



Pathways Home Colorado

Ensuring all Coloradans have a place to call home

Governor John W. Hickenlooper

State of Colorado



"When I walk in the door and actually have the key and walk in, it's going to be fun it's going to be so fun and relaxing."

"If I stood around and held up a cardboard sign and said, 'Hey, me and my son are homeless, feed us,' I wouldn't get nowhere. It wouldn't show him anything"

"I did all the legwork...All they did was give me the tools."

"I was in the shelter and I just started remembering when my daughters were little girls...You know, the smells of cooking, the joy. I felt so lonely."

"The loneliness, the isolation, the wonder...the wondering of what's going to happen tomorrow and finding something to eat, staying warm. There's just so much involved in being out there."

"I could find temporary work, but not enough to pay monthly rent...When the registration stickers on my car expired, my car was towed. I never saw it again. I couldn't afford a cell-phone anymore. You feel so cut off from the world without a phone, a car or a home."

"I'll never forget...I got a little bottle of lotion. I opened it up, and I smelled it—and it was the most beautiful fragrance I had ever smelled. And I remember crying, because it lifted my spirits so."

"I don't like telling people where I'm staying, but what else can I say? I've got to tell the truth."



Dedicated to
the hope that future generations will not experience homelessness

Special Acknowledgements to following partners:

Colorado Department of Local Affairs – Division of Housing

Members of the Housing and Homeless Collaborative

Denver Foundation, Piton Foundation, Anschutz Foundation, Don and Lynn Burnes Family Foundation, Mile High United Way, Marcus Foundation, Bloom Foundation,

Serve Colorado

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Photo of Adjutant General Edwards courtesy of the **Colorado Department of Military and Veterans Affairs**

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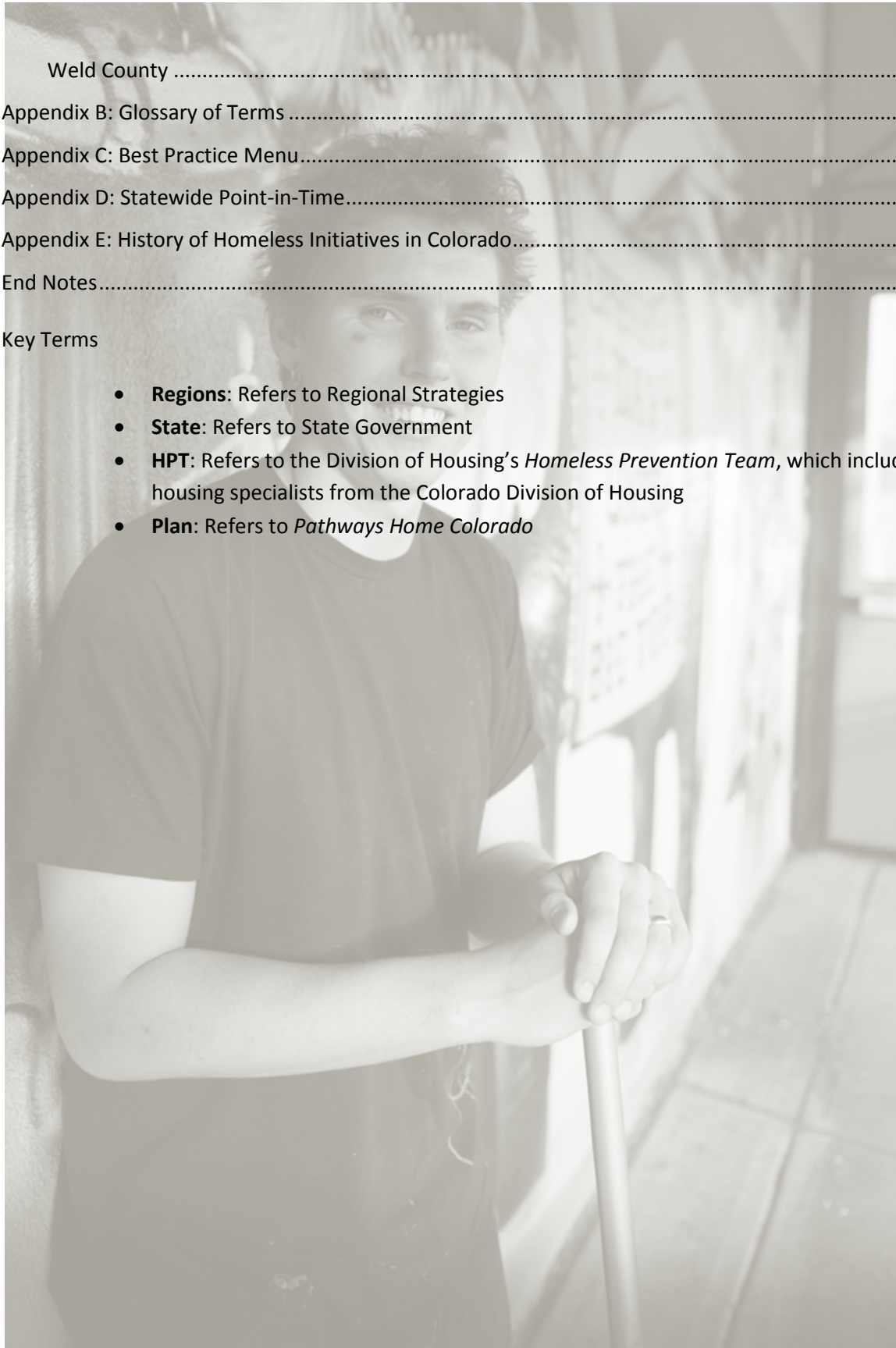
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Key Terms

- **Regions:** Refers to Regional Strategies
- **State:** Refers to State Government
- **HPT:** Refers to the Division of Housing’s *Homeless Prevention Team*, which includes housing specialists from the Colorado Division of Housing
- **Plan:** Refers to *Pathways Home Colorado*



Letter from Governor John Hickenlooper

April 2012

My Fellow Coloradans,

All Coloradans should have a place to call home—our children, our Veterans, our families, our neighbors. For that reason, Colorado endeavors to end all forms of homelessness by 2020.

Why? Being deliberate in how we prevent and end homelessness is not only the right thing to do, but the smart thing to do. Experiences across the country and in Colorado tell us that homelessness takes an economic toll on our citizens, our cities, our businesses, and our communities. We also know that developing housing creates jobs and can be an economic driver in our communities. Housing is essential to support the very fabric of our communities and the future of our state's health. As I mentioned in the State of State, no Coloradan should have to pick between rent, groceries, or medicine.



What have we learned? Communities across Colorado and our country are learning that through collaborative partnerships, effective policies, prioritized resources, and engaged political leadership, we can prevent and end homelessness. Our administration is committed to becoming a better partner with communities across the state in our effort to eradicate homelessness in Colorado. We will accomplish this by addressing ineffective government policies, strengthening collaborative efforts, and replicating what we know works.

How are we going to do this? As *Pathways Home Colorado* suggests, we will begin our work in state government by reviewing the policies and practices that inhibit our citizens from rising out of homelessness, or contribute to their falling into homelessness. We also will work with communities to assess the scope of homelessness and barriers to housing and services. Recognizing that additional resources are difficult to come by, we are committed to working with our business, faith, individual, and foundation partners to ensure that we direct resources to projects that have proven success in addressing homelessness. One Congregation—One Family (OCOF) is an example of a project with proven success. Through OCOF we are working in partnership with faith communities across our state to mentor families who are experiencing homelessness.

We are going to be **bold**, **innovative**, and **collaborative** to make the necessary changes to build a stronger Colorado. Difficult times call for efficient, effective, and elegant solutions. Homelessness is not an insurmountable challenge. We need many to walk with us to ensure that every Coloradan has a place to call home.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Hickenlooper". The signature is fluid and cursive.

John Hickenlooper—Governor

Executive Summary

Our intent is to take homeless policy from the old idea of funding programs that serve homeless people endlessly and invest in results that actually end homelessness.

Phillip Mangano, Former Executive Director of the USICH from Malcolm Gladwell's [Million-Dollar Murray](#)

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness in 2010 released *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*. *Opening Doors* envisions a time where “no one should experience homelessness—no one should be without a safe, stable place to call home.” By encouraging states and localities to create their own strategies, *Opening Doors* positions the Federal Government to work as a partner to address homelessness in our communities.

Many states have recognized that preventing and ending homelessness is not just a national issue. As of 2012, 26 states and the District of Columbia have adopted ten-year plans to address homelessness. We, in Colorado, have learned that in order to be strategic at the state level, we need to approach this work with the collaborative partnerships, effective policies, prioritized resources, and engaged political leadership.

Collaborative partnerships reflect strategic efforts to build effective working relationships among housing providers, human service agencies as well as other community partners and resources.

Effective policies mean aligning practices and resources that prevent and eliminate homelessness. Some policies and practices can become part of the problem, versus being a part of the solution.

Prioritized resources reach the most in need to prevent and end homelessness. Communities are faced with limited resources which creates a culture of competition. By prioritizing available resources, some communities may discover efficient and effective solutions to some of the causes which contribute to homelessness.

And finally, **engaged political leadership** has the ability to convene government, non-profits, faith communities, civic groups, businesses, and individuals to work together toward community priorities and cost-effective solutions. It is imperative in this time of competing concerns and limited resources that communities work to engage local elected officials and community leaders to inspire communities toward a collective solution in addressing the causes of homelessness.

The Governor's Office has worked over the past year to understand the scope of local and regional efforts as well as assess how state government can become a stronger partner with localities. These efforts have included:

- Recommendations from the *University of Denver* student project to develop state approach;
- Research and community dialogue through two *AmeriCorps VISTA* members;
- Formation of the *Homeless Prevention Team* at *Colorado Division of Housing*;
- Bus tour in Fall 2011 meeting with over 150 individuals from over 20 different communities; and

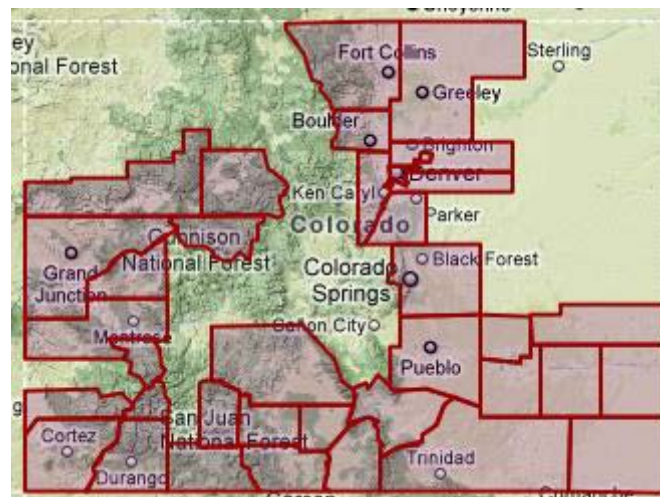
- Interviews with local and national experts working to address homelessness.

While much has already been accomplished around Colorado prior to development of this plan the State can be an effective advocate, partner, and investor in the sustainable futures of Coloradans. *Pathways Home Colorado* will promote regional collaborative efforts to address homelessness. Through broader geographic efforts, regional initiatives will promote:

- Cost efficiencies;
- Encourage sharing of resources and information;
- Promote collaborative partnerships to reduce duplication;
- Build political will and regional priorities;
- Innovative approaches to local needs and issues; and
- Understanding of mobility of specific homeless and at-risk populations, addressing problems statewide instead of locally.

Through these efforts the following areas (see Figure 1) are highlighted for their local initiatives and identified issues. These regions represent 93.7% of our total population, and involve 59.3% of the square mileage. Each of these regions is at a different point in the planning spectrum—some have completed 10-year plans, while others are beginning to bring partners together to determine how to strategically work together. Many have showed us that collaborative partnerships, effective policies, prioritized resources, and engaged political leadership are the ingredients necessary to successfully eradicate homelessness.

Figure 1



The recent downturn in the economy has impacted communities across the country and Colorado with higher housing foreclosure rates, lower rental vacancies with higher rents, increasing unemployment, and shrinking resources to assist those in need. Many who find themselves homeless are struggling with untreated mental health issues as well as past traumas. Others have fallen into homelessness through the vicious cycle of substance abuse and addiction which has contributed to 'burning bridges' with family members and other support systems. Some are on the edge of becoming homeless due to living

in uninhabitable mobile homes or homes without running water or electricity. Others are faced with inadequate employment or lack of affordable housing. Families and individuals fall into situations of crisis when there is a lack of opportunities for skilled labor. Others, still, may be living in a temporary setting to escape violence, abuse and/or trauma. Homelessness, housing instability, as well as limited and inaccessible services, affects our **Veterans, families with children, youth, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and those whom experience chronic homelessness**. Furthermore, the needs of each population are significant, diverse, and specific.

Communities around Colorado have worked to create accurate and timely assessments of the scope of homelessness in Colorado. Either through the Point-in-Time (PIT) survey or Community Solutions' Vulnerability Index (VI), our communities have continued to determine those who are currently, or at risk of becoming, homeless. But we still struggle to have clear and reliable numbers for all populations. Additionally, despite the successes in our local communities, statewide and regional homeless prevention strategies in Colorado have been fragmented and under-resourced.

We are called upon as a state to organize ourselves, collaborate, and direct our limited resources to efficiently, effectively, and elegantly serve our neighbors in need. Not only is it the right and humane thing to do, but it is also the smart thing to do. We must keep our communities connected; build capacity to increase our opportunities; be innovative to address unique needs across the spectrum; as well as create sustainable housing solutions for our neighbors in need. As we do this, we must *clarify state government's role in addressing homelessness*.

The work we do is about helping people find their own path towards a home. This means whether we are working with runaway or homeless youth; individuals struggling with mental illness and/or substance addictions; families; seniors; Veterans; domestic violence survivors; the chronically homeless; persons with disabilities; the unemployed; or the person that met "the perfect storm," the solution is always the same: access to housing and human services. Having a place to call home is one of the most basic necessities in life.

Our Vision All Coloradans have a place to call home.

In the coming years, we will strive to accomplish the following goals:

- Encourage six regional strategies via a coordinated state plan by January 2013;
- Create housing and accessible services for homeless Veterans by January 2015; and
- Create housing and accessible services for homeless youth and families, the chronically homeless, and other populations by January 2020.

How will we do this? In the coming years, state government and our partners will:

- ***Build capacity by:***

<i>Addressing state policies/practices which contribute to homelessness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify state policies and practices which contribute to homelessness • Develop action plan to address identified policies
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<i>Deploying measurable strategies to address homelessness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement <i>Colorado Counts</i> in six regions • Support strategic collaborations in six regions to prevent and address homelessness
<i>Improving data systems and evaluation measures</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to establish quality indicators for Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) • Assist in the formation of a statewide HMIS group • Develop provider and consumer feedback mechanisms to assess and improve data collection efforts

- **Create solutions by:**

<i>Identifying most in need</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support <i>Colorado Counts</i> in six regions to house and resource most in need • Assist in development in six regional approaches to create efficiencies and innovative practices to address most in need
<i>Increasing housing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support development of family host home model across the state to serve 100 homeless youth in 2012 • Provide homeless prevention assistance to 24,000 people in 2012 through HUD Emergency Solutions Grants • Increase shelter beds in 2012 by 200 • Increase transitional beds in 2012 by 250 • Increase housing for 300 homeless Veterans in 2012 • Increase permanent supportive housing units in 2012 by 640
<i>Streamlining entitlement benefit acquisition efforts</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist 300 individuals in 2012 with disability benefits through the Colorado SOAR Project • Streamline access for 100 Veterans to needed benefits in 2012
<i>Replicating best practice models to support regional priorities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand <i>One Congregation—One Family</i> into six communities in 2012 • Support Bridging the Gap initiative in 2012 to serve 150 foster youth currently housed by Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers • Expand <i>Next Steps Program</i> in 2012 for families model to one new community

The State can be an effective advocate, leader, and investor in the sustainable futures of Coloradans. The following are 2012 initiatives that are creating this sustainable future now:

- *Colorado Counts* is a statewide initiative between communities, governments, and the Office of Governor John Hickenlooper, that strives to develop regional collaborations to address

homelessness. By joining the *100,000 Homes Campaigns*, *Colorado Counts* will actively seek out those who are, or at risk of becoming, homeless to understand their health, housing, and economic needs. *Colorado Counts* will assess needs of the chronically homeless as well as youth, families and Veterans experiencing homelessness. The intention is to connect the most vulnerable to needed services to end their cycle of homelessness and reliance upon emergency services.

- The Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Division of Housing has set aside \$100 million in Private Activity Bonds to finance over 800 units of permanent housing for persons with disabilities and homeless Veterans.
- The Colorado SOAR (SSI/SSDI, Outreach, Access and Recovery) Project is a collaboration funded by the Colorado Health Foundation to expedite Social Security disability benefits for persons with disabilities who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.
- The One Congregation—One Family initiative allows area congregations to support and mentor homeless families and seniors into a stable, self-sufficient lifestyle by providing budgeting, parenting and emotional support.
- The *Next Step Program* partners eight government and social service agencies in Mesa County to house families with school-aged children experiencing homelessness in order to improve academic success and help families get access to intensive support services.
- Mile High United Way's *Bridging the Gap* model provides youth exiting the foster care system opportunities and experiences to build skills in order to successfully transition from foster care and prevent homelessness.
- Efforts to address homelessness among Veterans include:
 - *Colorado Counts* identifies the most vulnerable Veterans in six regions;
 - Collaborative efforts to increase access to VA and SSA benefits;
 - Assignment of 270 *Housing and Urban Development and Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing* vouchers allocated in 2012 to the most vulnerable;
 - Encouraging communities to collaborate with *Colorado Veterans Trust Fund* grantees to address and prevent Veteran homelessness;
 - Assisting communities in streamlining access to services for Veterans in need; and
 - Establishing a treatment program for Veterans experiencing homelessness at Fort Lyon.

Pathways Home Colorado will promote a dynamic process to strengthen the State's role in supporting regional and local efforts to prevent and eradicate homelessness in Colorado. The Plan builds on existing momentum and creates a forum for evaluating outcomes and developing new policies and programs aimed at providing stable, affordable, and appropriate housing. By understanding the diversity of its homeless and at-risk populations, creating efficiencies, building capacity, increasing the affordable housing stock, coordinating support services for housing, and increasing opportunities for employment, the State endeavors to change the situations of those who are, or at risk of becoming, homeless in Colorado. This will mean developing coordinated regional approaches to addressing homelessness; ending Veteran homelessness by 2015; and all forms of homelessness by 2020. By caring for our Veterans, families, youth, those with disabilities, and all others experiencing housing crisis—Colorado will build a stronger state and a brighter future.

Progress towards Preventing and Ending Homelessness

In 1987, the United States Federal Government created the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH). The council's mission is to "coordinate the federal response to homelessness and to create a national partnership at every level of government and with the private sector to reduce and end homelessness in the nation while maximizing the effectiveness of the Federal Government in contributing to the end of homelessness."ⁱ

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness in 2010 released *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*. *Opening Doors* envisions a time where "no one should experience homelessness—no one should be without a safe, stable place to call home." By encouraging states and localities to create their own strategies, *Opening Doors* positions the Federal Government to work as a partner to address homelessness. Through collaboration and strategic coordination, USICH hopes to accomplish the following:

1. Finish the job of ending chronic homelessness by 2015;
2. Prevent and end homelessness among Veterans in by 2015;
3. Prevent and end homelessness for families, youth, and children in by 2020; and
4. Set a path to ending all types of homelessness.

Nationally, innovative approaches have been created to ensure sustainable solutions: efforts to increase housing and supportive services for those in need; the *Housing First* philosophy which emphasizes housing stability prior to successful service engagement; and developing strategic plans with targeted objectives and measurable outcomes. These have become the paradigm for states and communities as they eradicate homelessness.

Increasing housing resources and supports reduces the need for shelter beds by providing more sustainable solutions. This will require the creation of more housing opportunities and means creating housing where the risk to the housing providers is minimized. While including different types of housing across the continuum of housing, from shelter beds to Permanent Supportive Housing¹ (PSH) to affordable housing, other supportive services and employment must also be created to ensure housing solutions. Emphasizing PSH and affordable housing has proven to be more effective and less costly than shelter beds nationally. We are confident that we will have these same results by applying this national best practice. Housing an individual, or family, makes sense not just socially, but economically.

¹ Supportive housing is a combination of housing and services intended as a cost-effective way to help people live more stable, productive lives. Supportive housing is widely believed to work well for those who face the most complex challenges—individuals and families confronted with homelessness and who also have very low incomes and/or serious, persistent issues that may include substance abuse, addiction or alcoholism, mental illness, or HIV/AIDS. "Public Housing Authorities: Helping to End Homelessness through Permanent Supportive Housing." *Journal of Housing & Community Development* March/April 2008: 18. Print.

Increasing the housing stock can have a multiplier effect on the Colorado economy. According to study conducted by Dr. Elliot Eisenberg, senior economist at the National Association of Homebuilders (NAHB), home building in Colorado “whether market rate or affordable...generates significant local economic activity, including new income and jobs for residents, and additional revenue for local governments.” Furthermore, in one year, the economic impact of building single and multifamily homes provided “\$1.93 billion in income for Colorado residents, \$513 million in taxes and other state and local revenue and 26,500 jobs in Colorado.” Therefore, while ensuring every Coloradan has a place to call home, we can promote new job creation, new incomes, and new revenues.ⁱⁱ

The ***Housing First***² approach prioritizes placement of people in stable housing so that they can feel safe and begin the stabilization process to self-sufficiency. Housing acts as a conduit for social services to be administered. This is evident amongst those who are frequent users of emergency services. Cycling through the “revolving door” of services (from being unsheltered, to emergency room, jail, to shelter, and back to being unsheltered) is incredibly costly, as these individuals are rarely placed in safe and permanent housing where services can be administered. According to a study conducted in Denver by the *Colorado Coalition for the Homeless*, the average cost of those who were frequent users of services was \$43,239 per person per year. After placing the same person in permanent supportive housing, their utilization of services was only \$11,694.ⁱⁱⁱ This clear difference demonstrates how *Housing First* is cost-efficient long term.

Strategic plans focused on preventing and ending homelessness have been developed in 217 communities and 26 states. These plans promote collaborative *partnerships*, setting *priorities* based upon community needs and resources, identifying *policies* which complicate and interfere with preventing homelessness, promoting community education, and engaging *political leadership* to mobilize community partners to assist in these efforts.

Furthermore, many states also have communities that have created their own ten-year plans to coordinate actions around homelessness. Here in Colorado, these are:

- *Denver’s Road Home*;
- *Boulder County’s Plan to End and Prevent Homelessness*;
- *Longmont Housing Opportunities Team*;
- *Homeward 2020* (Fort Collins);
- *Homeward Pikes Peak* (El Paso County),
- *Aurora @ Home*;

² *Housing First* is a relatively recent innovation in human service programs and social policy regarding treatment of the homeless and is an alternative to a system of emergency shelter/transitional housing progressions. Rather than moving homeless individuals through different “levels” of housing, known as the Continuum of Care, whereby each level moves them closer to independent housing. “*Housing First* moves the homeless individual or household immediately from the streets or homeless shelter into their own apartment.”

Out of a total of 594,540 renter households in Colorado, 282,200 households paid 30 percent or more of income towards housing; 230,900 households paid 35 percent or more. 142,100 households paid 50 percent or more. Among the rent burdened households, 51 percent were households with incomes of less than \$20,000 per year.

Housing Need and Rent Burden in Colorado and its Metropolitan Areas, Colorado Division of Housing, June 16, 2011

- *A Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness in the Grand Valley*; and
- *Adams County Blue Ribbon Commission* (still in development).

According to the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness (ICPH), these state and local plans share common values and language, in that they are:

- Established with clear goals and specific action-steps to accomplish these goals;
- Broad-based, easily amendable, and transparent;
- Collaborative and utilize strong leadership; and
- Funded by designated sources.

These common languages and values have resonated not only around the country, but also in our conversations around Colorado. There has been significant progress in our communities over the past ten years. We have learned that in order to be strategic we need to approach this work with the collaborative partnerships, effective policies, prioritized resources, and engaged political leadership.

Collaborative partnerships reflect strategic efforts to build effective working relationships among housing providers, human service providers as well as other community partners and resources.

Pathways Home Colorado's important partners in this effort include, not limited to:

- Colorado state government, including the *Governor's Office, Division of Housing³, Human Services, Health Care Policy and Financing, Corrections, Military and Veteran Affairs* and others;
- *Colorado Housing and Finance Authority⁴*;
- County governments and services, including housing authorities, mental health centers, human service departments;
- Municipal housing offices, development initiatives, and regional council of governments;
- Housing developers;
- Financial institutions;
- Business community partners;
- Faith community partners;
- Non-profit partners; and
- Other community partnerships.

Collaborative public/private partnerships are particularly important where there are limited resources and need for increased efficiencies.

³ The Division of Housing (DOH) was created by statute in 1970 to improve the access of all Coloradans to decent, affordable housing.

⁴ Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA) entire organization is focused on helping people and businesses succeed, through the positive effects of homeownership and business expansion. One success leads to another, as families become financially stable and companies add more jobs. For CHFA, every happy ending is really a new beginning.

Effective policies mean aligning practices and resources that prevent and eliminate homelessness. Some policies and practices can become part of the problem, versus being a part of the solution. Examples include:

Figure 2

Challenges	Solutions
School aged children in homeless families sometimes struggle to succeed in schools where there are not services to assist with individualized needs	<i>School district staff along with community partners focus on intervening and stabilizing the family situation and promoting school success</i>
Veterans who return with limited opportunities and support systems	<i>Integrated federal, state and local services which include housing, mental health supports, job and vocational training</i>
Persons with disabilities unable to navigate benefit systems	<i>Expediting federal and state benefits to provide housing, supportive services and health care</i>
Foster youth being discharged into communities without permanent housing or skills to be independent	<i>Initiatives which prepare youth in advance of discharge and connect them with persons and resources outside the foster care system to ensure their success</i>
Parolees exiting the system without housing, financial resources or supports to successfully transition	<i>Services for incarcerated individuals prior to release assisting with benefit acquisition, job training, mental health treatment, housing placement and having proper ID and other paperwork prior to being paroled</i>
Individuals discharged from health care facilities without housing and support services	<i>Coordination with community providers to ensure a successful transition, avoiding discharging a vulnerable individual into homelessness</i>
Local housing authority policies which exclude persons with criminal records from housing resources	<i>Eliminate restrictive policies by addressing concerns through collaborative service partnerships, education and stronger supports to ensure success</i>
Transfer of benefits for families across county jurisdictions can be difficult to navigate	<i>Develop seamless transfer practices which prevent disruption of TANF/SNAP benefits for families</i>
Financial and administrative barriers preventing individuals from obtaining state identification cards	<i>Work with state and local initiatives to remove barriers and expedite process to obtain state ID cards</i>

These are examples of challenges where it will be helpful to review current policies and practices which complicate efforts to prevent and end homelessness. It is incumbent upon federal, state and local governments to understand how policies affect efforts to address underlying causes of homelessness. These collaborative efforts will have a sustaining impact on preventing homelessness in future generations.

Prioritized resources reach the most in need to prevent and end homelessness. Communities are faced with limited resources which creates a culture of competition. By prioritizing available resources, some communities may discover efficient and effective solutions to some of the causes which contribute to

homelessness. Through local ten-year plans and other strategic initiatives, communities in Colorado have been successful in bringing together key partners, resources, and innovations to reduce the fiscal and human toil of homelessness upon communities. Examples include: establishing *Housing Choice Voucher* housing priorities and public housing preferences; expediting disability benefits for the most vulnerable; creating public/private collaborations to ensure successful transition of those in public care; and setting goals and benchmarks through local plans to track progress in their efforts.

Engaged political leadership has the ability to convene government, non-profits, faith communities, civic groups, businesses, and individuals to work together toward community priorities and cost-effective solutions. It is imperative in this time of competing concerns and limited resources that communities work to engage local elected officials and community leaders to inspire communities toward a collective solution in addressing the causes of homelessness. Ending homelessness is not only the morally right thing to do—but it is smart



government. As communities continue to demonstrate, when we proactively and collectively work to create solutions, we generate costs savings for our citizens, local governments, health care providers, employers, school districts, landlords and other community entities. Communities have demonstrated this is possible. As Pat Coyle, with *Colorado Department of Local Affairs' Division of Housing*, reminds us “it isn’t for lack of resources that we fail in our efforts to prevent and end homelessness; it is a lack of prioritizing the resources we have available to us.”

Much has already been accomplished around Colorado prior to development of this Plan. The State can be an effective advocate, partner, and investor in the sustainable futures of Coloradans. The following are examples of collaborative efforts that have worked to address partnerships, policies, priorities, and political will.

- During the 2011 Legislative session, HB11-1230 consolidated housing authorities from the *Colorado Department of Human Services* and *Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Division of Housing* (DOH) into one authority under DOH. The cost savings from this consolidation will be shared with local housing authorities and other non-profit agencies to expand their capacity to better serve landlords and tenants.
- The Colorado Department of Correction’s (CDOC) strategic planning committee identified internal policies that contributed to homelessness amongst ex-offenders upon re-entry.
- The Colorado Second Chance Act Re-Entry Program (C-SCHARP) is a federally funded collaborative project led by the Colorado Division of Housing in partnership with *Department of Corrections, Mental Health Center of Denver, Arapaho/Douglas Mental Health Network* and

other partners to address housing and support service needs of dually-diagnosed ex-offenders exiting state corrections.

- The Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) has worked with partners to address access to Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Programs (SNAP) by streamlining the application process. This has made it easier to apply for benefits.
- *Colorado Division of Housing* and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), in partnership with local housing authorities, school districts, and providers, are replicating a housing model (*Next Steps Program*) that creates housing stability for children and their families.
- The Colorado SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery) Project, a collaborative initiative between the *Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council*, the *Colorado Coalition for the Homeless*, the *Governor's Office* and other federal, state and local partners, expedites disability benefit applications for persons with disabilities who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.
- The Office of Homeless Youth Services (OHYS) seeks to identify and remove obstacles to the provision of services to homeless youth, improve the quality of services provided to homeless youth, reduce needless expenditures caused by the provision of overlapping services, and identify funding resources available to entities serving homeless youth. The OHYS in partnership with governments and non-profits around the state successfully established the *Rural Collaborative* to address homeless youth needs in rural areas of Colorado. OHYS is working with various partners to establish family host homes in rural areas of the state to provide respite and safety for those youth in need.

The Governor's Office has worked over the past year to understand the scope of local and regional efforts and assessed how state government can become a stronger partner for localities. These efforts have included:

- Recommendations from *University of Denver* project regarding state approach;
- Research and community dialogue through two *AmeriCorps VISTA* members;
- Formation of the *Homeless Prevention Team* at *Colorado Division of Housing*;
- Bus tour in Fall 2011 meeting with over 150 individuals from over 20 different communities; and
- Interviews with local and national experts working to address homelessness.

Regionalizing our Efforts

Pathways Home Colorado will promote regional collaborative efforts to address homelessness. Through broader geographic efforts, regional initiatives will promote:

- Cost efficiencies;
- Encourage sharing of resources and information;

You get used to the [camping] lifestyle. It wasn't too bad or too cold. Plus, I had my 8x10 'condo' tent, and built another attachment to it, and built an outdoor outhouse. I had blankets, tarps, sleeping bags. I kept warm—it was a good little place. I used to camp out a lot when I was a kid—mostly recreationally—but then I came back here and it became a reality thing.

Tent camper;
Colorado Springs, Co

- Promote collaborative partnerships to reduce duplication;
- Build political will and regional priorities;
- Innovative approaches to local needs and issues; and
- Understanding of mobility of specific homeless and at-risk populations, addressing problems statewide instead of locally.

The following is a summary of regional efforts. In some cases ten-year plans are being developed or implemented. These regional and local efforts exemplify success in areas of *partnerships, priorities, policies* and *political leadership* that *Pathways Home Colorado* will work to replicate. The map below (Figure 3) depicts the various regions with collaborative efforts addressing homelessness. These regions represent 93.7 percent of our total population, and involve 59.3 percent of the square mileage. We recognize that local communities not included in the following regions are addressing issues around homelessness. It is our intention in the coming years regional efforts will encompass the entire state. Though not all regions have elected to begin creating homeless prevention plans, a number of them are doing innovative work. Many demonstrate that collaborative partnerships, effective policies, prioritized resources, and engaged political leadership are the ingredients necessary to successfully address homelessness.

Figure 3

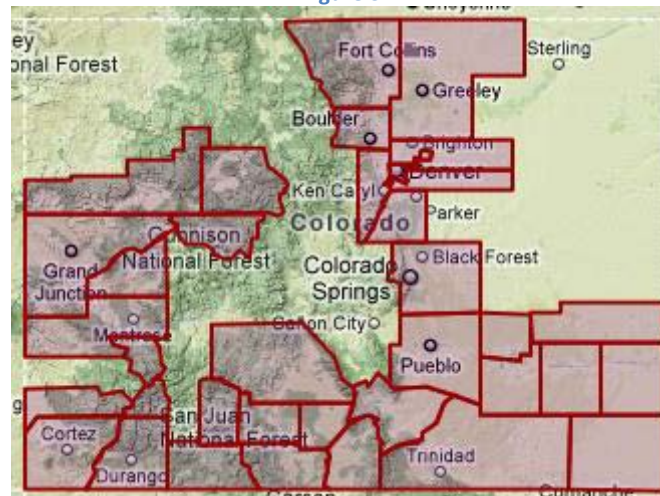
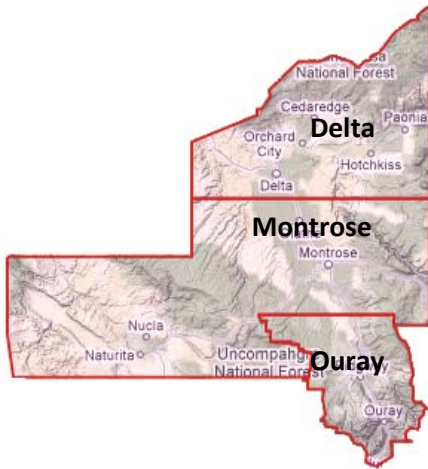


Figure 4 Demographics of Colorado

Population ^{iv}	Housing Units ^v	Median Household Income ^{vi}	Rental Vacancy Rate ^{vii}
5,029,196	2,212,898	55,735	7.6

Delta, Montrose, and Ouray Counties



County	Population	Median Household Income (\$)	Rental Vacancy Rate
Delta	30,952	41,528	5.1
Montrose	41,276	48,108	9.8
Ouray	4,436	59,810	13.4

Figure 5

The *Montrose Coalition for the Homeless* was formed to adequately assess and serve households at risk. Comprised of representatives from human service organizations, faith community, local businesses, government agencies, crisis response organizations, and other entities, the coalition is focused on addressing homelessness within the region. Although the *Coalition* identifies gaps in resources serving migrant agricultural laborers in the area, its collaborative efforts target the increasing number of situational homeless families that are not accessing available resources in their communities. Additionally, the school districts have formed a strong working relationship with homeless providers, communicating daily the number of homeless students in the school system—a staggering 200, or more, as of October 2011. The region offers the *Haven House*, a long-term self-sufficiency program for families, and has a seasonal community emergency shelter called *Abraham Connection*. They also rely on two local motels that provide extremely low or no-cost overnight residency for those in need. The region also offers bi-annual community resource fairs, created to share information about available housing and supportive resources for the growing number of situational homeless households in the region.

Despite the creative solutions to significant resource gaps, the region identified:

- A strong need for affordable housing, and
- A need for housing vouchers to match its population growth.

Tri-County Region

County	Population	Median Household Income (\$)	Rental Vacancy Rate
Eagle	52,197	74,220	4.5
Garfield	56,389	62,716	7.2
Pitkin	17,148	69,352	13.8

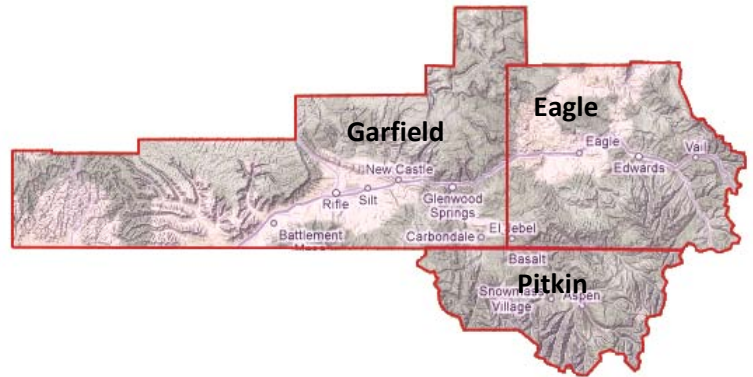


Figure 6

This region identified difficulties in distinguishing between the working poor, those living in immense poverty, and those homeless due to the high cost of living and lack of affordable housing options in Garfield, Eagle, and Pitkin Counties. One of the most evident forms of homelessness in the region is the number of families living in trailers with uninhabitable conditions. Because of the cost of living in the area, the creation of affordable and transitional housing is a challenge. Nevertheless, the region is very proud of the day centers in Aspen and Glenwood Springs that keep homeless people safe during the day. The partners in this region represent a variety of agencies, including *Feed My Sheep & Catholic Charities Prevention Services*, the *Rural Youth Collaborative*, the *Aspen Homeless Shelter*, and county human service directors. The region wishes to access Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH)⁵ vouchers with localized case management. The region will be initiating the vulnerability index in the summer of 2012 to assess needs of vulnerable and at-risk populations.

With these successes and challenges in mind, the region looks to move forward with:

- Creating affordable housing solutions for families living on the edge, and
- Accessing VASH vouchers with localized case management.

⁵ Housing and Urban Development and Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing



El Paso County

County	Population	Median Household Income (\$)	Rental Vacancy Rate
El Paso	622,263	55,621	9.9

Figure 7

Colorado Springs and El Paso County care providers identified large Veteran and family populations among the region’s homeless. The Governor’s Office made a presentation to over 100 housing and service providers from the *Colorado Springs Homeless Conference*, and learned important lessons about local successes and challenges. The largest gaps in services in the region include a lack of affordable housing stock and vouchers and a lack of successful reintegration programs for those exiting the military. Despite the identified difficulties in providing optimum housing and supportive services, El Paso County has made progress in strategically and collaboratively eradicating homelessness with a number of initiatives. An example is the work done with housing campers in the downtown area as well as avoiding criminalization of camping activities by developing local approaches that are responsive to those facing housing crisis. Partners in these efforts include *Homeward Pikes Peak*, members of *Community Assistance Providers*, transitional housing at the Aztec Motel, the *Colorado Springs Police Department’s* Homeless Outreach Team’s early intervention practices, *Urban Peak* emergency shelter for youth, the *VA Vocational Rehabilitation Center*, and the utilization of VASH vouchers.

Building on the momentum of local successes, this region hopes to provide:

- Affordable housing stock and housing vouchers, and
- Re-integration programs for those exiting the military.



Five County Southwest Region

County	Population	Median Household Income (\$)	Rental Vacancy Rate
Archuleta	12,084	46,013	31.5
Dolores	2,064	43,248	0.0
La Plata	51,334	56,610	8.7
Montezuma	25,535	40,859	2.8
San Juan	699	38,253	18.0

Figure 8

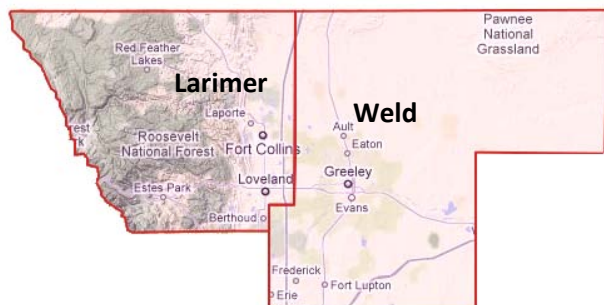
This region—comprised of Dolores, San Juan, Montezuma, La Plata, and Archuleta Counties—serves a diverse at-risk and homeless population, and it identified distinct cultural difficulties in providing adequate services to members of three different Native American communities. The counties have begun forming collaborative entities to respond to crisis needs in their communities. The Community Emergency Action Coalition (CEAC) and the Montezuma Emergency Action Coalition (MEAC), supported by the *United Way of Southwest Colorado*, is a collaborative multi-agency effort that provides one-time, emergency financial assistance for persons unable to meet urgent payments. Also, they plan to develop strategies with measurable outcomes that will guide homeless prevention activities. Cortez offers the only wet⁶ homeless shelter in the state of Colorado, which supplements the lack of a detoxification center and presents strong community-backed interest in serving the city’s homeless. Other partners, including Durango’s *Volunteers of America*, the *Regional Housing Alliance of La Plata County*, and *Housing Solutions for the Southwest*, have worked together to target housing resources, but face the same region-wide difficulties in acquiring permanent supportive housing, housing vouchers, and transportation. Additionally, the region has identified Veterans as a target population to launch in the five counties that will begin with the *Vulnerability Index*⁷, as well as work to develop a housing project for homeless Veterans in the region.

While significant community impact has been made in local crisis response systems, this region experiences a lack of:

- Affordable housing options and housing vouchers, and
- Economic development that creates adequate employment.

⁶ “Wet homeless shelter” refers to an emergency shelter that does not require its clients to be alcohol or drug-free to participate in their services. This important for communities that do not have their own substance abuse detox center, because those who are intoxicated and/or high might be turned away from traditional emergency shelters.

⁷ Vulnerability Index is a tool for identifying and prioritizing the street homeless population for housing according to the fragility of their health. Please see www.100khomes.org and www.coloradocounts.org for more information.



Larimer and Weld Counties

County	Population	Median Income (\$)	Rental Vacancy Rate
Larimer	299,630	56,281	5.2
Weld	252,825	54,578	8.0

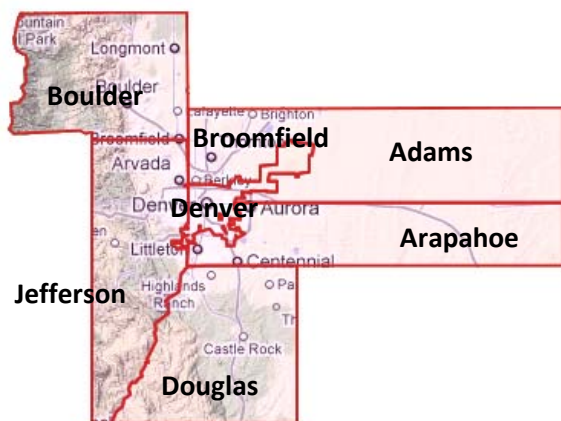
Figure 9

Larimer and Weld Counties each identify

homelessness as a symptom of extreme poverty, inadequate employment opportunities, and a severe lack of affordable housing for those living in their communities. Partners noticed significant challenges in effectively and stably housing homeless youth. Despite difficulties in connecting the homeless to housing, the Larimer and Weld County region have made significant strides in its work to prevent and eradicate homelessness. The *Guadalupe Shelter* in Greeley opened a state-of-the-art facility in 2011, providing emergency services and prevention assistance. The *Loveland Homeless Task Force* works to collaboratively tackle homeless issues in the area; the *Northern Front Range Continuum of Care* joins providers from both counties to discuss regional housing and homelessness issues; the *Housing and Emergency Services Network* provides collaboration of crisis response agencies in Weld County; *Family Unification Program* vouchers are utilized to house families at risk of welfare involvement and youth exiting foster care; and Fort Collins's *Homeward 2020* has implemented a *Registry Week* utilizing the *Vulnerability Index* from the *100,000 Homes Campaign*, which created a strong foundation for future implementation of their plan to prevent and end homelessness in Fort Collins and, later, Larimer County. The Vulnerability Index was conducted in Fort Collins in 2010, and determined that 40% of those surveyed were vulnerable. With this knowledge, *Homeward 2020* has set the goal to house 45 vulnerable individuals by 2013. Ft. Collins is replicating the One Congregation—One Family initiative to address family homelessness in the area.

While moving forward with regional homeless prevention services, this region finds challenges in:

- Finding housing options in the continuum for homeless youth, and
- Providing affordable and permanent housing for all experiencing homelessness.



Metropolitan Denver

On any given night, there are more than 10,000 homeless individuals within the region—comprised of Denver, Jefferson, Broomfield, Boulder, Adams, Arapahoe, and Douglas Counties. A number of emergency, transitional, supportive housing resources, and localized strategic plans to prevent and end homelessness work to respond to this immense need. Currently the Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI) is the *Continuum of Care* administering Federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) dollars to

providers in the seven-county area. MDHI, in collaboration with the surrounding communities, has initiated cold-weather shelter strategies across the region, facilitated the annual point-in-time counts, and convened a committee to explore employment strategies.

Challenges faced by the region include raising public awareness of homelessness, increasing needs without adequate

County	Population	Median Income (\$)	Rental Vacancy Rate
Adams	441,603	53,779	8.7
Arapahoe	572,003	56,099	7.4
Boulder	294,567	63,757	4.1
Broomfield	55,889	77,606	5.8
Denver	600,158	46,693	7.5
Douglas	285,465	99,198	5.8
Jefferson	534,543	66,059	5.2

Figure 10

services, and stronger cross-jurisdictional collaborations to break down geographic isolation related to housing vouchers and entitlement programs. There are a number of successful initiatives in the region including, but not limited to: *Denver's Road Home*; the *Family and Senior Homeless Initiative*; *Colorado Coalition's* permanent supportive housing projects and the *Stout Street Medical Clinic*; *Metro Denver Homeless Initiative*; the *Metropolitan Denver Chronic Homeless Collaborative* and the *Longmont Housing Opportunities Team*. Boulder County and Aurora have developed ten-year plans to end homelessness and Adams, Jefferson, and Arapahoe Counties are in various stages of developing their own local plans. Of significance, since 2005, *Denver's Road Home* has facilitated the creation of roughly 2,000 new units of housing for the homeless, including 759 units for those who have been defined chronically homeless. Furthermore, *Denver's Road Home* Employment Sub-Committee has found over 5,000 part or full-time jobs for the homeless. Denver implemented a *Registry Week* utilizing the *Vulnerability Index* from the *100,000 Homes Campaign*, and identified that 44% of those interviewed were vulnerable. *Denver's Road Home* then suggested setting aside several housing vouchers and units for those who have been identified as vulnerable.

Despite significant impacts and strategic planning efforts, these challenges are still present:

- Need for cross-jurisdictional collaboration to provide seamless access to information and resources, and
- Need for more housing resources and support services to serve the most vulnerable.



Mesa County

Mesa County and the city of Grand Junction have strong collaborative efforts in place and are developing a strategic plan to end homelessness. Specific county-wide successes include: the *Next Step Program*, which partners with *District 51 Schools*, *Colorado Division of Housing*, *Grand Junction Housing Authority*, and local non-profit agencies to house families with young children whose academic performance is

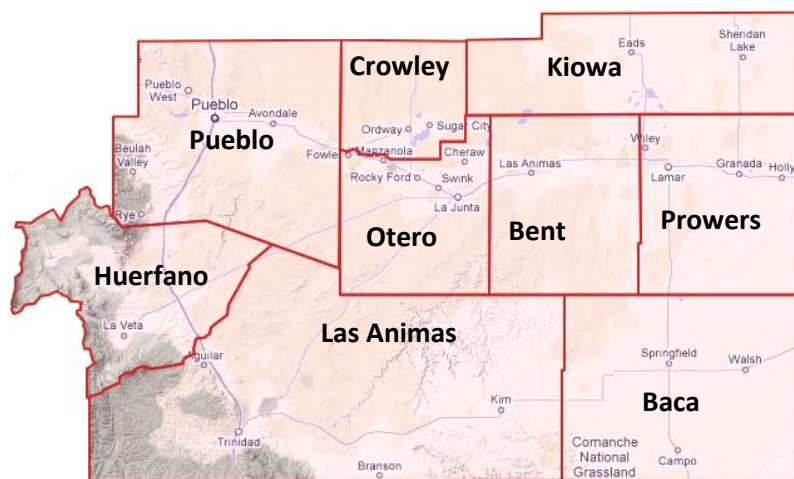
Figure 11

County	Population	Median Household Income (\$)	Rental Vacancy Rate
Mesa	146,723	52,290	3.5

negatively impacted by housing instability; the *Homeward Bound* shelter and its twelve bed Veteran program; the *Phoenix* transitional housing program for formerly homeless Veterans; *St. Martin’s* permanent supportive housing project for homeless Veterans; *Grand Valley Peace and Justice* is the lead agency for *One Congregation—One Family* in the county; opening *The House*, a shelter for runaway and homeless youth; and the positive incorporation of wrap-around therapeutic *Veterans Affairs* services. The largest gaps in services identified by care providers are the lack of a youth shelter—not only in the county, but on the entire western slope of Colorado—and the lack of appropriate services for the identified chronically homeless. After addressing homelessness amongst Veterans in the area, this region looks to explore initiatives to house those identified as chronic homeless. Mesa County is the first area to participate in the *Colorado Counts* initiative which entailed surveying over 400 persons in need utilizing the vulnerability index from the *100,000 Homes Campaign*.

Building on the momentum of recent success, Mesa County looks to increase capacity to serve:

- Homeless youth who lack appropriate and sufficient housing and supportive services, and
- Chronic homeless and Veterans identified in the recent vulnerability index survey.



Arkansas Valley

County	Population	Median Income (\$)	Rental Vacancy Rate
Baca	3,788	32,660	15.4
Bent	6,499	30,890	9.0
Crowley	5,823	29,104	14.2
Huerfano	55,889	77,606	7.9
Kiowa	1,398	36,931	9.6
Las Animas	15,507	36,575	9.1
Otero	18,831	30,373	7.4
Prowers	12,551	33,646	14.7
Pueblo	159,063	39,016	9.6

Figure 12

This region—comprised of Baca, Bent, Crowley, Huerfano, Las Animas, Otero, Kiowa, Prowers, and Pueblo Counties—expresses a strong desire to act to prevent homelessness in their communities. County human services, public housing authorities, mental health and substance abuse providers, crisis response systems, and other partners are committed to collaborating to eliminate poverty in the region. The region is also working to increase emergency shelter capabilities, economic development to stimulate employment, and adequate and high-quality housing options. Other priorities include providing home repair and utility support services for those living in their communities.

While aligning resources and creating strategies among partners, the southeast region identifies serious resource gaps in the following areas:

- Adequate economic development to stimulate employment, and
- Quality and affordable housing options.

San Luis Valley

County	Population	Median Income (\$)	Rental Vacancy Rate
Alamosa	15,445	35,960	8.7
Conejos	8,256	29,594	5.0
Costilla	3,524	24,758	7.1
Mineral	712	43,172	22.1
Rio Grande	1,398	36,931	15.7
Saguache	6,107	28,866	11.2

Figure 13



This region offers extensive crisis response services to one of the poorest regions in Colorado. While providers admit difficulties in measuring the extent of regional need, they combat the cycle of poverty and homelessness with a variety of organizational resources: *La Puente Shelter*; the *Food Bank Network of the San Luis Valley*; county Public Housing Authorities; the *Colorado Workforce Center*; the *Immigration Resource Center*; *Tu Casa* domestic violence agency; county Department of Human Services; *San Luis Valley Rural Electric*; *Energy Outreach Colorado*; *Valleywide Hospital* providing low-cost services to the low income households; *San Luis Valley Mental Health Center*; and local higher education institutions like *Adams State College*.

A large geographical area encompassing 10,000 square miles, a lack of public transportation, and severe weather conditions challenge the San Luis Valley's ability to work with and provide services to the homeless and those at-risk. Overcoming these challenges requires thoughtful solutions. Interagency collaborations, *Rural Philanthropy Days*, preventative financial assistance, and a Veteran transitional program at *La Puente Home* are some of the solutions that have already been developed. Specific regional challenges include underemployment, lack of adequate housing options, and difficulty in appropriately serving migrant agricultural workers.

With geographically isolating challenges in mind, this region looks to:

- Create more affordable housing options, including single-room occupancies, and
- Increase services and housing options for runaway and homeless youth.

Colorado's Scope of Need

What is “being homeless” in Colorado? The recent downturn in the economy has impacted communities across the country and in Colorado with higher housing foreclosure rates, lower rental vacancies with higher rents, increasing unemployment, and shrinking resources to assist those in need. Mental illness, substance addiction, trauma and becoming “disconnected” from natural and community supports increases the complexity of how to end homelessness as we know it. Untreated mental illness continues to be a cause and consequence among individuals and families experiencing homelessness across our country. While six percent of the general population suffers from a serious mental illness, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has reported that approximately 39 percent of people who are homeless have a mental disorder. In addition, an estimated 50 percent of adults with serious mental disorders who are homeless experience a substance abuse disorder as well.

In some of our communities, the public face of homelessness may fit the stereotype—middle-aged man sleeping on the streets. However, homelessness in other communities emerges differently and is specifically based on the community’s socio-economic situation. For example, some are on the edge of becoming homeless due to living in uninhabitable mobile homes or homes without running water or electricity. Some are faced with inadequate employment or lack of affordable housing. Families and individuals fall into crisis situations when there is a lack of opportunities for skilled labor. Others, still, may be living in a temporary setting to escape violence, abuse and/or trauma. Living without a home is always a symptom of something larger. There is no one-size-fits-all picture.

Homelessness can be described by population and situation such as episodic homelessness, which occurs in most communities, while chronic homelessness becomes more prevalent in our urban centers. Episodic homelessness is defined as an individual or family who is homeless for a short period of time. Examples are those who have been evicted from their home, or someone who has moved from one community to another, and is waiting for their benefits to be re-established. Chronic homelessness is a very different situation, as it is defined as an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.^{viii} Together, whether episodic or chronic, homelessness and housing instability affects our **Veterans, families, youth, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and those whom experience chronic homelessness**. The needs of each population are significant, diverse, and specific.

- As seen around the state, **Veterans** face issues surrounding re-integration into civilian life after exiting the military leave some Veterans at risk of becoming homeless. Veterans have high rates of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and sexual trauma, especially for women. In fact, of our estimated 400,941 Veterans, 68,945 (approximately 17%) of them have a service connected disability.^{ix} Substance abuse, cognitive impairments, difficulties in building healthy social relationships, controlling tempers or impulses, and other behaviors related to their service may create obstacles to maintaining housing, employment,

and stable personal and familial relationships.^x Veterans also face difficulty when navigating the various systems for services and benefits because of their discharge status or lack of awareness of available programs. While most Veterans are single men, a growing number of female Veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan are experiencing homelessness, as is the number of Veterans who have dependent children.^{xi} Right now, we estimate there are 3,000 to 5,000 Veterans in Colorado who are, or at-risk of becoming, homeless.

- Individuals living with a **disability** who become homeless are often unable to maintain employment. Today, there are an estimated 472,901 (about one in every ten) of the Colorado population living with some type of disability.^{xii} Many of those who are disabled and homeless have physical limitations; others may have severe behavioral health disorders, as well as barriers to community integration, difficulties accessing needed benefits and services, and some experience chronic homelessness. These create difficulties in securing stable employment and adequate housing. The recent national and local economic downturns and high unemployment rates have only further exacerbated this situation.
- On any given night, nearly 242,000 individuals in **families** are homeless nationally, although this does not include families who are living “doubled up⁸.”^{xiii} According to the Colorado Department of Education, there are 4,718 children and their families who are living in shelters, motels, or other temporary settings. There are another 17,297 who are living in doubled-up situations which make them vulnerable to becoming homeless. This means that the number may be even *higher*. Homeless families often experience inaccessibility of adequate and appropriate housing which leads to housing instability and food insecurity. This includes, but is not limited to, affordable and consistent child care; extremely low incomes and less access to housing subsidies than low-income families that remain housed; and also weaker social networks to provide support.^{xiv} These families are usually headed by a single mother in her late twenties with two children, at least one of whom is under the age of six.^{xv} Furthermore, more than 80 percent of mothers with children experiencing homelessness have previously experienced domestic violence in their lifetime.^{xvi} Children in families experiencing homelessness also have high rates of acute and chronic health problems, and the majority has been exposed to violence.^{xvii} Homeless school age children are more likely than similar age children in the general population to have emotional problems such as anxiety, depression, withdrawal, and manifestations of aggressive behavior, as well as academic set-backs due to housing mobility.^{xviii xix xx} Because family members do not want to be separated, they expose themselves to further risk. Male children, for example, may be forced to remain in a separate shelter than other female members due to

Not all homeless people are drug users, alcoholics, lazy, dependent on the system, or neglectful parents. There are many of us who work hard for the benefit of our children while someone else raises them. Living from paycheck to paycheck makes it hard to pay for the “little” things like medical expenses or “big” things like heat, but we are fighters and because of this we will not always be homeless.

Single mother in transitional housing; Montrose, CO

⁸ “Doubled-up” households are defined as those that include at least one “additional” adult.

emergency housing policies. The foster care and welfare system have higher rates of involvement with homeless families, while also having lower incidences of successful reunification.^{xxi}

- There are no definitive numbers for the **homeless youth** population in Colorado. Data and trends are difficult to collect due to varying definitions of homelessness, age discrepancies in service provision, and lack of involvement with services. Often living in precarious situations, homeless youth can double-up, “couch surf,” or live in places that are not ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation—like cars, under bridges, or abandoned buildings. They have often experienced a form of family conflict and/or sexual abuse, and/or they became homeless upon exiting a system like foster care or juvenile justice. A homeless youth will experience challenges that include disruption in education due to mobility and lack of housing stability;^{xxii} high prevalence of depression, suicidal tendencies, and chronic diseases; difficulties in securing adequate employment; and difficulties in accessing housing and medical programs due to age constraints, especially for those less than 18 years old.^{xxiii} Homeless youth often engage in risky behaviors including selling drugs, panhandling, stealing, and sex work as a means of financial subsistence.^{xxiv} Other risk behaviors include unprotected sex, sex with multiple partners, intravenous drug use and needle sharing, that place them at high risk for contracting HIV/AIDS.^{xxv}
- **Individual adults** experiencing homelessness have various backgrounds, ranging from a senior homeless woman who does not receive services, to a person who lives with a disability and cannot balance life’s needs with medical priorities, to a chronically homeless individual who has struggled with mental illness and substance addiction for years. These also include ex-offenders who are not returning to their families. In fact, offenders are four to six times more likely to report an episode of homelessness than the general population.^{xxvi} Being an ex-offender provides yet another barrier to housing, services, and employment. According to *Opening Doors*, six out of ten people experiencing **chronic** homelessness are not sheltered. While more than 75 percent of people experiencing chronic homelessness are male, there are also a significant number of women.^{xxvii} Due to their unsheltered living, they are particularly vulnerable to severe health needs, increased incidents of mental illness and substance abuse disorders, symptoms of alcohol abuse, schizophrenia, and personality disorders.^{xxviii} These factors contribute to significant life-threatening conditions. Chronic homelessness results in frequent use of emergency rooms, hospitals, police, jails, emergency shelters, and other homeless services. These services are very costly, but especially health care, which is the largest cost. Those who are chronically homeless are repeated users of emergency rooms, inpatient hospitalization for medical or psychiatric care, substance abuse treatment, and nursing homes.^{xxix}
- The number of homeless **senior citizens** across the country, and Colorado, continues to increase, according to a recent study publicized by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). The study predicts that the number of homeless seniors will increase by 33 percent in



the next ten years and will double by 2050, a significant number of which will be Veterans.^{xxx} Homeless persons aged 50-65 are frequently overlooked by governmental safety nets. While not technically old enough to qualify for Medicare, their physical health, harmed by poor nutrition and severe living conditions, may resemble that of a 70-year-old.^{xxxi} This is exemplified in the chronic homeless population that continues to age, living without appropriate housing or shelter. As the cost of living has increased, fixed income levels have remained stagnant; the decline in the availability of population-specific affordable housing; and the loss of social support systems as people age have all placed the elderly at risk of homelessness. So, not only are they chronically homeless continuing to age unsheltered, but once stably housed elderly are beginning to experience instability due to economic constraints.

Again, these images of homelessness are not as easily recognized by the general public. However, the common denominator between all the populations is the lack of safe and stable housing, access to human services, and economic opportunities. Just as we can agree that homelessness is about lack of housing, we can also agree to and approach homelessness understanding these fundamental points:

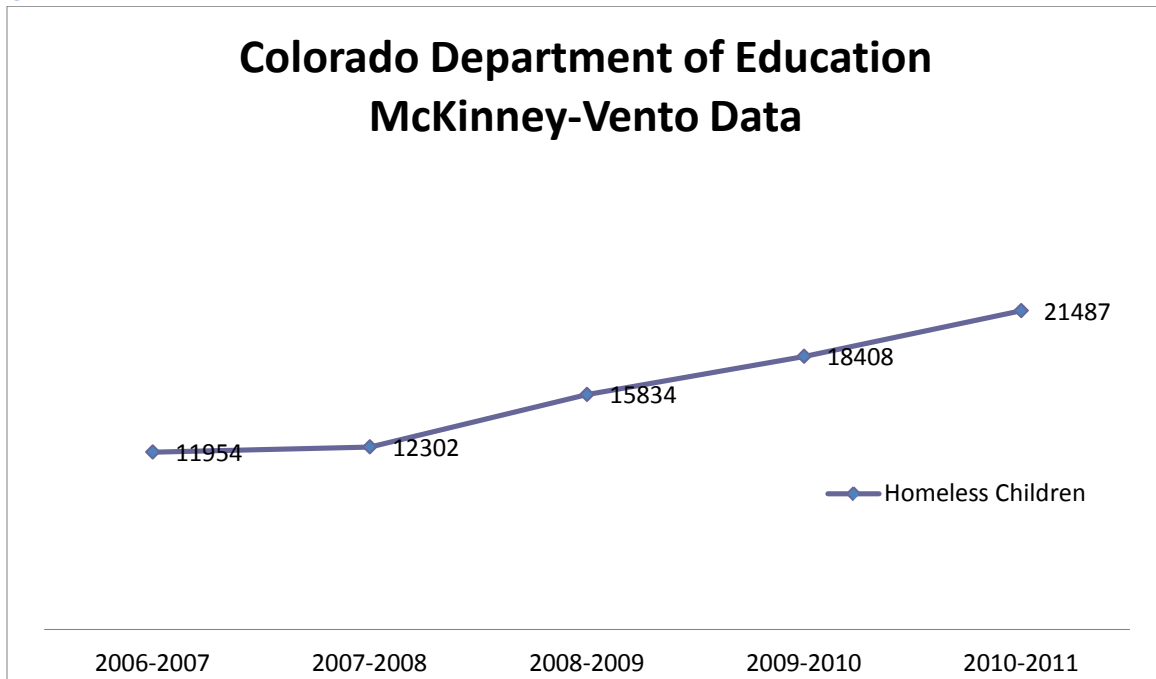
1. Homelessness exists, but takes many forms;
2. Homelessness is a symptom of other structural, cyclical, and generational issues; and
3. Homelessness can be prevented and, eventually, eradicated by prioritizing resources.

Many have asked: *what is the scope of the need in Colorado; how many Coloradans are homeless?*

Communities around Colorado have worked to create accurate and timely assessments. Either through the Point-in-Time⁹ (PIT) survey or through Community Solutions' Vulnerability Index (VI), our communities have continued to determine those who are currently, or at risk of becoming, homeless. Additionally, the Colorado Department of Education has identified the number of homeless children and youth in the Colorado Public School System through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.



⁹ Annual Point-in-Time (PIT) studies are used to count the number of homeless individuals on one day of the year and to educate citizens about the presence of homelessness within their own communities.

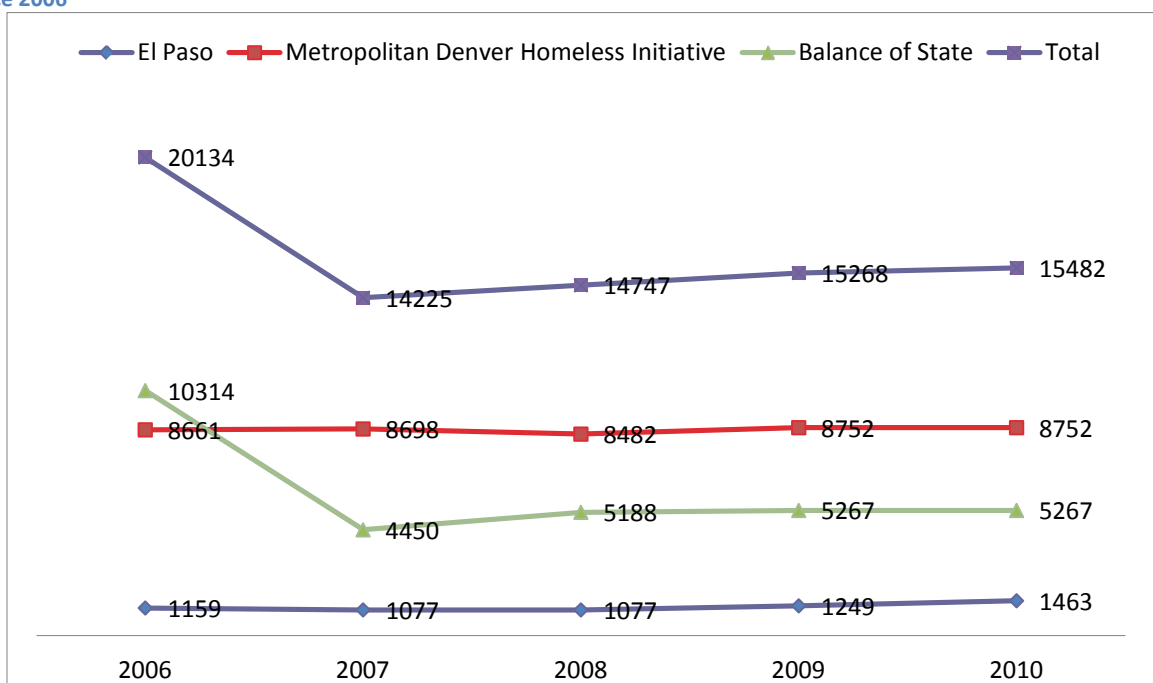
Figure 14^{xxxii xxxiii xxxiv}

A child is defined to be homeless if they are:

- Sharing housing “doubled up” due to economic hardship or loss of housing;
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or campgrounds due to lack of alternative accommodations;
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- Awaiting foster care placement;
- Using a primary nighttime residence that is not ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation (e.g. park benches, etc); and/or
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, etc.

The numbers, and the rates by which the numbers are changing, have increased each year. But, these still may be underestimates, because yearly data is dependent upon each school district’s homeless liaison having the capacity to adequately identify, serve, and report homeless students in his or her district. This lack of capacity has made it difficult for the State to truly assess the number of homeless children in our school districts. Additionally, *Opening Doors* indicates that homelessness amongst families and children is the fastest growing population at this moment in time.

Figure 15 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress by Continuum of Care¹⁰, Sheltered and Unsheltered, Since 2006



The numbers listed in Figure 15 were reported to the *United States Congress* in the *Annual Homeless Assessment Report*.¹¹ A couple things should be striking about this graph. First, except between the years of 2006 and 2007, the total sheltered and unsheltered homeless in Colorado have increased. This is either attributed to better instruments to assess need, or more people are losing their homes, or both. Secondly, we should notice the differences between each continuum. No Point-in-Time (PIT) survey has been conducted for the entire *Balance of State* continuum since 2007. Thus, their numbers are based on estimates of the homeless in this geographically large region. Because of the ambiguity between 2006 and 2007 in the *Balance of State*¹², one must wonder whether or not the number of homeless statewide is actually higher.

¹⁰ The Continuum of Care (COC) is a set of three competitively-awarded programs created to address the problems of homelessness in a comprehensive manner with other federal agencies. In Colorado, we have three COCs: Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI), *El Paso/Colorado Springs*, and the *Balance of State*.

¹¹ The Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) report relies on data from two sources: single-night, point-in-time counts of both sheltered and unsheltered homeless populations reported on the *Continuum of Care* applications to HUD; and counts of the sheltered homeless population over a full year provided by a sample of communities based on data in their local Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS).

¹² There are three Continua of Care (COC) in Colorado. MDHI and El Paso both refer to the Metro-Denver area and El Paso County, respectively. *The Balance of State* COC is made up of the remaining counties of Colorado. Together, the Balance of State COC distributes about \$3 million each year.

Figure 16 Results by County, 2006-2011

City	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Denver County	4,491 ^{xxxv}	3,954 ^{xxxvi}	4,172 ^{xxxvii}	6,659 ^{xxxviii}	4,357	4,166 ^{xxxix}
Metro Denver	9,091 ^{xl}	10,604 ^{xli}	8,482 ^{xlii}	11,061 ^{xliii}	8,752 ^{xliv}	11,377 ^{xlv}
					276 (VI) ^{xlvi}	
Pueblo County	Not available			1,124	Not available	1,739
Mesa County	Not available					768
Fort Collins	Not available				263 (VI) ^{xlvii}	Not available

The numbers found in Figure 16 are the results from Point-in-Time (PIT) surveys and vulnerability indexes conducted around the state. It should be noted that due to inconsistent data collection methods in the PIT data, trends are difficult to identify. First, instruments used to collect data have differed among communities (and sometimes even within the same community from year to year). Therefore, comparing numbers from Denver and Colorado Springs—for instance—is inappropriate; as their samples were collected differently. Also, because the PIT is sometimes not conducted each year there are gaps in data. Notice also when referring to the previous chart (Figure 15), that the numbers from Metro Denver Homeless Initiative do not match the numbers from Metro Denver. This is because HUD does not recognize doubled up families, and the PIT does.

The last time Colorado conducted a statewide assessment of homelessness was in 2007 through a Point in Time (PIT) survey (see Appendix D: Statewide Point-in-Time). The summer of 2006 PIT survey was used as a basis for the winter of 2007 sampling count for the Balance of State. During the winter 2007 count, Metro Denver and Colorado Springs did another non-sampling Point in Time survey. Thus, there is difficulty in comparing the two years. As one can see, between the two years, there were enormous differences in both how needs were assessed and the effectiveness thereof.



One can recognize that the state does not have clear and reliable numbers for all populations. First, instruments used to collect data have differed between communities (and sometimes even within the same community from year to year). Therefore, comparing numbers from Denver and Colorado Springs—for instance—is difficult; as their samples were collected differently. Secondly, the transient nature of homelessness makes it difficult to collect data concretely. The homeless population historically moves between several communities across Colorado—traveling from suburban and rural areas into their urban hubs, and from the urban hubs into suburban and rural areas. Other examples of hard-to-quantify populations are those who have been chronically homeless for many years, evading detection; or homeless youth who fear authority and will avoid mainstream entitlement services and programs.¹³ This constant travel and avoidance makes an overarching assessment of the extent of homelessness in Colorado difficult.

Additionally, despite the successes in our local communities, statewide and regional homeless prevention strategies in Colorado have been fragmented and under-resourced. Specifically, sustainable efforts in Colorado are challenged by:

- High unemployment rates, limited job creation, and a slowly recovering economy;
- Insufficient data collection and information sharing regarding both local needs and outcomes;
- Limited collaboration between key partners across geographic jurisdictions;
- Government agencies working in isolation and not aligning with local and regional efforts; and
- The absence of a clear and coordinated strategy to prevent, rather than manage, homelessness.

Furthermore, the *Colorado Community and Interagency Council on Homelessness* in 2010 developed a list of recommendations to address homelessness. These included:

- Increasing state general funding for affordable housing, permanent supportive housing, and integrated substance abuse and mental health services;
- Establish a state housing trust fund;
- Expand disability benefits acquisition model for persons with disabilities;
- Ensure that the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) administered by the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA) is prioritized for projects serving households with the lowest income;
- Continued use of *Housing First*; and
- Upgrading *Homeless Management Information System*.¹⁴

Though 96 percent of homeless Veterans are male, the number of female Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans experiencing homelessness is increasing as is the number of Veterans who have dependent children.

United States
Interagency Council
on Homelessness

¹³ Mainstream entitlement programs refer to a guarantee of access to benefits based on established rights or legislation. Examples in the United States are Social Security and Medicare.

¹⁴ Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is the term used to describe a class of database applications used to confidentially aggregate data on homeless populations served in the United States.

Colorado's Approach: *Pathways Home Colorado*

“We can do better than we have done. Colorado’s slow economy constrains consideration of new large programs to aid the homeless. It requires initiation of a collaborative effort, involving all elements of the state’s leadership to respond to their difficulties. It also mandates finding ways to leverage scarce public and private dollars to secure more federal and foundation funds. Finally, it demands the initiation of innovative strategies to assure the State’s citizens, including its homeless citizens, that dollars allocated to the homeless are spent wisely and are directed at achieving maximum impact.”

From [Report of the Governor’s Task Force on the Homeless](#), State of Colorado December 1988

The recommendations from the 1988 report still apply today. Collaboration, public private partnerships, leadership and innovative strategies are critical to our success.

We are called as a state to organize ourselves, collaborate, and direct our limited resources to efficiently, effectively, and elegantly serve our neighbors in need. In short, the State must become a better partner in our effort to prevent and end homelessness. Not only is it the right and humane thing to do, but it is also the smart thing to do. We must keep our communities connected, build capacity to increase our opportunities, be innovative as a state with unique needs across the spectrum, and create sustainable housing solutions for our neighbors in need. As we do this, we must *clarify the State’s role in addressing homelessness*.

Our consumers come from diverse backgrounds, and they have reminded us how important it is that as we drive this, and other public policy forward, we do so in a way that brings communities together. Each requires different support to remain housed. It is not an insurmountable challenge to house our vulnerable community members, but it does require the federal, state, regional, and local levels of government to be strategic and collaborative. Some of these efforts may take more time and would require a full and robust economic recovery as the State confronts a variety of challenges and competing policy priorities, all of which would benefit from an investment of more resources. Nevertheless, housing and homelessness is a priority for this administration, and limited resources will not deter the State’s work to collaborate with partners and key stakeholders to find innovative solutions for ensuring that every Coloradan has a place to call home. We can, and will, adequately serve our community members experiencing housing instability in order to grow a healthy future for all Coloradans.

The work we do is about assisting people to find their own path towards a home. This means whether we are working with runaway or homeless youth; families; seniors; Veterans; domestic violence survivors; the chronically homeless; persons with disabilities; the unemployed; or the person that met “the perfect storm,” the solution is always the same: housing, access to services, and economic opportunities. Having a place to call home is one of the most basic necessities in life.

Our Vision All Coloradans have a place to call home.

In the coming years, we will strive to accomplish the following goals:

- Encourage six regional strategies via a coordinated state plan by January 2013;

- Create housing and accessible services for homeless Veterans by January 2015; and
- Create housing and accessible services for homeless youth and families, the chronically homeless, and other populations by January 2020.

How will we do this? In 2012, state government and our partners will:

- **Build capacity by:**

<i>Addressing state policies/practices which contribute to homelessness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify ten state policies and practices which contribute to homelessness • Develop action plan to address identified policies
<i>Deploying measurable strategies to address homelessness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement <i>Colorado Counts</i> in six regions • Support strategic collaborations in six regions to prevent and address homelessness
<i>Improving data systems and evaluation measures</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with stakeholders to establish quality indicators for Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) • Assist in the formation of a statewide HMIS group • Develop provider feedback mechanisms to assess and improve data collection efforts

Figure 17

- **Create solutions by:**

<i>Identifying most in need</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support <i>Colorado Counts</i> in six regions to house and resource most in need • Assist in development in six regional approaches to create efficiencies and innovative practices to address most in need
<i>Increasing housing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support development of family host home model across the state to serve 100 homeless youth in 2012 • 24,000 people will receive Homeless Prevention assistance through in 2012 HUD Emergency Solutions Grants • Increase shelter beds in 2012 by 200 • Increase transitional beds in 2012 by 250 • Increase housing for 300 homeless Veterans in 2012 • Increase permanent supportive housing units in 2012 by 640
<i>Streamlining entitlement benefit acquisition efforts</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist 300 individuals in 2012 with disability benefits through the Colorado SOAR Project • Streamline access for 100 Veterans to needed benefits in 2012

<p><i>Replicating best practice models to support regional priorities</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand <i>One Congregation—One Family</i> into six communities in 2012 • Support Bridging the Gap initiative in 2012 to serve 150 foster youth currently housed by Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers • Expand <i>Next Steps Programs</i> in 2012 for families model to one new community
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Figure 18

Building Capacity

While Colorado has made progress in addressing homelessness, there is still much more to accomplish. Building on the momentum that has been created, this plan will work with Colorado’s many communities to become more focused and strategic in *how* we address homelessness. Ensuring all Coloradans have a place to call home requires leadership, capacity, and resources from the State for Regions, as Regions simultaneously create solutions for those in their communities. Thus, *Pathways Home Colorado* will:

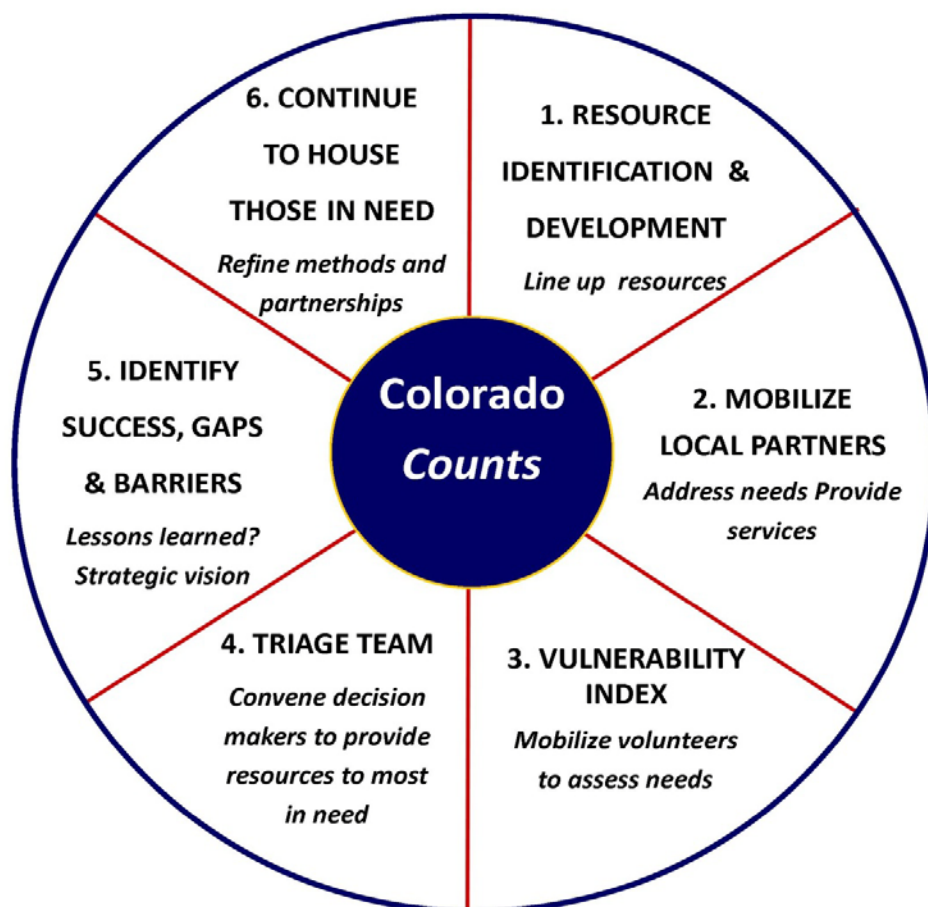
- Guide decisions;
- Promote collaborations;
- Increase strategic efforts;
- Drive evaluation and data measures; and
- Replicate evidence-based best practices.

To accomplish this, Colorado will first register as the fifth state with the *100,000 Homes Campaign* to a statewide Vulnerability Index (VI). Made possible by a grant from *British Petroleum America* and support from *Community Solutions*, self-identified regions with existing collaborative efforts to address homelessness will begin hosting the VI, known as *Colorado Counts*, in 2012. The VI is a process (outlined in Figure 19), not only a survey. Before the survey is actually conducted, a local leadership body will have brought together local partners together to develop a “Resource Bucket.” This resource bucket may have housing choice vouchers, rental assistance, mental health evaluations, and a number of other resources from localities. With the resource bucket identified, our partners from communities and local government can then promote collaboration and streamline access to services to those identified by the VI. Utilizing trained community volunteers, we will actively seek out and survey those who are, or at risk of becoming homeless. Through the *Colorado Counts* survey, we will be able to understand their health, housing, and economic needs. It is the intent of *Colorado Counts* to connect those identified as most vulnerable in each region to needed services within their communities from the resource bucket. A triage team of direct care providers will help secure resources to house the most vulnerable. When the triage team begins to connect resources to individuals and families, they will be able to determine successes, gaps, and barriers to housing and employment and providing services to those who are, or at risk, of being homeless. These will allow our Regions and the State to refine their methods and partnerships so that they may continue to house those in need.

While existing resources won't be able to address immediately all presenting needs, regions will be encouraged to be collaborative and strategic in creating efficiencies to maximize services as well as work with state and federal partners to increase needed resources. It will be an on-going priority for the state to partner with regions involved in *Colorado Counts* to replicate best practices, maximize government resources and increase investment opportunities.

Following is an overview of *Colorado Counts*:

Figure 19



Colorado Counts provides a variety of benefits for the communities involved. Not only will the Region's most at-risk be identified—reducing frequent system use like the emergency room and jail—but the campaign will also provide a comprehensive understanding and picture of homelessness in Colorado because it engages those experiencing housing crises.

The information gathered from *Colorado Counts*, will serve as the catalyst for all capacity building activities, informing the state about which policies and practices are best to create housing solutions around our priorities. Furthermore, the State can be an effective advocate, leader, and investor in the sustainable futures of Coloradans. The following are 2012 initiatives that are creating this sustainable future now:

Rural homeless youth tend to be less visible than their urban counterparts. In rural areas, these youth are particularly hard to identify due to the prevalence of “couch surfing” and other transient living situations—such as sleeping in garages, trailers and camping when weather permits—that hides them and their needs from the public eye. This invisibility has left many rural areas unaware of the problem.

Amanda Cleveland,
Project Specialist for
the *Colorado Rural Collaborative for Runaway and Homeless Youth*

- The *Division of Housing* has set aside \$100 million in *Private Activity Bonds* to finance over 800 units of permanent housing for persons with disabilities and homeless Veterans.
 - The *One Congregation—One Family* initiative allows area congregations to support and mentor homeless families and seniors into a stable, self-sufficient lifestyle by providing budgeting, parenting and emotional support.
 - Efforts to address homelessness among Veterans:
 - *Colorado Counts* will identify the most vulnerable Veterans in six regions;
 - Collaborative efforts will work to increase access to *Veterans Affairs* and *Social Security Administration* benefits;
 - Ensure assignment of 270 VASH vouchers allocated in 2012 to the most vulnerable;
 - Encourage communities to work with *Colorado Veterans Trust Fund* grantees to address and prevent Veteran homelessness;
 - Assist communities in streamlining access to services for Veterans in need; and
 - Establish a treatment program for Veterans experiencing homelessness at Fort Lyon. The *Gateway Housing Collaborative*, with leadership from Colorado Division of Housing, will seek to establish a treatment program for homeless Veterans. *Colorado Counts* will identify homeless Veterans with the most acute physical and mental health conditions, and offer services to stabilize their lives. By using *Gateway Housing Collaborative*, Veterans in need can be housed and treated while waiting for their rental vouchers or newly constructed affordable housing. Without this resource, these Veterans would remain on the streets or in shelters. When permanent housing is available they will return to their home communities.
 - The *Next Step Program* partners eight government and social service agencies in Mesa County to house families with school-aged children experiencing homelessness in order to improve academic success and help families get access to intensive support services. Efforts are underway to replicate this model into two new communities in 2012.
 - *Mile High United Way's Bridging the Gap* (BTG) model provides youth exiting the foster care system opportunities and experiences to build skills to successfully transition from foster care and prevent homelessness. The BTG initiative engages youth in transition in planning their futures and making decisions that will impact the larger community. This is a collaborative initiative between *Mile High United Way*, the *Morgridge Family Foundation*, *Colorado Department of Human Services*, *Colorado Division of Housing*, and various non-profit and county agencies.

These efforts and others will build capacity around the state—enacting positive policies, practices, and strategies—will create solutions that ensure *all* Coloradans have a place to call home.

Creating Solutions

The State recognizes that it is proficient at convening people, and will use its leadership to bring the right partners together to stimulate discussion. Therefore, our administration is moving away from the interagency state-level oversight model. Instead, using multiple mechanisms and advisory bodies to inform and guide state efforts around homelessness.

1. A **Pathways Home Advisory Board** will be convened to provide strategic input and access to important resources needed for state and regional efforts. *Pathways Home Advisory Board* will act as a “board of trustees,” providing higher level discussion and direction for the Plan. The Board will include government, faith, business, and provider representation with geographic balance. The Board will also have standing representation from the *Consumer Advocacy Council*, the *Homeless Youth Advisory Committee* and the *Homeless Veterans Advisory Group*. The Board will provide an annual report to the Governor regarding progress and recommendations for *Pathways Home Colorado*.
2. A **Consumer Advocacy Council** will engage consumers from various regions to develop strategies to enlist consumer feedback and suggestions to inform state and regional efforts
3. The **Homeless Youth Advisory Committee**, led by the *Office of Homeless Youth Services*, will consist of as well as provider agencies, government and other partners. The group will be charged with development and implementation of a plan to address homeless youth issues across the state. This effort will be in conjunction with *Pathways Home Colorado*.
4. A **Homeless Veterans Advisory Group** will consist of various public and private Veteran partners.

The *Homeless Prevention Team* will work with the *Pathways Home Advisory Board* to implement and update the Plan, acting as the “action body.” Made up of key personnel from the *Colorado Division of Housing*, the HPT provides expertise on housing and homelessness. They will develop solutions that address issues such as housing, employment, education, benefits, and health care. Collaboration between federal agencies, state departments and local governments will determine best practices and solutions to ensure that homelessness is not *caused* by government, but instead is *prevented* by it.

Using the Plan as a guiding tool, the HPT will provide technical assistance to Regions in their local work to address homelessness. The *Homeless Prevention Team* will have the capacity to share best practices and act as a single source of information for Regions. Also, the Plan asks for the State to help create collaboration between the State and Regions, as well as between Regions. Regions have proven to be successful at providing housing and services to those who are without homes. They know their populations, geography, and, most importantly, what does and does not work in their given setting. In order to create housing solutions in Colorado, communities must work to regionalize their efforts and enact solutions that take into account the community’s particular needs and resources while still aligning with larger state perspectives and goals.

The *Governor’s Office*, HPT, and the *Pathways Home Colorado Advisory Board* will work together to achieve this outcome. This is because many different entities—government, business, non-profit, private-sector partners, faith-based and individuals—are working to address homelessness. These

entities' activities will be even more effective when coordinated and implemented with an eye toward a larger state plan and goals. Furthermore, Regional and local work is vital to homeless prevention because it keeps those seeking services connected to their communities and their local and personal support systems. Ensuring that people stay connected to their support systems and communities increases the likelihood that they will eventually attain sustainable housing.

Aligning with *Opening Doors*, the Plan will focus on six themes and ten objectives to guide its actions (as described in **Error! Reference source not found.**). These will provide a common understanding and language for the state government, regions, counties, and communities to discuss addressing homelessness.

Theme: Increase capacity, knowledge, leadership, and collaboration between departments within state government, non-profits, and for-profits, and in Regions
<i>Federal Objectives</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide and promote collaborative leadership around Colorado across all sectors to increase awareness about homelessness. 2. Strengthen the capacity of organizations by increasing knowledge about collaboration, homelessness, and successful interventions to create solutions.
Theme: Increasing the capabilities of crisis response and prevention systems to prevent homelessness
<i>Federal Objectives</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Transform homeless services to crisis response systems that prevent homelessness and rapidly return people who experience homelessness into stable housing.
Theme: Increasing the resources and capacity to streamline acquisition of mainstream entitlement programs
<i>Federal Objectives</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Improve access to mainstream entitlement programs and services to reduce people's financial vulnerability.
Theme: Increase employment and educational opportunities
<i>Federal Objectives</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Increase meaningful and sustainable employment and educational opportunities for people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness.
Theme: Increase the number of housing units throughout the continuum of housing
<i>Federal Objectives</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Provide affordable housing to people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness. 7. Provide permanent supportive housing to those who are most vulnerable.
Theme: Increase access to all types of health care
<i>Federal Objectives</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Integrate primary and behavioral health care services with homeless assistance programs to reduce people's vulnerability and the impacts of homelessness. 9. Advance health and housing stability for youth aging out of systems. 10. Advance health and housing stability for people experiencing homelessness who have frequent contact with hospitals and criminal justice.

Figure 20

State Action Plan for January 2012 to December 2013

Our lack of organization and capacity are hindering statewide efforts to coordinate activities around homelessness. To address these deficiencies, we will:

- Work to identify and implement policies that create solutions for homelessness;
- Streamline data collection and evaluation methods;
- Prioritize resources;
- Increase public awareness about homelessness;
- Restructuring information sharing to have a navigation focus.

My dream house
is a place I can
call my own,
where I feel safe.
It doesn't matter
what it looks like.
It's just a place I
can call my own
that I don't have
to leave. People
don't realize that
homelessness is
in their backyard,
especially in
Craig.

Youth Leader, the
Colorado Rural
Collaborative for
Runaway and
Homeless Youth



The following matrix outlines objectives for 2012-13 in order to lay the foundation for development of objectives for subsequent years. This matrix will continue to evolve as efforts progress.

Q=Quarter of the Year

Figure 21

<i>State Theme</i>	<i>Action Step</i>	<i>Colorado Objective</i>	<i>Time Frame</i>	<i>Progress Indicator</i>
Capacity, Knowledge, Collaboration, & Leadership	Address state policies and practices which contribute to homelessness	Primary Objective	Q2	1. Appoint liaisons from state agencies to work with HPT
			Q2-Q4	2. Identify state and federal policies/practices
			Q4, 2012-Q2, 2013	3. Develop action plan to address identified state policies/practices
	Establish Advisory Bodies ¹⁵	Primary Objective	Q1	1. Develop Homeless Prevention Team (HPT)
			Q2	2. Convene Pathways Home Advisory Board
			Q2-Q4	3. Support meetings of four advisory bodies
			Q3-Q4	4. Support identification of six regional bodies to guide <i>Colorado Counts</i> efforts
	Increase effectiveness of Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)	Primary Objective	Q1-Q4	1. Implement new system with vendor and partner agencies
			Q2-Q4	2. Obtain monthly progress reports on system upgrades and implementation
			Q2-Q4	3. Facilitate quarterly provider calls to obtain input

¹⁵ See page 28 for more information about advisory bodies

<i>State Theme</i>	<i>Action Step</i>	<i>Colorado Objective</i>	<i>Time Frame</i>	<i>Progress Indicator</i>
Capacity, Knowledge, Collaboration, & Leadership			Q3	4. Formation of statewide Colorado HMIS Committee <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identify lead entity Determine data sharing protocol Develop capacity to generate regional and statewide reports Review progress indicators
	Leverage resources to help Regions establish and accomplish identified strategies	Primary Objective	Q1-Q2	1. Invigorate and repurpose Homeless Prevention Activities Program (HPAP) ¹⁶
			Q1-Q2	a. Update HPAP legislation
			Q1	b. Develop outreach campaign to increase check-off fund contributions
			Q3	c. Prioritize funds to align with state objectives
	Support vulnerability index (VI) in six regions	Primary Objective	Q1	1. Obtain grant to support VI training and implementation
			Q1-Q3	2. Host planning meetings in each region
			Q2-Q4	3. Conduct VI training and development of resource bucket in each region
			Q4	4. Support development and implementation of regional reports
			2013	5. Measure outcomes at 6 months and 1 year
	Increase consumer input regarding policies and services	Secondary Objective	Q2-Q3	1. Identify strategies for consumer input
			Q2-Q4	2. Explore regional and local opportunities for consumer input, including a consumer council

¹⁶ The Homeless Prevention Activities Program (HPAP) was enacted in 1989 by the *Colorado General Assembly* to provide assistance to households at risk of losing their homes without some kind of community assistance. The program allows Colorado residents to make voluntary contributions on their Colorado tax return that help non-profit organizations throughout the state provide services to eligible clients.

<i>State Theme</i>	<i>Action Step</i>	<i>Colorado Objective</i>	<i>Time Frame</i>	<i>Progress Indicator</i>
Capacity, Knowledge, Collaboration, & Leadership	Support Statewide and Regional Networking and Educational Opportunities	Secondary Objective	Q2-Q3	1. Identify topics of interest and needs
			Q3	2. Develop schedule featuring experts in identified topic areas
			Q3-Q4	3. Facilitate two educational events
			Q3-Q4	4. Establish HPT website with best practice portal/menu
			Q2-Q4	5. Explore idea of research institute to guide data and best practice efforts
	Update Colorado Homeless Youth Action Plan ¹⁷ , and develop future strategies to implement solutions	Secondary Objective	Q1	1. Hire Coordinator for Office of Homeless Youth Services
			Q1-Q3	2. Support Advisory Committee on Homeless Youth to update plan
			Q3	3. Identify priorities and time frames in alignment with state plan
	Increase public awareness of housing and homeless issues	Secondary Objective	Q1-Q4	1. Support efforts to develop a statewide housing awareness campaign
			Q3-Q4	2. Secure resources to develop cost avoidance report reflecting regional efforts
			Q4	3. Host Homeless Youth Awareness Month Exhibit in State Capitol
	Enhance effectiveness of State and Federal resources to align with Continua of Care entities	Secondary Objective	Q2-Q3	1. Develop comprehensive matrix of COC investments and outcomes
			Q3	2. Convene leadership of three COCs and other partners to identify strategies to better align efforts with state and regional goals
Q3-Q4			3. Support best practices in implementing a centralized and coordinated intake and assessment process	

¹⁷ The *Colorado Homeless Youth Action Plan* is designed to prevent and address youth homelessness in Colorado and to ensure that the primary objectives outlined in the *Homeless Youth Services Act* are accomplished. The *Office of Homeless Youth Services* is responsible for overseeing the overall implementation of the plan.

<i>State Theme</i>	<i>Action Step</i>	<i>Colorado Objective</i>	<i>Time Frame</i>	<i>Progress Indicator</i>
Crisis Response & Prevention Systems	Identify policies that place people in situations of crisis	Primary Objective	Q2-Q4	1. TBA : Policies to be identified by state agencies might include: <i>discharge planning practices; emergency/crisis services; support pilot programs in shelters to allow pets; innovative transportation</i>
			Q4	2. TBA Develop action plan to address identified policies
	Replicate One Congregation—One Family (OCOF) initiative	Primary Objective	Q1	1. Identify three communities to replicate OCOF
			Q1-Q2	2. Integrate hunger ¹⁸ and literacy ¹⁹ priorities into OCOF
			Q1-Q2	3. Support grant writing efforts to increase local capacity
			Q3	4. Identify three additional communities to replicate OCOF
			Q1-Q4	5. Provide training and technical assistant in pilot communities
	Replicate best practices that support successful transition of foster youth	Primary Objective	Q3-Q4	1. Support Bridging the Gap (BTG) initiative to strengthen foster youth transition from care
			2013	2. Identify policies and practices that will promote successful transition of foster youth
	Implement best practices to prevent individuals and families from falling into housing crisis	Secondary Objective	Q2-Q4	1. Work with crisis response systems, providers and consumers to identify barriers, successes, best practices across the state
	Partner with 2-1-1 to effectively provide information referral and navigation (I & R) for those facing homelessness	Secondary Objective	Q2-Q4	1. Identify state and regional needs regarding Information & Referral housing and other services
			Q3-Q4	2. Inventory current local Information & Referral capacity
Q4			3. Develop recommendations to better serve Coloradans facing homelessness	

¹⁸ [No Kid Hungry Colorado](#), Statewide initiative through Governor and Lt. Governor's Offices

¹⁹ [Colorado Reads: the Early Literacy Initiative](#), Statewide initiative through Governor and Lt. Governor's Offices

<i>State Theme</i>	<i>Action Step</i>	<i>Colorado Objective</i>	<i>Time Frame</i>	<i>Progress Indicator</i>
Mainstream Entitlement Programs	Identify policies that restrict access to programs and benefits	Primary Objective	Q2-Q4	1. TBA: Policies to be identified by state agencies might include: <i>access issues; intake requirements; seamless benefits for mobile populations; Create access to vital records</i>
			Q3	2. TBA: Develop action plan to address identified policies:
	Implement solutions that better connect people to benefits	Primary Objective	Q3-Q4	1. Explore cross-jurisdictional TANF methods for at risk or homeless families
			Q3-Q4	2. Support increased outreach and access to SNAP in pilot communities
			Q1-Q4	3. Provide leadership for Colorado SOAR Project
	Employment & Education	Identify policies that restrict employment and educational opportunities	Primary Objective	Q2-Q4
Q3				2. TBA: Develop action plan to address identified policies
Implement solutions to connect people to employment		Primary Objective	Q1-Q3	1. Identify best practices in areas of job training and supported employment
			Q4	2. Support replication of best practices in three communities
Implement solutions to connect people to education		Secondary Objective	Q1-Q3	1. Identify best practices in education for children, youth, and adults
			Q4	2. Support replication of best practices in three communities
Increase academic opportunities and success for homeless students		Secondary Objective	Q2-Q4 2013	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify existing best practices 2. Pilot best practices 3. Develop strategies to increase access and success in higher education for students experiencing homelessness 4. Implement solutions to decrease dropout rate and increase graduation rates for students in public school 5. Work with McKinney-Vento K-12 liaisons to increase FAFSA completion and awareness of and access to higher education.

<i>State Theme</i>	<i>Action Step</i>	<i>Colorado Objective</i>	<i>Time Frame</i>	<i>Progress Indicator</i>
Continuum of Housing	Identify policies that will keep people in safe and stable housing	Primary Objective	Q2-Q4	1. TBA: Policies to be identified by state agencies might include: <i>public housing policies, discharge practices, streamline federal vouchers to expedite local placement; making existing housing more accessible to vulnerable or high risk populations</i>
	Implement solutions that place and maintain people in safe and stable housing	Primary Objective	Q2-Q3	1. Increase landlord and PHA awareness and supports
			Q3-Q4	2. Expedite VASH process including local case management resources
			Q1-Q2	3. Align Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA) ²⁰ Low Income Tax Credit program with state priorities to prevent homelessness
			Q4	4. Implement ACT ²¹ team model with public housing authority in one region
			Q2-Q4	5. Identify home repair and weatherization resources and strategies to keep individuals and families housed
	Expand statewide housing inventory database	Secondary Objective	Q2-Q3	1. Develop protocol to maintain current housing inventory with Internet access
			Q2-Q4	2. Partner with 211 ²² to provide real time housing information in one region 3. Conduct a housing stock analysis to determine the condition and types of housing available

²⁰ The CHFA team works together throughout Colorado to: 1) Increase the availability of affordable, decent, and accessible housing for lower income Coloradans; 2) Strengthen the state's economy by providing financial assistance to businesses

²¹ [Assertive community treatment](#), or ACT, is an intensive and highly integrated approach for community mental health service delivery.

²² 2-1-1 provides free and confidential information and referral for help with food, housing, employment, health care, counseling and more

<i>State Theme</i>	<i>Action Step</i>	<i>Colorado Objective</i>	<i>Time Frame</i>	<i>Progress Indicator</i>
Access to Health care	Identify policies that restrict access to all types of health care	Primary Objective	Q2-Q4	1. TBA: Policies to be identified by state agencies might include: <i>Discharge practice; Access to behavioral and medical health care</i>
			Q1	2. Supporting policies that provide health care coordination for homeless individuals, and linking care coordination to supportive housing
			Q4	3. TBA: Develop action plan to address policies
	Implement solutions that make health care more accessible	Secondary Objective	Q2-Q4	1. Promote AWDC ²³ enrollment through Colorado PEAK ²⁴
			Q2-Q3	2. Connect homeless providers to Regional Care Collaborative Organizations
			Q4	3. Identify how Medicaid and supportive service agencies can collaborate to prevent homelessness



²³ Adults without Dependent Children, The Colorado Healthcare Affordability Act (09-1293) authorized HCPF to expand coverage to Adults without Dependent Children up to 100% FPL, and HCPF is mid-way through implementation. However, benefits are not yet available, and when they do become available—spring 2012—only those up to 10% FPL will initially be eligible. Additionally, PPACA extends Medicaid coverage to individuals below 133% FPL, but that provision does not go into effect until 2014.

²⁴ PEAK is an online service for Coloradoans to screen themselves and apply for medical, food, and cash assistance programs.

Conclusion

“Cooperation, collaboration, and working with partnerships across the spectrum: From the grassroots, to the Governor’s Office, and beyond to the federal government... we’re challenging the notion that we are separate. We all belong, we count, and we are all a part of the main stage.” - Randle Loeb, Community Organizer and Homeless Advocate

Pathways Home Colorado will promote a dynamic process to strengthen the State’s role in supporting regional and local efforts to prevent and eradicate homelessness in Colorado. The Plan builds on existing momentum and creates a forum for evaluating outcomes and developing new policies and programs aimed at providing stable, affordable, and appropriate housing. Influenced by *Opening Doors* and implemented by the Homeless Prevention Team (HPT), the Plan will guide decisions, promote collaborations, increase strategic efforts, and drive evaluation and data measures to ensure that housing becomes the norm in Colorado, rather than a privilege.

By understanding the diversity of its homeless and at-risk populations, creating efficiencies, building capacity, increasing the affordable housing stock, coordinating support services for housing, and increasing opportunities for employment, the State endeavors to change the situations of those who are, or at risk of becoming, homeless in Colorado. This means developing a coordinated regional approach to addressing homelessness; ending Veteran homelessness by 2015; and all forms of homelessness by 2020. By working creatively and collaboratively with measures that hold each organization and program involved accountable, Colorado can be an example for other states. By caring for Veterans; families; youth; those with disabilities; and all others experiencing a housing crisis, Colorado will build a stronger state and a brighter future.



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Appendix B: Glossary of Terms

- AWDC: Adults without Dependent Children
- CDE: Colorado Department of Education
- CDHCPF: Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing
- CDHE: Colorado Department of Higher Education
- CDHS: Colorado Department of Human Services
- CDLE: Colorado Department of Labor and Employment
- CDMVA: Colorado Department of Military and Veteran Affairs
- CDOC: Colorado Department of Corrections
- CDOLA: Colorado Department of Local Affairs
- CDOR: Colorado Department of Revenue
- CDPHE: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
- CHFA: Colorado Housing and Finance Authority
- CICHH: Colorado Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness
- CO: Colorado, abbreviation
- DOH: Division of Housing
- HA: Local Public Housing Authority
- HMIS: Homeless Management Information Systems
- HPAP: Homeless Prevention Activities Program
- HS: Local Department of Human Services
- HUD-VASH/VASH: U.S. Housing and Urban Development & Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing
- MOU: Memorandum of Understanding
- OHYS: Office of Homeless Youth Services
- PSH: Permanent Supportive Housing
- RYH: Runaway or Homeless Youth
- SNAP: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
- SOAR: SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery
- SSA: Social Security Administration
- SSDI: Social Security Disability Insurance
- SSI: Social Security Insurance
- TANF: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- UHY: Unaccompanied Homeless Youth
- USICH: United States Interagency Council on Homelessness
- VA: United States Department of Veterans Affairs
- VBA: Veterans Benefits Administration
- VI: Vulnerability Index
- VSO: Veteran Service Officer

Appendix C: Best Practice Menu

State Theme	Best Practices with Descriptions
<i>Capacity, Knowledge, Collaboration and Leadership</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Vulnerability Index</u>: Comprehensive data collection mechanism to assess the vulnerability of the homeless to death on the streets. • <u>Supportive Housing Institute</u>: A workshop to develop and implement a supportive housing unit. • <i>Highlight effective, responsive delivery systems</i>
<i>Crisis Response & Prevention Systems</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Community Emergency Assistance Grants</i>: A funding source to provide flexible financial emergency assistance. • <u>Homeless Outreach Team</u>: A team of law enforcement officials that proactively work with the homeless. • <u>One Congregation—One Family</u>: Connects faith community to homeless families to provide mentorship, stability, and self-sufficiency. • <u>I & R services with real time housing inventory</u>: An accessible and current t database of housing and other resources available to those experiencing crisis. • <u>Critical Time Intervention</u>: A time-limited case management model through discharge from systems that creates greater housing and personal stability. • <u>Homeless Court</u> – addressing individuals outstanding warrants or legal issues • <u>Legal Services</u> – providing pro-bono legal services
<i>Mainstream Entitlement Programs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>SSI/SSDI Access, Outreach and Recovery (SOAR)</u>: Increases access to SSI/SSDI for eligible adults experiencing housing instability and mental illness and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder. • <i>One-on-One Mentor Life Skill programs from RHY</i>
<i>Employment & Education</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Veteran Centers @ Institutions of Higher Learning</u>: A single point of entry for Veteran services including VA benefits, academic services, Veteran student organizations, etc. • <u>Next Steps</u>: Connects the housing authority and education systems to target homeless families and the academic success of young children.
<i>Continuum of Housing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Host Home Model for Runaway/Homeless Youth</i>: Licensed host homes as a temporary emergency shelter options for runaway/homeless youth in communities lacking appropriate emergency housing. • <u>Keeping Families Together</u>: Houses and case manages families at risk of child welfare involvement to prevent homelessness and family disruption. • <u>Permanent Supportive Housing</u>: Permanent housing and supportive services to chronically homeless households to promote stability and self-sufficiency.
<i>Access to Health care</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Taking Health care Home/PSH with case management and access to health care</i>: Incorporates permanent, affordable housing with behavioral health and substance abuse treatment.

Appendix D: Statewide Point-in-Time

Figure 22 2006 & 2007 Statewide PIT Regions 1-5

Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delta • Garfield • Mesa • Moffat • Pitkin • Rio Blanco • Routt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear Creek • Eagle • Gilpin • Grand • Jackson • Larimer • Summit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logan • Morgan • Phillips • Sedgwick • Washington • Weld • Yuma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chaffee • Custer • Fremont • Gunnison • Hinsdale • Lake Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adams • Arapahoe • Boulder • Broomfield • Denver • Douglas • Jefferson

Figure 23 2006 & 2007 Statewide PIT Regions 6-9

Region 6	Region 7	Region 8	Region 9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheyenne • El Paso • Elbert • Kiowa • Kit Carson • Lincoln • Teller 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archuleta • Dolores • La Plata • Montezuma • Montrose • Ouray • San Juan • San Miguel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alamosa • Conejos • Costilla • Mineral • Rio Grande • Saguache 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baca • Bent • Crowley • Huerfano • Las Animas • Otero • Prowers • Pueblo

Figure 24 Statewide Point-in-Time Results by Region^{xlviii}

	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8	Region 9	Total
Summer 2006	316	404	169	82	4,259	707	197	251	253	6,638
Winter 2007	905	469	354	137	8,797	943	594	292	1,119	13,610

Appendix E: History of Homeless Initiatives in Colorado



2005

- *Advisory Committee on Homeless Youth* created within CDHS

2006

- Governor Owens reappoints the Colorado Community and Interagency Council on Homelessness (CCICH)
- CCICH completes a summer statewide point-in-time survey, finding 6,638 homeless men, women, and children on one night in Colorado
- Governor Owens continues implementation of Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

2007

- Governor Ritter re-appoints the Colorado Community and Interagency Council on Homelessness (CCICH)
- CCICH completes a winter statewide point-in-time survey, finding 15,394 homeless men, women, and children on one night in Colorado
- The development of a statewide five year plan is started

2008

- CCICH identifies housing; education; employment; benefit acquisition; access to support services; and information collection, management, and evaluation as priorities
- Rural collaborative established

2009

- *Homeward Pikes Peak* begins implementation
- *Boulder County Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* begins implementation
- *Longmont Housing Opportunities Team* begins implementation
- HEARTH act passed, amending and re-authorizing the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act with substantial changes

2010

- *Homeward 2020* begins implementation
- Development of HB 11-1079, bringing state statute into alignment with Federal Runaway Homeless Youth (RHY) code, including adding host family homes as an allowable emergency shelter for RHY
- Implementation of Colorado *SOAR Project*

End Notes

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