

**HOMELESSNESS IN THE DENVER METROPOLITAN AREA  
FALL POINT IN TIME STUDY  
SEPTEMBER 19, 2000**

*A Collaborative Effort Between  
The Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative  
&  
The Colorado Department of Human Services*

*By*

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This research project could not have been completed without the support and dedication of the many homeless providers throughout the Denver metropolitan area. A special note of thanks goes to the hard working people who strive to provide a decent and safe place for homeless persons to live.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **Homelessness In The Denver Metropolitan Area A Point In Time Study: September 19, 2000 A Collaborative Effort Between The Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative & The Colorado Department of Human Service, Supportive Housing and Homeless Programs**

By Tracy A. D'Alanno, Manager Homeless Program  
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The Denver Metropolitan area has worked for the past six years to develop a comprehensive system of housing and services for homeless persons. The Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI) has facilitated the development of this system. Designing and implementing a comprehensive homeless system requires on-going accurate information on the numbers and demographic characteristics of homeless persons residing in this geographic region. This research project concentrated on counting homeless persons in Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Denver, Douglas and Jefferson counties.

The Colorado Department of Human Services, Supportive Housing and Homeless Programs (SHHP) on behalf of MDHI agreed to conduct a census count of homeless persons in the six county region throughout the day and evening of September 19, 2000. The census count was completed by distributing questionnaires to all area homeless facilities and requesting that they administer the survey throughout the entire day and evening to all homeless persons contacted. Homeless persons completed survey forms with the assistance of staff and volunteers at homeless provider facilities. Homeless persons who did not agree to complete a survey were counted and entered on a separate homeless count form. Finally, homeless facilities completed a survey that counted the total number of persons residing or using services on that day, total daily capacity, and number of surveys returned. Initial data entry, cleaning and removal of duplicates was performed in an ACCESS database. Final data analysis was performed through utilization of a statistical software program called SPSS. A total head count of those not completing surveys minus the duplication rate found in the initial survey was then added to the initial count to get a total count. Data analysis for homeless characteristics, demographics and other statistics are based solely upon respondents who completed a survey.

This study was completed on the streets, in emergency shelters, transitional housing projects, food lines, day shelters, homeless treatment programs, and homeless work programs. Persons were counted as homeless who lacked a permanent place of their own to live. This includes persons who were staying on the streets, in emergency shelters in transitional living facilities or were using services for the indigent, living in welfare hotels or motels, or were doubled up temporarily with family or friends and identified themselves as being homeless and were therefore requesting emergency shelter and services. Persons who reported that they had a permanent place of their own to live were not counted as homeless unless their permanent residence was an emergency shelter or the streets.

A total of 8,137 persons in the metropolitan area were counted on September 19, 2000. Of those, 448 persons were receiving permanent supportive housing, resulting in a total homeless person count of 7,689. Of the total homeless persons counted 2,722 were single adults, 1,938 were adults in families, over one-third were -- 2,745 -- were children in families, and 284 were single youth on their own.

On September 19, 2000, 3,785 persons who completed a survey or 62% of the population surveyed had a need for emergency shelter and services. These persons lacked a permanent place of their own and were sleeping in emergency shelters, on the streets, were doubled up with family or friends, were staying night-to-night at welfare hotels, were coming out of institutions, or staying in other places not fit for human habitation. Persons receiving transitional housing or permanent supportive services are not included in this figure.

A total of 2,239 persons who completed a survey or 37% of the population surveyed are participants in homeless transitional housing programs or treatment programs. A total of 448 persons or 7% were formerly homeless persons who were counted as residing in permanent supportive housing programs. A total of 64 persons or 1% did not report where they spent last night, so no assumptions can be made as to what type of housing they would need.

This is a point in time survey that indicates how many people are homeless at that given point in time. Point prevalence is important in determining the current need for emergency shelter beds, food, and clothing. However, an annual prevalence or how many homeless persons there are over the course of a year is important in determining the on-going supportive housing, job training, educational, and permanent housing needs of homeless persons. Results of this survey suggest that the annual prevalence of homelessness in the Denver metropolitan area is close to 21,129 persons each year.

Changes in the definitions of homelessness, in the homeless service delivery system, counting methodologies, as well as seasonal factors make accurate comparisons to earlier studies difficult. In June of 1998, the Colorado Department of Human Services conducted a similar study that completed a census count on homeless persons. However, the 1998 study did not attempt to get a head count of homeless persons who refused to complete a questionnaire. In addition, the 1998 study had unprecedented participation from all providers of homeless services in the six county Denver metropolitan area. Good participation from homeless providers in the 1998 study increased the number of opportunities to find homeless persons that were included in that count. This study attempted to gain the same type of participation, however, two facilities, Central Shelter and Shelter on the Hill, who serve up to 170 homeless single men on any given night chose not participate. Finally, the Boulder Shelter for the Homeless, which provides emergency shelter to an additional 85 persons in the winter, is not open for emergency services in September. The lack of participation from two facilities in Denver and the closure of emergency shelter services at the Boulder Shelter for the Homeless in September may have resulted in an undercount for single individuals of as much as 255 persons.

Earlier studies conducted before 1998 were completed using sampling methodology that did not attempt to complete an actual census count on homeless persons. Regardless of the different methodologies utilized to estimate the number of homeless persons at any given time, there has undoubtedly been a continuing trend showing an increase in the number of homeless persons in the Denver metropolitan area over the past ten years.

The 1998 MDHI Study counted a total of 5,792 homeless persons in the Denver metropolitan area at that given point in time.<sup>1</sup> This study counted a total of 7,689 homeless persons, resulting in a total increase in homelessness of about 33% over the past two years.

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<sup>1</sup> Tracy A. D'Alanno, "Homelessness in the Denver Metropolitan Area, A Base Line Point In Time Study: June 15, 1998." Colorado Department of Human Services.

As in previous studies, homelessness among children in families continues to be one of the fastest growing segments of the homeless population in the Denver metropolitan area. This study shows an increase of 42% in the number of children from 1,931 in June of 1998 to 2,745 in September of 2000 with a corresponding increase of 16.3% in the number of families. Homelessness among single adults increased by 8% from 2,514 in 1998 to 2,722 in 2000 and homelessness among single youth increased 44% from 197 in 1998 to 284 in 2000.

While the booming economy within the state of Colorado brings with it growing employment opportunities and other economic benefits, it has also contributed to a severe lack of affordable housing. The primary reason individuals and families reported becoming homeless related directly to their inability to pay rent or mortgage and as a result became homeless due to eviction or foreclosure. In addition, twelve percent or 730 of the persons who completed a survey reported that their last permanent address was outside of the state of Colorado. Clearly, many people are migrating to the state looking for employment opportunities. It is likely that as the population in Colorado continues to grow and as long as housing vacancy rates remain low and housing costs remain high, the Denver metropolitan area will continue to see a growing homeless population.

The Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative has made significant progress in implementing a coordinated system of housing and service delivery for homeless individuals, families and youth. Unfortunately, the demand for services has significantly outpaced the region's capacity to meet those needs. There are simply not enough resources to meet an annual estimated prevalence of up to 21,129 homeless persons per year. According to the Emergency Shelter Helpline managed by the Colorado Department of Human Services and administered by Mile High United Way, 50% of families calling and requesting emergency shelter could not be housed upon first contact. The total percentage of families that cannot be eventually placed is approximately thirty-three percent. Emergency shelters throughout the metropolitan area now have waiting lists and/or conduct lotteries to give away beds at night. Families with children continue to be forced to sleep in their cars, in bus stations, and in parks.

## INTRODUCTION

The Denver Metropolitan area has worked for the past six years to develop a completely comprehensive system of housing and services for homeless persons. The homeless service delivery system called the Homeless Continuum of Care includes a plan for addressing the emergency, transitional, and permanent housing and services needs of homeless families, individuals and youth. The homeless service delivery system has been designed to work in a coordinated manner throughout the six county Denver metropolitan area. The Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI) is facilitating the development of this system. Designing and implementing a comprehensive homeless system requires on-going accurate information on the numbers and demographic characteristics of homeless persons residing in the geographic region. Therefore, this research project concentrated on counting homeless persons in Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson counties.

The Colorado Department of Human Services, Supportive Housing and Homeless Programs (SHHP) on behalf of MDHI agreed to conduct a census count of homeless persons in the six county region throughout the day and evening of September 19, 2000. The census count was completed by distributing questionnaires to all area homeless facilities and requesting that they administer the survey throughout the entire day and evening to all homeless persons contacted. Homeless persons completed the survey forms with the assistance of staff and volunteers at area homeless provider facilities. In addition, outreach workers canvassed the streets and area motels to interview and complete survey forms for homeless persons not accessing homeless services. In addition, homeless persons who did not agree to complete a survey were counted and entered on a separate homeless count form. Finally, homeless facilities completed a survey that counted the total number of persons residing or using services on that day, total daily capacity, and number of surveys returned.

Questionnaire results were then entered into an ACCESS database. Duplicate entries were identified and removed from the database. Initial aggregation and data cleaning was completed in the ACCESS database and then the entire database was imported into SPSS. SPSS is a statistical analysis software program that was utilized for final data aggregation and cleaning. A total head count of those not completing surveys minus the duplication rate found in the initial survey was then added to the initial count to get a total count. The attached tables are primarily based on the responses received from the survey questionnaire.

This study was completed on the streets, in emergency shelters, transitional housing projects, food lines, day shelters, homeless treatment programs, and homeless work programs. Guidelines and requirements established by the federal government were used to conduct an enumeration of the homeless population. The federal definition includes homeless persons with emergency housing and service needs, as well as, homeless persons who are receiving transitional housing and services. Persons residing in transitional housing are not counted as needing emergency services. In addition, the Department of Housing and Urban Development requires a count of formerly homeless persons residing in federally funded permanent supportive housing programs for persons with special needs. Four hundred and forty-eight persons, who are currently residing in permanent supportive housing programs for homeless persons with disabilities were counted but are not included in the overall homeless count. This group was counted in order to help MDHI analyze current homeless system capacity in providing appropriate supported housing to homeless persons with mental illness, physical disabilities, HIV/AIDS, and other special needs and to meet federal documentation requirements.

Methods utilized by this study included the distribution of questionnaires developed by the Colorado Department of Human Services and approved by MDHI's Data Collection committee. Questionnaires were distributed to homeless agencies, county departments of social services, and human service agencies, which serve the homeless. Five training sessions were held for area homeless case managers and directors to ensure that administration of the questionnaire was completed correctly. Questionnaires were completed either through case manager interviews with homeless persons or individually by homeless persons themselves. Each person counted was assigned a unique identifier based on a combination of their first and last name, gender, and their date of birth. Duplicates were further checked for ethnicity and last permanent address to gain an unduplicated count. The methodologies used in this survey are described in more detail at the end of this paper. The questionnaire used in the interviews and filled out by homeless persons is presented in Appendix C. The questionnaire used to collect head counts of homeless persons not completing a survey is presented in Appendix C-1. The provider questionnaire used to determine overall facility capacity and matched against number of surveys returned is presented in Appendix C-2. Provider agencies and facilities that participated in the survey are included in Appendix D and D-1. Directions for administering the survey are attached as Appendix E.

This is the second point-in-time survey sponsored by The Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative and conducted by the Colorado Department of Human Services.

The goals of the 2000 survey were to:

- To provide a comprehensive census count of the homeless population in the metropolitan area on September 19, 2000;
- To document demographic characteristics of the homeless population;
- To determine the last permanent residence of homeless persons to better determine needs within each county;
- To determine where homeless persons spent last night to analyze system capacity and review patterns of mobility of the homeless;
- To meet research requirements for the Department of Housing and Urban Development for the annual Homeless Notice of Funding Availability;
- To differentiate the needs of homeless persons for emergency housing, transitional housing, and permanent housing;
- To differentiate the needs of homeless persons for appropriate services like job training, child care, education, food, domestic violence counseling, employment assistance, and mental health and/or substance abuse treatment.

It should be noted that this study was not able to gain much information about the specific service needs of the homeless for HIV/AIDS services. Collecting information on the number of persons with HIV or AIDS related illnesses among the homeless population is difficult due to client confidentiality issues and the self-reporting nature of this study. As a result, some HIV/AIDS providers chose not to participate in the survey and many homeless consumers with AIDS related illnesses chose not to self-report receiving or needing services.

This study counted a total of 44 unduplicated persons who reported that they either received or needed services for HIV/AIDS related illness. In addition, the Colorado AIDS project counted an additional 37 homeless persons with HIV/AIDS who refused to complete a survey. Total

count in this survey of homeless persons needing or receiving services for HIV/AIDS related illness is 81 which is approximately 1.3% of the total number of homeless persons counted. This is likely a significant under count of the actual need for HIV/AIDS services. As a result, the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) Advisory Committee will appoint a member to serve on the MDHI Data Collection committee to help ensure that subsequent homeless surveys more accurately reflect this population in future counts. While the total count of persons receiving or needing services for HIV/AIDS related illnesses is low, it should be noted that 25% or eleven persons of the forty-four who completed a survey and indicated a need for HIV/AIDS services were persons in families.

Some information regarding the service needs of homeless persons with mental illness and substance abuse treatment issues was obtained. However, further studies that focus on these specific populations would be better able to document their specific service needs.

### **DEFINING THE HOMELESS**

Guidelines and requirements established by the federal government were used to conduct an enumeration of the homeless population. The federal definition includes homeless persons with emergency housing and service needs, as well as, homeless persons who are receiving transitional housing and services. Persons residing in transitional housing were not counted as needing emergency services. In addition, the Department of Housing and Urban Development requires a count of formerly homeless persons residing in federally funded permanent supportive housing programs for persons with special needs. Persons residing in permanent supportive housing programs were not counted as homeless. However, the Department of Housing and Urban Development requires that persons residing in transitional housing and permanent supportive housing be included in the overall counts of the homeless in order to take into account their needs for either permanent housing or for continued case management and services required for persons to reach a maximum point of personal self-sufficiency. Finally, a comprehensive analysis of the service delivery system is not possible without first understanding who is currently being served by the system. In order to obtain a true count of gaps in the housing and service delivery system, the following formula is used:

Total # of Persons <b>Estimated Need</b>	Total # of housing/service units <b>Current Inventory</b>	(Need) - (Inventory) = Gaps <b>Unmet Need</b>
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Persons were also counted as homeless who lacked a permanent place to live, were using services for the indigent, were living in welfare hotels or motels, and were doubled up temporarily with family or friends and identified themselves as being homeless and were therefore requesting emergency shelter and services. Persons in any of these places, who reported that they had a permanent place to live, were not counted as homeless.

### **OVERALL NUMBERS OF HOMELESS**

A total of 8,137 persons in the metropolitan area were counted on September 19, 2000. Of those, 448 persons were receiving permanent supportive housing, resulting in a total homeless person count of **7,689**. Of the total homeless persons counted 2,722 were single adults, 1,938 were adults in families, over one-third were – 2,745 -- were children in families, and 284 were single youth on their own.



On September 19, 2000, 3,785 persons who completed a survey or 62% of the population surveyed had a need for emergency shelter and services. These persons lacked a permanent place of their own and were sleeping in emergency shelters, on the streets, were doubled up with family or friends, were staying night-to-night at welfare hotels, were coming out of institutions, or staying in other places not fit for human habitation. Persons receiving transitional services or permanent supportive services are not included in this figure. There are currently 572 emergency shelter beds available to persons in families with this study showing an estimated need of 2,110 beds for families on any given night. There are currently 1,176 emergency shelter beds available for individuals with this study showing an estimated need of 1,675 beds on any given night.

A total of 2,239 persons who completed a survey or 37% of the population counted are participants in homeless transitional housing programs or treatment programs. In 1998 1,517 persons or 25% of the population counted were participants in homeless transitional housing programs. This study shows an increase of 47.5% or 722 additional persons being served in this type of housing. This increase represents the success of the current homeless service delivery system in providing more appropriate housing and services to homeless persons by facilitating opportunities for self-sufficiency. A total of 448 persons or 7% were formerly homeless persons counted as residing in permanent supportive housing programs. A total of 64 persons or 1% did not report where they spent last night, so no assumptions can be made as to what type of housing they would need.

## **TRENDS IN HOMELESSNESS**

Changes in the definitions of homelessness, in the homeless service delivery system, counting methodologies, as well as seasonal factors make accurate comparisons to earlier studies difficult. In June of 1998, the Colorado Department of Human Services conducted a similar study that completed a census count on homeless persons. However, the 1998 study did not attempt to get a head count of homeless persons who refused to complete a questionnaire. In addition, the 1998 study had unprecedented participation from all providers of homeless services in the six county Denver metropolitan area. Good participation from homeless providers in the 1998 study increased the number of opportunities to find homeless persons that were included in that count. This study attempted to gain the same type of participation, however, two facilities, Central Shelter and Shelter on the Hill, who serve up to 170 homeless single men on any given night chose not participate. Finally, the Boulder Shelter for the Homeless, which provides emergency shelter to an additional 85 persons in the winter, is not open for emergency services in September. The lack of participation from two facilities in Denver and the closure of emergency shelter services at the Boulder Shelter for the Homeless in September may have resulted in an undercount for single individuals of as much as 255 persons.

Earlier studies conducted before 1998 were completed using sampling methodology that did not attempt to complete an actual census count on homeless persons. In addition, the 1998 study and this study completed surveys on families and individuals who called homeless providers requesting emergency shelter. Since previous studies did not complete questionnaires from people who were calling and requesting assistance, it is likely that more homeless persons were found. Regardless of the different methodologies utilized to estimate the number of homeless persons at any given time, there has undoubtedly been a continuing trend showing an increase in the number of homeless persons in the Denver metropolitan area over the past ten years.

The 1998 MDHI Study counted a total of 5,792 homeless persons in the Denver metropolitan area at that given point in time.<sup>2</sup> This study counted a total of 7,689 homeless persons, resulting in a total increase in homelessness of about 33% over the past two years.

As in previous studies, homelessness among children in families continues to be one of the fastest growing segments of the homeless population in the Denver metropolitan area. According to a survey conducted in 1995, by Dr. Franklin James, the number of homeless children in families grew by 180 % between 1990 and 1995.<sup>3</sup> The 1995 homeless survey by Dr. Franklin James counted a total of 1,050 children and the 1998 MDHI survey counted a total of 1,931 homeless children, an increase of 83%.<sup>4</sup> This study shows an increase of 42% in the number of children from 1,931 in June of 1998 to 2,745 in September of 2000. Homelessness among single adults increased by 8% from 2,514 in 1998 to 2,722 in 2000 and homelessness among single youth increased 44% from 197 in 1998 to 284 in 2000.

Counts of the homeless conducted in 1988 and 1990 focused on identifying homeless persons with emergency needs. However, it should be noted that transitional and permanent supportive housing programs were extremely limited so that homeless persons in 1988 through 1990 generally were in need of emergency services as the only option available. By 1995, MDHI had successfully begun the implementation of a more coordinated homeless service delivery system and had significantly expanded the transitional housing system. Therefore, the 1995 research counted residents of transitional housing programs.

In addition, the 1988 and 1990 studies were completed in April; the 1995 study was conducted in August and the 1998 study was completed in June and the 2000 study was conducted in September. Seasonal patterns identifying whether the homeless population is higher or lower in any one of these months has never been accurately identified. However, it is generally accepted that homelessness tends to increase over the summer months as people are more mobile and families don't have children in school.

Finally, the 1988, 1990 and 1995 studies were conducted using cluster-sampling methods to estimate the homeless population in shelters, food lines, and in transitional housing.<sup>5</sup> The 1998 and 2000 studies are an actual census count of the homeless population using intake and assessment questionnaires and software developed in an ACCESS database to aggregate collected information. In addition, the 1998 and 2000 studies made a concerted effort to gain participation from any human service agency that may make contact with homeless persons in the six county metropolitan region. This methodology certainly increased the number of

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<sup>2</sup> Tracy A. D'Alanno, "Homelessness in the Denver Metropolitan Area, A Base Line Point In Time Study: June 15, 1998." Colorado Department of Human Services.

<sup>3</sup> Franklin J. James, "Patterns of Homelessness in the Denver Metropolitan Area: August, 1995." Denver: Graduate School of Public Affairs, April 1996 (revised).

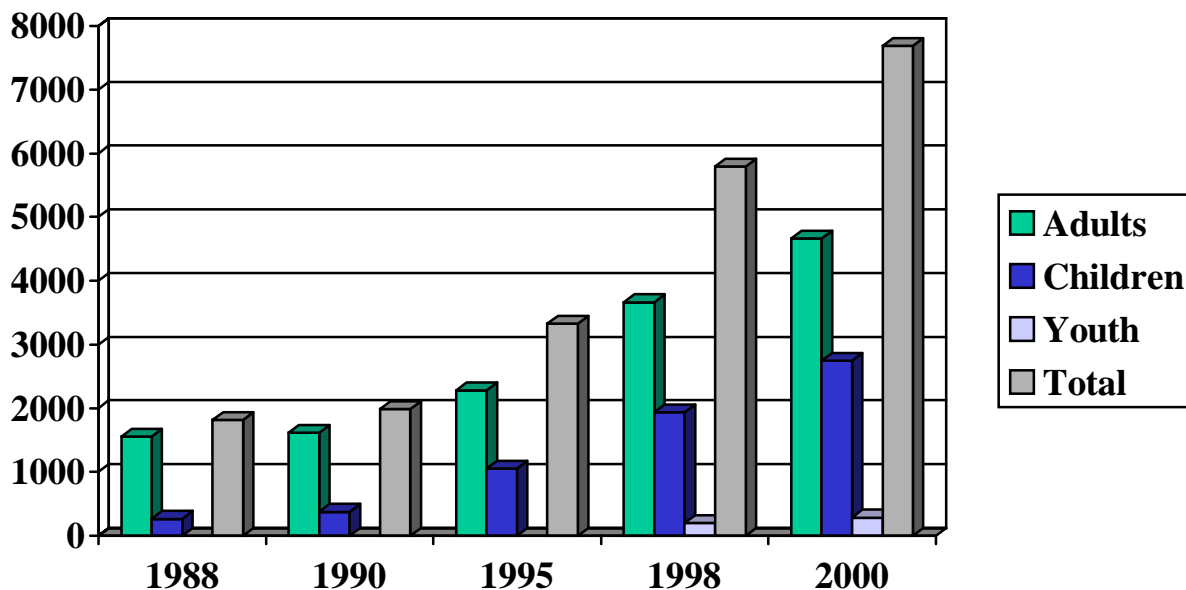
<sup>4</sup> Tracy A. D'Alanno, "Homelessness in the Denver Metropolitan Area, A Base Line Point In Time Study: June 15, 1998." Colorado Department of Human Services.

<sup>5</sup> Franklin J. James, "New Methods for Measuring Homelessness and the Population at Risk: Exploratory Research in Colorado," Social Work Research and Abstracts, Volume 28, Number 2, June 1992, pp. 9-14. Franklin J. James "Counting Homeless Persons with Surveys of Users of Services for the Homeless", Housing Policy Debate, Volume 2, Issue 3, 1991, pp. 733-753. Franklin J. James, "Techniques for Estimating the Size of the Homeless Population in Colorado", in U.S. Bureau of the Census, Enumerating Homeless Persons: Methods and Data Needs: Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of Commerce, March 1991.

opportunities to find homeless persons that were included in the counts. Finally, the 1998 and 2000 studies completed surveys on families and individuals who called homeless providers requesting emergency shelter. Since previous studies did not complete questionnaires from people who were calling and requesting assistance, it is likely that more homeless persons were found. The total number of persons counted in each study is as follows:

### Homeless Trends 1988 Through 2000

	1988 <sup>a</sup>	1990 <sup>a</sup>	1995 <sup>a</sup>	1998 <sup>b</sup>	2000 <sup>d</sup>
Adults	1,550	1,610	2,280	3,664	4,660
Children	265	375	1,050	1,931	2,745
Youth	<sup>c</sup>	<sup>c</sup>	<sup>c</sup>	197	284
Total	1,815	1,985	3,330	5,792	7,689



### CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS

For the past five years, the State of Colorado has been experiencing a tremendous growth in its economy. Unfortunately, economic growth has contributed to a severe lack of affordable housing, resulting in housing vacancy rates as low as 2% throughout the Denver metropolitan

<sup>a</sup> SOURCE: Franklin J. James, "Patterns of Homelessness in the Denver Metropolitan Area: August, 1995." Denver: Graduate School of Public Affairs, April 1996 (revised).


<sup>b</sup> SOURCE: Tracy A. D'Alanno, "Homelessness in the Denver Metropolitan Area, A Base Line Point In Time Study: June 15, 1998." Colorado Department of Human Services.

<sup>d</sup> SOURCE: Tracy A. D'Alanno, "Homelessness in the Denver Metropolitan Area, Fall Point In Time Study: September 19, 2000." Colorado Department of Human Services.

<sup>c</sup> No separate estimates of homeless youth on their own are available. The 1998, 1990, and 1995 studies did not differentiate single adults from homeless youth.

area. Due to low vacancy rates, housing costs have risen dramatically forcing many individuals and families to become homeless. In addition, positive reports regarding Colorado’s economy acted as a catalyst for encouraging individuals and families to move here looking for employment. In fact, twelve percent or 730 of the persons who completed a survey reported that their last permanent address was outside of the state of Colorado. Clearly, many people are migrating to the state looking for employment opportunities. Many homeless persons who moved to Colorado looking for employment could either not find appropriate employment and/or could not find an affordable place to live. Inability to pay rent or mortgage and unemployment were reported as the two highest causes for homelessness among both individuals and families. Other causes of homelessness as reported by survey respondents varied between individuals and families. Substance abuse and mental illness were cited as causes of homelessness for individuals more often than for families, whereas, domestic violence was a larger contributing factor in family homelessness.

Reasons respondents reported for becoming homeless are as follows:



## Homeless Characteristics Family/Individual Comparison Causes of Homelessness


Reasons	Overall Count	Pct. of Cases	Indiv. Count	Indiv. Pct.	Family Count	Family Pct.
Unable to pay rent or mortgage	1350	43.8	737	37.8	613	54.3
Unemployment	1227	39.8	747	38.3	480	42.6
Alcohol/substance abuse	781	25.3	645	33.1	136	12.1
Mental disabilities	628	20.4	525	26.9	103	9.0
Domestic violence	502	16.3	201	10.3	301	26.7
Bad credit history	367	11.9	185	9.5	182	16.1
Family member/personal illness	338	11.0	184	9.4	154	13.7
Moved to seek work	326	10.6	201	10.3	125	11.0
Physical disabilities	316	10.3	224	11.5	92	8.0
Welfare issues	225	7.2	82	4.2	143	12.6
Discharge from jail or prison	206	6.7	164	8.4	42	3.7
Child abuse	102	3.3	72	3.7	30	2.6
Change in household composition/divorce	80	2.6	38	2.0	42	3.7
Teen runaway	70	2.3	37	1.9	33	2.9
Family problems	58	1.9	35	1.8	23	2.0
Personal Choice	43	1.4	38	1.9	5	.4

It is likely that as the population in Colorado continues to grow, and as long as housing vacancy rates remain low and housing costs remain high, the Denver metropolitan area will continue to see a growing homeless population.

## BARRIERS TO SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Survey respondents were asked to identify issues that were keeping them homeless. Sixty percent of respondents indicated that the lack of affordable housing was a significant barrier to self-sufficiency. Thirty percent of the individuals, who responded, indicated that substance abuse was a significant factor keeping them homeless. Twenty-eight percent of individuals reported that mental illness was a factor contributing to their inability to become self-sufficient. The primary barrier for families was the inability to find affordable housing at seventy-two percent. Twenty-nine percent of respondents in families felt that a bad credit history was a barrier to self-sufficiency. Over twenty-six percent of respondents in families felt that a lack of job skills and poor education were contributing factors to keeping them homeless.

Respondents reported the following issues as barriers to self-sufficiency:



### Homeless Characteristics Family/Individual Comparison Reasons Keeping People Homeless

Reasons	Overall Count	Pct. of Cases	Indiv. Count	Indiv. Pct.	Family Count	Family Pct.
Can't find affordable housing	1645	60.6	898	53.5	747	72.2
Substance abuse	597	22.0	509	30.3	88	8.5
Bad credit history	588	21.7	288	17.2	300	29.0
Mental illness	566	20.9	474	28.2	92	8.9
Lack of job skills	526	19.4	252	15.0	274	26.5
Need more education	502	18.5	229	13.6	273	26.4
Criminal background	370	13.6	273	16.3	97	9.4
Eviction history	341	12.6	161	9.6	180	17.4
Work history	328	12.1	158	9.4	170	16.5
Physical disability	310	11.4	224	13.3	86	8.2
Large family	134	4.9	22	1.3	112	10.8
Do not speak English	101	3.7	50	3.0	51	4.9
U.S. citizenship status	57	2.1	20	1.2	37	3.6

## DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

### Homelessness Among Children

As in previous studies, homelessness among children in families continues to be one of the fastest growing segments of the homeless population in the Denver metropolitan area. According to a survey conducted in 1995, by Dr. Franklin James, the number of homeless

children in families grew by 180 % between 1990 and 1995.<sup>6</sup> The 1995 homeless survey by Dr. Franklin James counted a total of 1,050 children and the 1998 MDHI survey counted a total of 1,931 homeless children, an increase of 83%.<sup>7</sup> This study shows an increase of 42% in the number of children from 1,931 in June of 1998 to 2,745 in September of 2000 with a corresponding increase of 16.3% in the number of families.

Forty-nine percent or 1,092 children counted were living in transitional housing. Twenty-three percent or 517 children were rotating between family and friends, fifteen percent or 338 children were staying in emergency or domestic violence shelters, 216 children or over nine percent were living in motels, 35 children were living in the family car, and 25 children stayed the previous night on the street, of which 11 children were five years old or younger.

While this study did not attempt to determine the long term affects of homelessness on children, the lack of a stable living environment, appropriate health care and nutrition, and the on-going educational impacts could certainly be considered detrimental to a child's sense of well being and future stability. According to the *Journal of Children & Poverty*, sixty-two percent of homeless children are reading below grade level, seventy-eight percent are performing below grade level in math, twenty-four percent have been placed in special education, and thirty-seven percent have repeated a grade. Early intervention, intensive case management and services along with transitional housing become of prime importance in ensuring that we break the cycle of poverty and homelessness for the future for these children.<sup>8</sup>

The age breakdown of children in families surveyed is important for understanding the childcare and educational needs of homeless families in the Denver metropolitan area. 1,021 children surveyed were five years old or younger, with seven percent under the age of 1 and over thirty-eight percent between the ages of 1 and 5. If the parents of these children are expected to work or attend educational programs, then these children will be in need of childcare. In addition, thirty-eight percent of the families surveyed indicated that they had children between the ages of 6 and 12, and sixteen percent had children between the ages of 13 and 17. Public school systems need to be made aware of the special educational and emotional needs of these children.

### Homelessness Among Families

One thousand two hundred and twelve families were surveyed which included a total of 3,847 persons. Seventy-six percent of the families interviewed were one-parent families, thirteen percent were two-parent families, and four percent were couples with no children. Seven percent of families were other family compositions including families headed by grandparents, or other family members.

The age breakdown of homelessness among adults in families shows that forty-three percent of the adults were between the ages of 18 and 30. Forty-six percent were between the ages of 31 and 50. Four percent were between the ages of 51 and 64. Finally, one percent was 65 or older

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<sup>6</sup> Franklin J. James, "Patterns of Homelessness in the Denver Metropolitan Area: August, 1995." Denver: Graduate School of Public Affairs, April 1996 (revised).

<sup>7</sup> Tracy A. D'Alanno, "Homelessness in the Denver Metropolitan Area, A Base Line Point In Time Study: June 15, 1998." Colorado Department of Human Services.

<sup>8</sup> Ralph da Costa Nunez, "Journal of Children & Poverty: The Future of Violence Among Homeless Children in America," Volume 4, Number 1, Winter/Spring 1998. Institute for Children and Poverty, New York, New York.

with six percent not responding. Seventy-six percent of the adults in families are female with only twenty-four percent of the adults in families being male.

#### Homelessness Among Single Adults

The age breakdown of homelessness among single adults shows that 513 persons or twenty-five percent are between the ages of 18 and 30. This is significantly less than the forty-three percent of adults in families for the same age group. Sixty percent of single adults are between the ages of 31 and 50 in comparison to the forty-six percent of adults in families for this age group. Fourteen percent are between the ages of 51 and 64 in comparison to the four percent of adults in families for the same age group. Finally, almost two percent or 33 individuals are 65 or older. This demographic information indicates that homeless single individuals are significantly older than their adult counter parts in families. In direct contrast to homeless families, males comprise a total of sixty-eight percent of homeless single adults where women comprise approximately seventy-six percent of adults in homeless families. A total of 702 single homeless women were counted. Homeless single women tend to be more vulnerable on the streets, have less emergency shelter options available, and tend to have a higher percentage of mental illness associated with their homelessness. In fact, thirty-three percent of homeless single women self-reported that they had received treatment or services for serious mental illness in the past versus twenty-three percent of homeless single males.

Survey results point to a need for mental illness and substance abuse treatment and services for homeless single adults. A total of twenty-six percent of adult respondents reported having received treatment or services for serious mental illness in the past with the same percentage reporting having needed services in the past. Seventeen percent or 96 persons who reported that they needed services did not report that they had received services. Finally, a total of twenty-six percent of single adult respondents reported having received treatment or services for chronic substance abuse in the past while thirty-four percent reported having needed treatment or services for substance abuse.

#### Homeless Youth On Their Own

A total of 284 single homeless youth age 21 or under living on their own were counted. In addition, there were 123 families headed by youth under the age of twenty-one with children of their own. This included 10 families headed by youth 17 years of age or younger. 123 youth families were ninety-six percent headed by single females. It should be noted that counting homeless youth on their own is difficult because they do not access traditional homeless service delivery systems. It is likely, that this is a significant undercount of homeless youth on their own. For more information on homeless youth please see the following report by: Franklin J. James, Ph.D. "Homelessness Among Youth on their Own is a Serious Problem for Colorado" (Denver: Graduate School of Public Affairs, CU-Denver, February 1992).

#### Race and Ethnicity

The racial and ethnic composition of the region's homeless population breaks down into sixty-five percent White, twenty-six percent Black, eight percent Native American, and one percent Asian. Twenty-six percent of those who responded to the question reported being of Hispanic origin. The following table outlines race and ethnicity within the homeless population in comparison to 1990 Census data.

<b>RACE &amp; ETHNICITY</b>	<b>Study Data</b>	<b>1990 Census Data</b>	<b>Percent of difference</b>
White	65%	88%	(23%)
Black	26%	4%	22%
American Indian	8%	.8%	7.2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1%	2%	(1%)
Non-Hispanic	74%	87%	(13%)
Hispanic	26%	13%	13%

As the above table indicates, minorities are disproportionately represented among metropolitan Denver’s homeless population.

### Level of Education Achieved

The following information was accomplished by extrapolating highest levels of education reported by adult single individuals and adult primaries in families. The following table illustrates levels of education achieved by homeless adults in this region. One thousand thirty-one persons or thirty-one percent reported less than a high school education. Forty percent reported having graduated from high school or receiving their GED. Finally, twenty-nine percent reported having completed some form of higher education. This breakdown should be helpful to providers, when planning for the educational, job training, and employment assistance needs of homeless adults.



## Homeless Characteristics Education Summary – Based on Adults Surveyed

<b>HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ACHIEVED</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Less Than High School	273	
Some High School	758	
<b>Subtotal Non-High School Graduate</b>	<b>1031</b>	<b>31%</b>
GED	533	
High School Graduate	811	
<b>Subtotal High School Graduate</b>	<b>1344</b>	<b>40%</b>
Some College	597	
Technical College	179	
College Degree	167	
Masters Degree	22	
Doctorate	10	
<b>Subtotal Higher Education</b>	<b>975</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,350</b>	<b>100%</b>

## **LENGTH AND FREQUENCY OF HOMELESSNESS**

It has long been believed that persons who are homeless cycle in and out of homelessness and that most homeless persons have been homeless for a long period of time. As in previous studies, this survey found that sixty-eight percent or more than half of the persons interviewed had never been homeless before. In addition, a full forty percent reported that they had been homeless for 90 days or less. Quite obviously, the trend of frequent turnover among the



homeless population has continued. Therefore, the current homeless service delivery system must be prepared to handle new homeless individuals and families as the need arises. In addition, clearly more focus needs to be placed in the area of homeless prevention. Prevention activities could significantly decrease the number of families and individuals experiencing homelessness. The following charts indicate length and frequency of homelessness among respondents.

## Frequencies

### Statistics

		LENGTH	TIMES
N	Valid	5605	6002
	Missing	483	86

## Frequency Table

### LENGTH

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<30 Days	1120	18.4	20.0	20.0
	30-90 Days	1134	18.6	20.2	40.2
	3-6 Months	843	13.8	15.0	55.3
	6 Mos. - 1 Yr.	964	15.8	17.2	72.5
	1-2 Years	921	15.1	16.4	88.9
	2-5 Years	419	6.9	7.5	96.4
	5-10 Years	108	1.8	1.9	98.3
	10+ Years	96	1.6	1.7	100.0
	Total	5605	92.1	100.0	
Missing	no response	483	7.9		
Total		6088	100.0		

### TIMES

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	First Time Homeless	4093	67.2	68.2	68.2
	Homeless Once Before	717	11.8	11.9	80.1
	Homeless Twice Before	508	8.3	8.5	88.6
	Homeless 3-5 Times Before	486	8.0	8.1	96.7
	Homeless 6 or More Times	198	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	6002	98.6	100.0	
Missing	No Response	86	1.4		
Total		6088	100.0		

## Crosstabs

### Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
LENGTH * TIMES	5533	90.9%	555	9.1%	6088	100.0%

### LENGTH \* TIMES Crosstabulation

Count		TIMES					Total
		First Time Homeless	Homeless Once Before	Homeless Twice Before	Homeless 3-5 Times Before	Homeless 6 or More Times	
LENGTH	<30 Days	792	139	74	75	35	1115
	30-90 Days	749	150	99	96	33	1127
	3-6 Months	565	94	87	73	19	838
	6 Mos. - 1 Yr.	614	128	94	79	33	948
	1-2 Years	602	98	88	81	26	895
	2-5 Years	233	60	44	51	27	415
	5-10 Years	55	20	9	13	9	106
	10+ Years	52	14	5	5	13	89
Total		3662	703	500	473	195	5533

This is a point in time survey that indicates how many people are homeless at that given point in time. Point prevalence is important in determining the current need for emergency shelter beds, food, and clothing. However, an annual prevalence or how many homeless persons there are over the course of a year is important in determining the on-going supportive housing, job training, educational, and permanent housing needs of homeless persons. A rough estimate can be made by summing up the point prevalence of 7,689 --plus the number of new cases emerging each month, approximately 1,120 X 12 months, for an approximate total annual prevalence of 21,129 persons each year.<sup>9</sup> However, this is a rough estimate and it would be necessary to conduct either ongoing census counts or at least quarterly census counts to determine if the monthly new case estimate is an accurate figure.

### WHERE HOMELESS PERSONS SLEEP AT NIGHT

A lack of capacity in the current emergency, transitional and affordable permanent housing stock has forced individuals and families to become creative in finding places to stay. Results of this survey indicate that approximately twenty percent of the homeless surveyed were sleeping in shelters. Twenty-one percent of homeless persons interviewed were staying with family or friends, twelve percent were sleeping on the streets, camping out, or were living in their car. Nine percent were living in hotels and motels. Working individuals and families forced to live in daily and weekly rate motels find it hard to save enough money to move into a permanent place of their own. The daily hotel rate and the necessity of having to eat out drains away any money earned, leaving little or nothing to put away for a damage deposit and first and last months rent.

<sup>9</sup> At the time of the June survey, 1,120 total homeless persons had been homeless one month or less. The estimate of annual prevalence assumes the number of new cases each month is constant over the year, yielding (12X 1120) or about 13,440 new cases over the year plus the sum of the point prevalence 7,689.

Twenty persons reported that they spent last night in jail or prison. This is a significant number of persons being released daily to the streets with the expectation that homeless facilities will provide them with emergency shelter. Eight persons interviewed indicated that they had spent last night in the hospital. The Denver metropolitan area does not have a respite facility that can provide homeless persons with the type of care they need when being released from hospitals. Consequently, homeless persons who may require a bed in which to recover from surgery or a major illness have few options available to them.

While there continues to be a lack of capacity to meet the emergency shelter needs of families and single women, study results show an increase in the systems capacity to provide transitional housing for homeless persons. The homeless service delivery system is more effectively responding to homelessness by developing and expanding appropriate housing and service programs that promote self-sufficiency. Thirty-seven percent of homeless persons interviewed reported being housed in a transitional housing program, a significant increase from the twenty-four percent of homeless persons who reported being housed in a transitional housing program in 1998. Transitional housing programs provide participants with job training, employment assistance, case management, basic living skills, and other services necessary for helping people transition into and maintain permanent housing. Results of the study show that homeless providers are making some progress in providing opportunities for individuals and families to become self-sufficient through the increase in the number of transitional housing units available.

However, more needs to be done to expand the availability of affordable permanent housing so that families can successfully transition from supported transitional housing programs into permanent housing. The current lack of affordable housing in the private rental market may act as a bottle neck preventing individuals and families from moving in a timely manner into permanent housing resulting in a corresponding bottle neck for individuals and families trying to move from emergency shelter into available transitional housing.

## **LAST PERMANENT RESIDENCE**

In order to determine where homeless individuals and families were coming from, respondents were asked to identify the county, city, state or country of their last permanent address. In addition, respondents were asked to identify in which county they spent last night. Thirty-six percent of those responding to this question indicated that their last permanent address was in the city or county of Denver. The largest percentage at forty-three percent indicated they had come from one of the surrounding five counties (Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Douglas, Jefferson Counties). Three percent reported their last permanent address within Colorado, but outside of the Denver metropolitan area. Finally, 730 people or twelve percent reported their last permanent address as outside the state of Colorado. The actual breakdown with suburban counties combined is as follows:

Statistics

Last Permanent County  
 N Valid 6088  
 Missing 0

Suburban Counties Combined

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Metro counties combined	2622	43.1	43.1	43.1
Denver	2217	36.4	36.4	79.5
Other State	730	12.0	12.0	91.5
No Response	258	4.2	4.2	95.7
Other	195	3.2	3.2	98.9
Colorado				
Other Country	66	1.1	1.1	100.0
Total	6088	100.0	100.0	

While thirty-six percent of respondents reported their last permanent address as Denver, the actual percentage of persons who reported staying in Denver on the night before the survey was taken is almost fifty percent. This is not surprising given the fact that Denver is the primary city in the state. Transportation, employment, emergency shelter services, and other human services are more easily accessible in Denver than in other parts of the metropolitan area.

It should be noted that the suburbs are playing an increasingly more significant role in meeting the housing and service needs of the homeless. The development of transitional and permanent supportive housing programs are being scattered throughout the region. Homeless task forces have been established in Adams, Jefferson, Boulder, and Arapahoe counties to take a concerted look at dealing with homeless persons in their community. Finally, the Arapahoe and Jefferson Public School systems are becoming increasingly concerned about meeting the educational needs of homeless students within their jurisdictions.

Furthermore, The Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative has made a concerted effort to disperse housing and services for homeless individuals and families throughout the six county metropolitan area. While emergency shelter and services have been traditionally located in the city and county of Denver, a balance of jurisdictional responsibility is starting to be achieved by the development of new transitional and emergency housing programs in Jefferson, Adams, Arapahoe, and Boulder counties. In addition, suburban counties are now working together to find a cooperative solution to meeting the emergency shelter needs of homeless persons who are not being served due to a lack of capacity. Distributing responsibility for providing homeless services throughout each region promotes jurisdictional accountability and helps homeless persons maintain critical relationships within their home communities.

Too often, a homeless family is forced to migrate to Denver to receive emergency housing and services. Parents are forced to move further away from their places of employment and children are forced to transfer to new school districts, only to be moved again when a more permanent housing situation is found. In addition, individuals with mental illness who are forced to move to Denver to find emergency shelter, lose contact with the services they may have been receiving

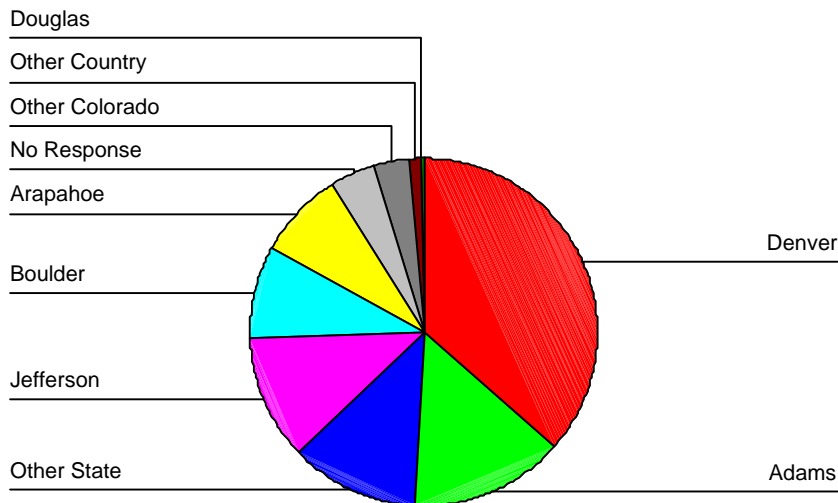
from the mental health center in their home community. This lack of continuity only further hinders an individuals or families ability to work toward self-sufficiency.

The overall breakdown of respondents' last permanent address, which includes each metropolitan county separately, is as follows:

Last Permanent County

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Denver	2217	36.4	36.4	36.4
Adams	880	14.5	14.5	50.9
Other State	730	12.0	12.0	62.9
Jefferson	707	11.6	11.6	74.5
Boulder	514	8.4	8.4	82.9
Arapahoe	500	8.2	8.2	91.1
No Response	258	4.2	4.2	95.4
Other Colorado	195	3.2	3.2	98.6
Other Country	66	1.1	1.1	99.7
Douglas	21	.3	.3	100.0
Total	6088	100.0	100.0	

Last Permanent County



## **HOMELESSNESS WITHIN EACH COUNTY**

Specific county demographic and statistical information can be found in Appendix A. Appendix A is a collection of tables broken out based upon which county homeless persons spent last night. Tables in appendix A are as follows:

### **Appendix A-1: Situation**

Tables are broken out by county last night and type of sleeping situation.

### **Appendix A-2: Individual Gender Breakdown**

Tables are broken out by county last night and show the breakdown of gender between male and female for homeless single individuals.

### **Appendix A-3: Individual Age Breakdown**

Tables are broken out by county last night and show the age breakdown for homeless single individuals.

### **Appendix A-4: Family Relationship Breakdown**

Tables show the number and percentage of primaries, spouses, children, other family members, domestic partners, other children in families and number of individuals.

### **Appendix A-5: Family Age Breakdown**

Tables are broken out by county last night and show the age breakdown for family members.

### **Appendix A-6: Length and Number of Times Homeless Cross Tabulation**

Tables are broken out by county last night and show a cross tabulation of the number of times and length of homelessness.

### **Appendix A-7: Length and Number of Times Homeless**

Tables are broken out by county last night and show the number of times and the length of homelessness.

### **Appendix A-8: Race and Ethnicity Cross Tabulation**

Tables are broken out by county last night and show a cross tabulation for race and ethnicity for adult primaries.

### **Appendix A-9: Last Permanent County**

Tables are broken out by county last night showing a breakdown of the respondents' last permanent county of residence.

## **AGGREGATE INFORMATION AND TABLES**

The full study results are reported in tables in Appendix B.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Homelessness in the metropolitan area continues to grow. The impact of homelessness on children and families is an issue that should be taken seriously by the public school systems, state government and legislators, and local governments which work to ensure that the people of

Colorado have a healthy environment with which to raise our children. Access to mainstream programs for the provision of mental health, substance abuse and Medicaid need to be better coordinated to ensure that homeless persons needing these services are able to obtain them.

While the booming economy within the state of Colorado brings with it growing employment opportunities and other economic benefits, it has also contributed to a severe lack of affordable housing. The primary reason individuals and families reported becoming homeless related directly to their inability to pay rent or mortgage and therefore became homeless due to eviction or foreclosure. According to the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, 450,000 Colorado households make less than \$17,500 per year.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, a family would need a base annual income of at least \$23,865 to pay for a two-bedroom unit. Finally, a minimum wage worker in Colorado would need to work 89 hours each week to afford a two-bedroom apartment in the Denver metropolitan area.

Finally, twelve percent or 730 of the persons who completed a survey reported that their last permanent address was outside of the state of Colorado. Clearly, many people are migrating to the state looking for employment opportunities. However, according to the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, fifty percent of all the jobs in Colorado are in the retail, agricultural and service trades. These trades have the lowest average annual wages and are increasing at a faster rate than other employment as a whole.<sup>11</sup> According to the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, there are 450,000 Colorado households that make less than \$17,500 per year. A family would need a base annual income of at least \$23,865 to pay for a two-bedroom unit. Finally, a minimum wage worker in Colorado would need to work 89 hours each week to afford a two-bedroom apartment in the Denver metropolitan area.<sup>12</sup> It is likely that as the population in Colorado continues to grow and as long as housing vacancy rates remain low and housing costs remain high, the Denver metropolitan area will continue to see a growing homeless population.

The Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative has made significant progress in implementing a coordinated system of housing and service delivery for homeless individuals, families and youth. Unfortunately, the demand for services has significantly outpaced the region's capacity to meet those needs. There are simply not enough resources to meet an annual estimated prevalence of up to 21,129 homeless persons per year. According to the Emergency Shelter Helpline managed by the Colorado Department of Human Services and administered by Mile High United Way, 50% of families calling and requesting emergency shelter were not able to be housed upon first contact. The total percentage of families that cannot be eventually placed is approximately thirty-three percent. Emergency shelters throughout the metropolitan area now have waiting lists and/or conduct lotteries to give away beds at night. Families with children continue to be forced to sleep in their cars, in bus stations, and in parks.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The methodologies used to estimate the number of homeless persons on September 19, 2000, in the six county Denver metropolitan area were developed by The Colorado Department of Human

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<sup>10</sup> Source: The Colorado Coalition for the Homeless

<sup>11</sup> Source: Colorado Employment and Wages, Annual Average 1990-1996.

<sup>12</sup> Source: Colorado Coalition for the Homeless

Services in coordination with the Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative. The questionnaire was developed by first making changes to the 1998 MDHI questionnaire based upon results and feedback of that survey. In addition staff with the Colorado Department of Human Services researched previous homeless studies and questionnaires to determine number and type of questions and questionnaire format. Finally, The Department of Housing and Urban Development translated the survey form into Spanish so that a Spanish version was made available to those who could read Spanish and not English.

This research project encompassed a six county geographic region that included Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson counties.

In order to gain an accurate enumeration of the number of homeless persons in the Denver metropolitan area, comprehensive surveys were conducted by agencies that serve the homeless. Participating agencies included emergency shelters, day shelters, transitional housing facilities, soup kitchens, homeless clinics, county departments of social services, housing authorities, and homeless permanent supportive housing programs funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In addition, mobile outreach teams from the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, the Boulder Homeless Shelter, and the Salvation Army conducted outreach surveys to persons sleeping on the streets or other public places.

#### Survey Procedures

The Metropolitan Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI) Research Committee met in June of 2000 and decided that a metropolitan census count of the homeless would need to be conducted in September 2000. The purpose of the survey was to gather statistical information needed by the initiative to facilitate system planning and to accurately complete statistical and demographic information required by HUD for the annual homeless funding application. It was determined at this meeting that the most cost effective and efficient way of gaining an accurate count was to develop a database program in ACCESS for data entry and to then import the database into a statistical analysis software program called SPSS for final data cleaning and analysis.

Questionnaires were distributed by mail to over four hundred service agencies on August 21, 2000. Questionnaires included attachments with detailed instructions for completing the survey and times and date for two general training sessions. Three additional training sessions were scheduled with large area providers and in specific geographic locations to ensure that the survey was completed appropriately. See appendix E for instructions and training announcement. General training sessions were held at Samaritan House Shelter on September 12, 2000 and September 14, 2000.

Questionnaires were completed throughout the day and evening of September 19, 2000 by participating service agencies and homeless persons being served on that day. Many day and night shelters provided candy bars and pop as an incentive to homeless persons to complete the survey. Homeless persons completed survey forms with the assistance of staff and volunteers at area homeless provider facilities. Outreach workers canvassed the streets and area motels to interview and complete survey forms for homeless persons not accessing homeless services. In addition, homeless persons who did not agree to complete a survey were counted and entered on a separate homeless count form. Finally, homeless facilities completed a survey that counted the total number of persons residing or using services on that day, total daily capacity, and number of surveys returned.



Questionnaire results were then entered into an ACCESS database. An unduplicated count was achieved by assigning a unique identifier to each person counted based on a combination of last name, first name, middle initial and date of birth. Duplicates were then further cross-checked for race, ethnicity, last permanent address, sex, and marital status. Duplicates were then identified and deleted from the database. Initial aggregation and data cleaning was completed in the ACCESS database and then the entire database was imported into SPSS. SPSS is a statistical analysis software program that was utilized for final data aggregation and cleaning. A total head count of those not completing surveys minus the duplication rate found in the initial survey was then added to the initial count to get a total count.

Three temporaries were hired by MDHI and supervised by Supportive Housing and Homeless Programs to enter the raw data into the ACCESS database. A grant from the Denver Department of Human Services enabled MDHI to pay for the data entry clerks. Every tenth record being entered was checked to verify that the data was being entered correctly. Two data entry clerks were let go and replaced as a result of either inefficiencies or data entry errors. Full time data entry took two and half weeks. The raw data was then cleaned for errors and all duplicates were removed. The ACCESS database was then imported into SPSS for final cleaning, aggregation and data analysis.

The final report and was reviewed by the MDHI Data Collection committee with recommendations to the board for approval. The MDHI board then approved the release of the study in January.

Finally, while the results of this study provide a good estimate for the needs of homeless persons in the metropolitan area, it should be noted that only homeless persons receiving and requesting assistance or those found through outreach efforts were counted. It is unlikely, that every homeless person in the metropolitan area was found on that particular day. Families sleeping in their cars and individuals not requesting assistance and who were not found through outreach efforts were not counted. This is a point in time census count and formulas were not utilized to estimate the number of persons not found.