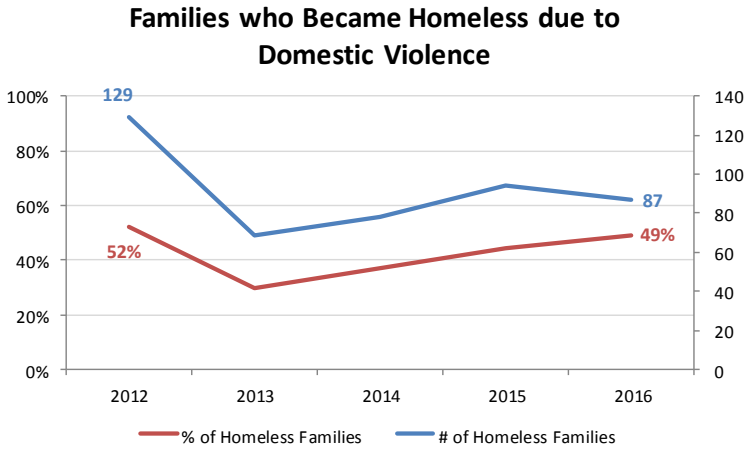


The annual Point-in-Time Count of People Experiencing Homelessness in the Fairfax-Falls Church Community covers people who are literally homeless – those who are in shelters, in transitional housing or unsheltered living on the street.

The homeless population **decreased by 42%** from 2008 to 2016. *(Source: Office to End and Prevent Homelessness, Fairfax County, Point-in-Time Count of People Experiencing Homelessness)*

Individuals in families accounted for 54% of all literally homeless persons counted in 2016. Of those, **32%, or 341** were **children 18 years of age or younger.** *(Source: Office to End and Prevent Homelessness, Fairfax County, Point-in-Time Count of People Experiencing Homelessness)*

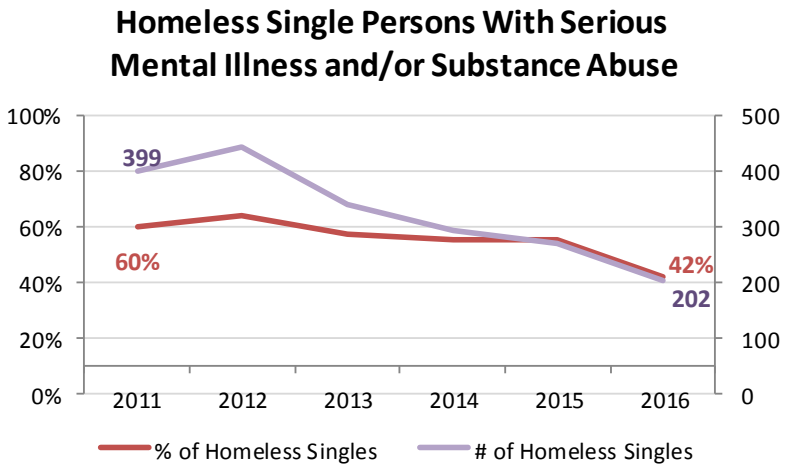




In 2016, 49% of families (or 87 families) reported they became homeless due to domestic violence. *(Source: Office to End and Prevent Homelessness, Fairfax County, Point-in-Time Count of People Experiencing Homelessness)*

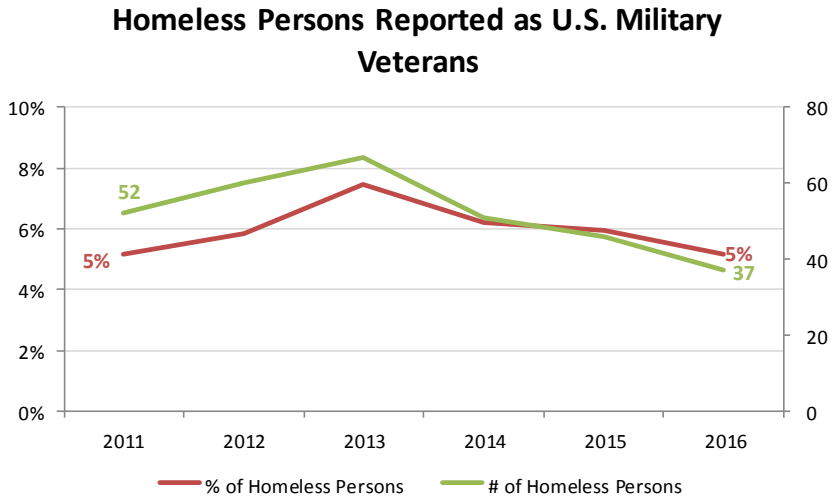
What is happening in our county?

In 2016, **single individuals represented 46%** of the total number of persons counted as literally homeless. Of these homeless single individuals, approximately **42% suffered from serious mental illness and/or substance abuse,** a 13% decrease from 2015. Many of these individuals had chronic health problems and/or physical disabilities as well. (*Source: Office to End and Prevent Homelessness, Fairfax County, Point-in-Time Count of People Experiencing Homelessness)*



In 2016, there were **37 homeless persons** in Fairfax County who **reported Veteran status** which represents 5% of all single individuals and adults in families. *(Source: Office to End and Prevent Homelessness, Fairfax County, Point-in -Time Count of People Experiencing Homelessness)*

Veteran status is not a protected class under fair housing laws. However, veterans with disabilities or perceived disabilities (e.g., PTSD) do have options under fair housing laws.



Safe, Affordable, and Accessible Housing

Goal: Increase safe, affordable, and accessible housing

Sustainable Housing

How are we doing?

Sustainable Housing involves a range of housing options which not only supports the health and human services system but also comprises a critical part of the county's economic infrastructure. Availability of housing opportunities for those who seek to live and work in the county promotes the economic success of Fairfax County.

The health and human services system serves the most vulnerable residents who face substantial economic challenges and find themselves either homeless or at-risk of being homeless. Financial stability can be one key component in acquiring and sustaining housing that is affordable, particularly for individuals and families with extremely low-income or individuals with disabilities.

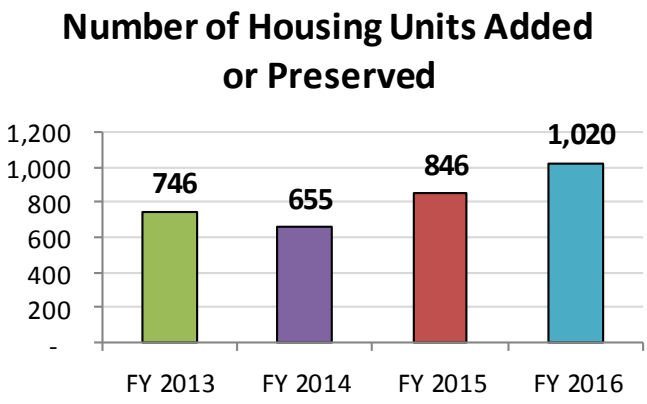
The Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (FCRHA) and the Department of Housing and Community Development (via non-profit partners) operate four principal affordable housing programs: the federal Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher programs, the Fairfax County Rental Program and Bridging Affordability. The average household income served in these programs in FY 2014 was $24,273 which meets the federal definition of "extremely low income."

System Indicator	Baseline	Most Recent
# of housing units added or preserved*	**746** (FY 2013)	**1,020** (FY 2016)

Source: *Fairfax County Health and Human Services System Data

Fairfax County is committed to increasing the availability of affordable housing as outlined in the Fairfax County Housing Blueprint. A total of 1,020 housing units were added or preserved in FY 2016. FY 2015 was the first year workforce dwelling units produced were included in this indicator so data from FY 2013 and FY 2014 are not comparable.

The affordable housing gap (i.e., needed supply to meet existing demand) for low- and moderate-income renters is approximately 31,630 units. For low- and moderate-income owners, the gap is approximately 27,900 units. These estimated figures were produced by the Virginia Tech Center for Housing Research for FCRHA's 2016-2020 Five-year Consolidated Plan.



How are we doing? (continued)

Local and federal funds made available to affordable housing developers through the FCRHA have contributed to performance for this indicator. However, the county lacks sufficient funding to build, preserve, and rehabilitate housing that is affordable for homeless and low-income individuals as well as individuals with disabilities. The local contribution to financing affordable housing has decreased since the Penny for Affordable Housing Fund was cut in half. Additionally, Federal HOME Investment Partnerships Program funding to support acquisition, construction and rehabilitation of multifamily and special needs housing is rapidly depleting.

New approaches to Request For Proposals for capital and project based subsidies have provided greater opportunities to leverage tax credit equity and other funding sources. However, there has been a lack of real estate tax relief available to nonprofit developers of affordable housing for extremely low income populations.

While Fairfax County's zoning policies have historically promoted addition and preservation of housing units (e.g., Affordable Dwelling Unit and Workforce Dwelling Unit programs), there is a shortage of land zoned at densities that would promote the development of more affordable unit types. Current zoning ordinance language limits the development of affordable dwelling units because some building types are not covered based on current development patterns. Lack of community support for innovative approaches to land use and additional density including residential studio units and other non-traditional dwelling types constrains Fairfax County's ability to provide a range of housing options.

Partnerships with developers have been critical in enabling progress for this indicator. Strong non-profit and for-profit affordable housing developers work in this region. Creative approaches to public-private partnerships have allowed redevelopment of county- and FCRHA- owned properties to increase density of affordable units.

Housing programs are designed to address a variety of needs along a continuum of available housing options which range from providing shelter for homeless individuals and families to fostering homeownership. The Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (FCRHA) and the Department of Housing and Community Development (via non-profit partners) operate four principal affordable housing programs: the federal Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher programs and the Fairfax County Rental and Bridging Affordability programs. Approximately 2,800 clients are currently housed by Public Housing, 9,500 clients by Housing Choice Voucher, and 5,600 by Fairfax County Rental Programs.

The FCRHA's designation as a HUD Moving to Work agency is dramatically altering the way affordable housing is delivered in Fairfax County. The creation of the THRIVE (Total Housing Reinvention for Individual Success, Vital Services, and Economic Empowerment) Housing Continuum, which links Bridging Affordability, Housing Choice Voucher, Public Housing and Fairfax County Rental Programs, is expected to focus county and community resources to help move clients through the housing continuum to achieve their highest degree of self-sufficiency (i.e., not relying on housing subsidies or supports).

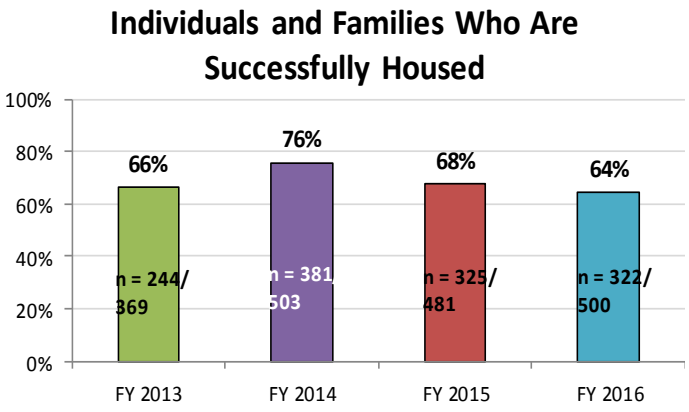
The Bridging Affordability program provides stable housing to and coordinated services for persons at risk of homelessness, persons with extremely low incomes, and persons with disabilities. In FY 2015, this program housed 75 additional homeless individuals and families and individuals with disabilities. As individuals and families transition out of programs along the housing continuum, those spaces become available to serve other clients.

How are we doing? (continued)

System Indicator	Baseline	Most Recent
% of individuals and families who are successfully housed*	**66%** (FY 2013) 244 / 369	**64%** (FY 2016) 322 / 500

Source: *Fairfax County Health and Human Services System Data

In FY 2016, 64% of individuals and families served by Fairfax County were successfully housed. Factors that contributed to system performance include the expansion of the stock of affordable units through below-market-rate units made available by the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority and efforts to increase the availability of Workforce Dwelling Units and Affordable Dwelling Units. In addition, the system began to target funding sources and locally funded investments in rental assistance programs to specific populations. Preferences in the Housing Choice Voucher and Public Housing programs were established to assist veterans, individuals who are homeless, and other vulnerable populations.



External factors challenge the county's ability to help households obtain and sustain housing. For example, it is difficult to find units with rents that are within the limits ("caps") on federal and local rent subsidies. Escalating rents, low vacancy rates, and lack of turnover in public housing programs make it hard to rapidly re-house homeless individuals and families. Rapid Rehousing is an approach which rapidly connects individuals and families to assistance including permanent housing, limited financial assistance and targeted support services.

Other factors which have restricted system performance include the lack of accessible units and constraints in converting available units for households with disabilities. The system's housing locator services are limited to households that are homeless and additional housing locator services are needed to find appropriate and affordable housing for households with individuals with disabilities. There is a scarcity of landlords willing to serve households with poor credit histories and large debt. This scarcity coupled with limited financial literacy programs for this population impact the county's performance on this indicator.

Numerous barriers to renting exist for persons with criminal records as well as refugee and asylum-seeking families with children. A limited number of landlords allow rentals by persons with criminal records. Landlords who allow government agencies and nonprofits to lease units often require corporate leases that prohibit occupancy by anyone with a criminal background.

Voucher holders may face discrimination when searching for housing as private sector housing providers are not required to accept vouchers. Among the limited number of landlords who accept vouchers, many require a minimum income in addition to a voucher, making it difficult for some individuals to secure housing. Source of income (e.g., Housing Choice Vouchers, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Temporary Assistance for Needed Families, unemployment insurance, or veteran's benefits) is not a protected class in Virginia under fair housing laws.

The Fairfax County Health and Human Services System also monitors children and youth and their living environments. This information can be referenced in the Connected Individuals section of the report card.

Homelessness Prevention

Goal: Prevent and end homelessness

Sustainable Housing

How are we doing?

Residents who experience challenges in securing housing due to the high cost of housing in Fairfax County may become homeless or live at risk of homelessness. As an illustration, per the 2015 Out of Reach Report, a resident earning the minimum hourly wage ($7.25) would need to work 131 hours per week to afford renting a one-bedroom apartment or 155 hours for a two-bedroom unit. The annual income needed to afford a one-bedroom fair market rent apartment is estimated at $49,200 and for a two-bedroom unit the estimated annual income is $58,320.

A 2015 Analysis of Fair Market Rent Rental Complex Costs in Fairfax County highlights the affordability problem for many residents. Housing that is affordable is less available to individuals with disabilities who have a disproportionately lower rate of workforce participation and higher poverty rate compared to individuals without a disability and thus have fewer funds to dedicate to housing.

The Fairfax County Housing Blueprint targets the use of existing resources (e.g., Housing Choice and Family Unification Vouchers) as well as newly created resources (e.g., the locally-funded Bridging Affordability Program) towards the goal of ending homelessness. It is estimated that at the end of FY 2016, 1,618 units will be needed to meet the ten-year goal of 2,650 units of permanent housing for homeless individuals and families.

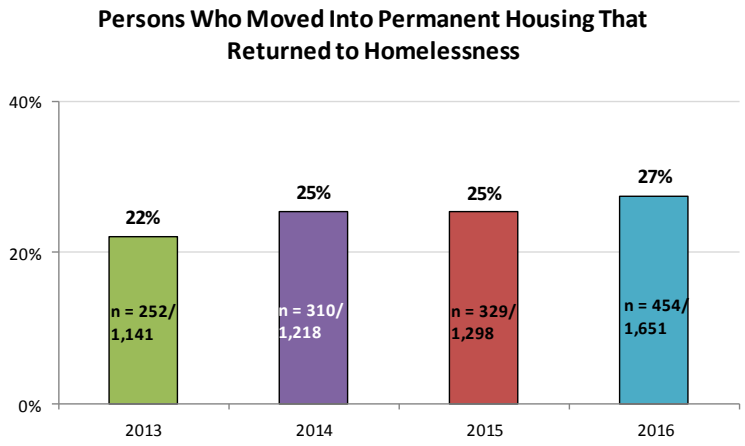
Based on data from the Homeless Management Information System, emergency shelters for families with children have improved efficiency significantly since 2010. The average length of stay in family shelters has decreased 27% from 93 days in FY 2010 to only 68 days in FY 2014. However, the number of people served in the family shelters has increased to 1,137 or 42% since 2010. Similarly, emergency shelters for single adults have improved efficiency since 2010. The average length of stay in single adult shelters has decreased 40% from 66 days in FY 2010 to only 40 days in FY 2014. However, the number of people served in the single adult shelters increased to 978 or 24% since 2010. In FY 2014, the number of people exiting emergency shelter to permanent destinations increased to 970 or 183% since 2010.

System Indicator	Baseline	Most Recent
% of persons that moved into permanent housing that returned to homelessness *	**22%** (FFY 2013) 252 / 1,141	**27%** (FFY 2016) 454 / 1,651

Source: *Fairfax County Health and Human Services System Data

This system indicator shows that 27% of persons served by homeless programs in Fairfax County during Federal Fiscal Year 2016 returned to homelessness within two years. A number of factors contributed to and restricted performance for this indicator.

How are we doing? (continued)



Among the factors that contribute to system performance is the Housing First approach which helps to assess and triage people in housing emergencies. The approach places homeless persons in permanent housing first, along with time-limited financial assistance and targeted supportive services, instead of placing them into shelters. The Housing Locator Network, which consists of personnel tasked to increase housing options for homeless individuals, is a critical component in the effectiveness of this approach.

The alignment of various local, state, and federal resources and goals to achieve consistent outcomes (including resources such as the Emergency Solutions Grants), support homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing services provided by community partners. Partners from nonprofit organizations, the faith-based community, businesses and others have joined in a concerted effort to reduce homelessness and increase housing stability. Assistance includes an array of support services provided by community partners to address barriers encountered by homeless individuals and families and assist them in obtaining and maintaining housing. Predominant among the barriers faced by individuals are extremely low incomes, poor credit and rental history, ongoing mental health and/or substance abuse issues, and limited employability.

Factors which restrict system performance include a lack of affordable housing units coupled with limits ("caps") on federal rent subsidies that do not reflect the true cost of housing in Fairfax County. Additionally, some landlords and condo associations are unwilling to enter into leases with government and nonprofit agencies that serve the homeless population. Other landlords have restrictive leasing policies that make it challenging for government and nonprofit agencies to lease. Finally, the Housing Locator services are limited to households that currently receive homeless services and do not include the majority of individuals at risk of becoming homeless.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development is currently updating the methodology used to calculate households who obtain and retain housing. Data for this indicator will be updated based on new methodology in 2016. At that time, it may be possible to include the number of households that became homeless for the first time and the number of households that returned to homelessness.

Sustainable Housing

Programs and Services Contributing to the Goals

Safe, Affordable, and Accessible Housing

Successfully Housed Indicator:

- Fairfax County Rental Program
- Family Unification Program Referral Placements
- Housing and Economic Support Services
- Housing Choice Voucher and Homeless Preference Referral Placements
- Public Housing
- First-Time Homebuyers Program (not included as of FY 2016)

Homelessness Prevention

- Includes programs in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

Other Programs, Services, and Activities Supporting the Goals

Homelessness Prevention

- Alternative House
- Shelter House's Community Case Management
- Continuum of Care
- Consolidated Community Funding Pool

Sustainable Housing

Our strategies to increase safe, affordable, and accessible housing

- **Partner with private landlords to increase acceptance of housing subsidies**
  - ⇒ **Has been selected for initial implementation**
  - ⇒ **Focuses on expansion of successful private housing options by...**
    - **a. Establishing a toolbox of financial and other incentives to recruit, retain, and expand the network of satisfied private landlords**
    - **b. Providing training and marketing support to engage property owners**
    - **c. Creating a consolidated portal for use by housing locators**
  - ⇒ **Enhances cross-system efforts to provide safe, affordable, and accessible housing**

Additional ongoing efforts in the health and human services system seek to strengthen inclusionary zoning rules by educating local leaders and members of the community about the financial and social issues/benefits of mixed incomes and accessible development.

Additionally, in FY 2017, the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (FCRHA) will implement the re-opening of the Housing Choice Voucher wait list, closed since March 2007 due to the large volume of applicant families on the list. After careful research and vetting of approaches, an equitable lottery process was identified as the best method to be used. In FY 2015, 9,327 persons were housed with Housing Choice Vouchers. While the opportunity to increase safe, affordable, and accessible housing through Housing Choice Vouchers is dependent upon the allocation of vouchers from HUD (the current allocation is 3,868 vouchers), the successful distribution of subsidies to those groups most in need and the ongoing examination of policies regarding utilization of housing subsidies will be high priorities to enable the FCRHA to maintain or exceed its outstanding voucher funding utilization rate of 98% attained in FY 2015.

Our strategies to prevent and end homelessness

- Develop and implement a more coordinated system-wide strategy to facilitate transitions to Permanent Accessible Supportive Housing units
- Effectively implement coordinated homelessness prevention strategies which may include:
  - a. Identifying and streamlining all funding mechanisms used for prevention services within and outside of the Continuum of Care
  - b. Establishing target population of HUD's definition of those at imminent risk of literal homelessness

Our strategies related to all Sustainable Housing goals

- Support the plan to identify a reoccurring source of sustainable funding which can be reinvested into projects in order to preserve housing affordability and produce new affordable and accessible housing units (relates to the Strategic Plan to Facilitate the Economic Success of Fairfax County)
- Fund and develop safe, accessible and affordable small rental units

Sustainable Housing

Terms and Methodology

Baseline: Term refers to data for "year zero" and will be used as a comparison point for future performance.

Composite: Term refers to a single data point which represents various programs and services contributing to outcomes. Percentages on report card are composites and these are calculated by a) summing all individuals who are better off as a result of participating in contributing programs or receiving services – this sum is the numerator; b) summing the total number of individuals who participate in all contributing programs or receive services – this sum is the denominator; and c) dividing numerator by denominator; i.e., composite (%) = numerator ÷ denominator.

Rounding: Figures presented as percentages are in most cases rounded to the nearest whole number percentage. Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to 100%.

The system indicators included reflect a representative sampling of persons served by health and human services within county administered programs. Based on existing system indicator outcomes, health and human services appraises the overall system performance in attaining the desired goal utilizing the classifications below:

LEGEND:

An opportunity to celebrate the significant progress made in moving toward achievement of the desired result.

An opportunity to continue to improve upon the progress made toward achievement; this reflects less progress than the opportunity to celebrate; however, positive movement has been made.

An opportunity to improve, reflecting the need for the community and Fairfax County Health and Human Services System to address the desired result more effectively.