



Response to Questions on the 2016 LOBs

Request By: Supervisor Cook

Relevant LOB(s): LOBs #156, #158

Question: Provide an update on the number of chronically homeless individuals and the barriers they face.

Response:

According to the annual Point in Time report conducted by the Fairfax-Falls Church Partnership to Prevent and End Homelessness, the number of individuals reported as chronically homeless has decreased from 402 people in 2008 to 203 people in 2015, a reduction of nearly 50 percent. The most recent count was January 27, 2016 and the results will be available in early spring 2016. Two of the most significant reasons for Fairfax County's success in reducing the number of chronically homeless individuals is the adoption of the "Housing First" approach and investment in research-tested interventions, such as permanent supportive housing, as established in the Ten Year Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness that was adopted by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in 2008.

Chronically homeless individuals by definition must have "a diagnosable substance use disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability, posttraumatic stress disorder, cognitive impairments resulting from a brain injury, or chronic physical illness or disability." Naturally such disabilities pose severe barriers to housing stability as they limit an individual's ability to be employed and earn sufficient income to afford even the most modest housing in the community.

The federal definition of "chronically homeless" provides a way to prioritize people with the longest histories of homelessness and most severe needs. The definition was recently updated by the federal government to mean:

"A homeless individual with a disability who lives either in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter, or in an institutional care facility if the individual has been living in the facility for fewer than 90 days and had been living in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter immediately before entering the institutional care facility. In order to meet the "chronically homeless" definition, the individual also must have been living as described above continuously for at least 12 months, or on at least four separate occasions in the last 3 years, where the combined occasions total a length of time of at least 12 months. Each period separating the occasions must include at least 7 nights of living in a situation other than a place not meant for human habitation, in an emergency shelter, or in a safe haven."



“Chronically homeless families are families with adult heads of household who meet the definition of a chronically homeless individual. If there is no adult in the family, the family would still be considered chronically homeless if a minor head of household meets all the criteria of a chronically homeless individual. A chronically homeless family includes those whose composition has fluctuated while the head of household has been homeless.”