

THE PATH HOME

PROGRESS REPORT 2022

An Update to the Five-Year Plan

Low-Barrier Shelter **Street Outreach**
Unaccompanied Youth Housing Choice Voucher
Prevention Rapid Re-housing Eviction Prevention
Homeless Coordinated Entry By-name List
Housing First
Critical Time Intervention Progressive Engagement Unsheltered
Host Homes Rent Burdened Point In Time Count
Motivational Interviewing **HMIS** Permanent Supportive Housing

A PARTNERSHIP OF THE

Howard County Coalition to End Homelessness

AND THE


Howard County
Office of Community Partnerships

VISION

A community where no one experiences homelessness. The Coalition believes this vision can be realized through a dynamic, comprehensive system of housing services focused on ending homelessness, so every member of the community has a safe and stable home.

WHO WE ARE —
The Howard County Coalition to End Homelessness

The Howard County Coalition to End Homelessness, “The Coalition” (formerly **Continuum of Care**), consists of 23 members representing Howard County government, Howard County School System, non-profit agencies, the business and faith communities, citizen advocates, and individuals with lived experience. The Coalition fulfills the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requirement to have a planning body designed to promote a community-wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness. The Coalition is responsible for and committed to creating and driving a system of housing and care that responds to the needs of homeless individuals and families in Howard County with the mission to make homelessness rare, brief and a one-time experience.

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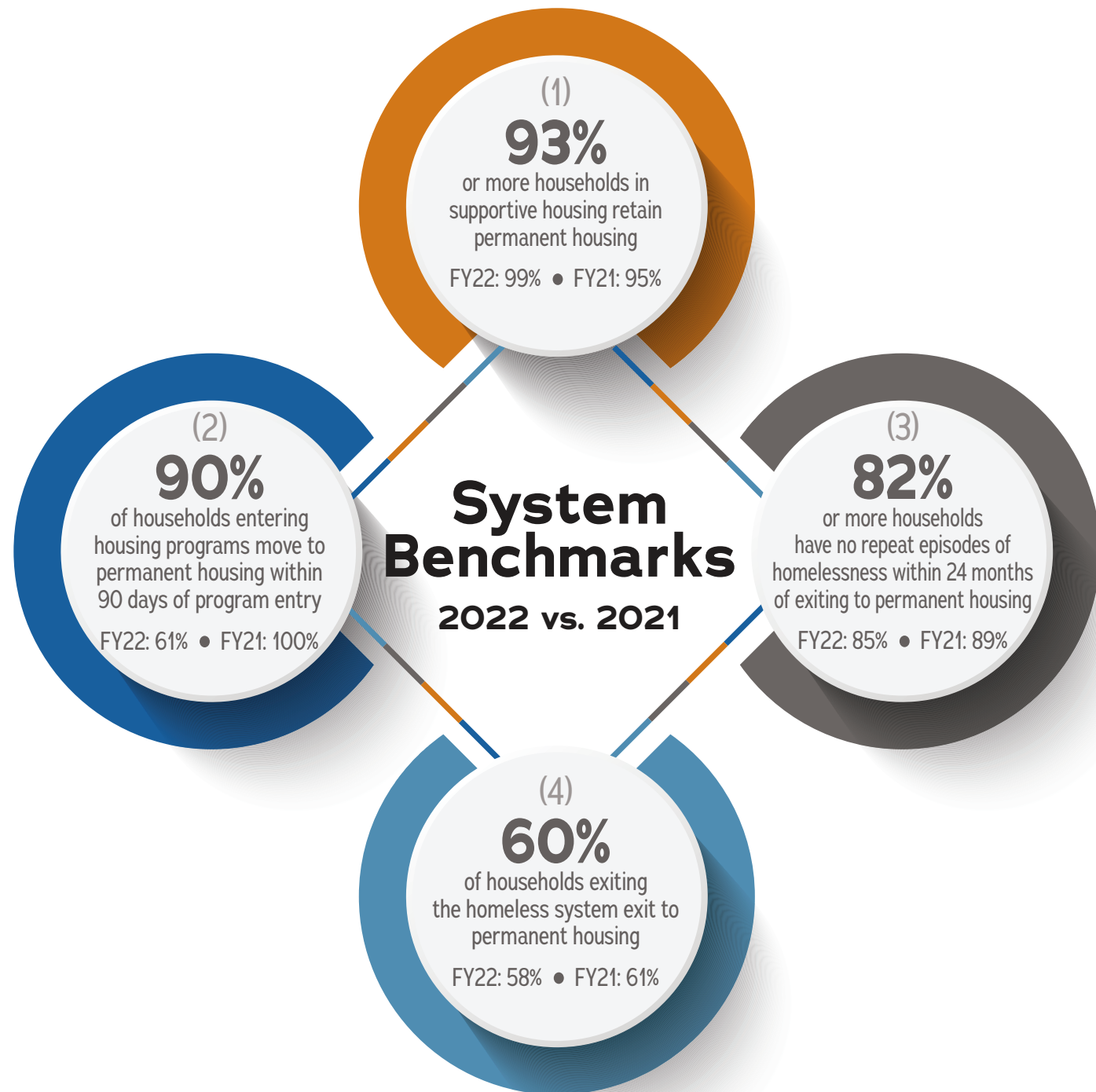
What is this?

The Path Home, Howard County's Five-Year Strategic Plan to End Homeless launched in January 2020 with ambitious goals and strategies for strengthening the County's homeless response system and creating a community where no one experiences homelessness. As part of The Path Home, the Coalition to End Homelessness committed to providing an annual progress report on our accomplishments. The first report, due to be published in 2021 was tabled as our partners focused on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

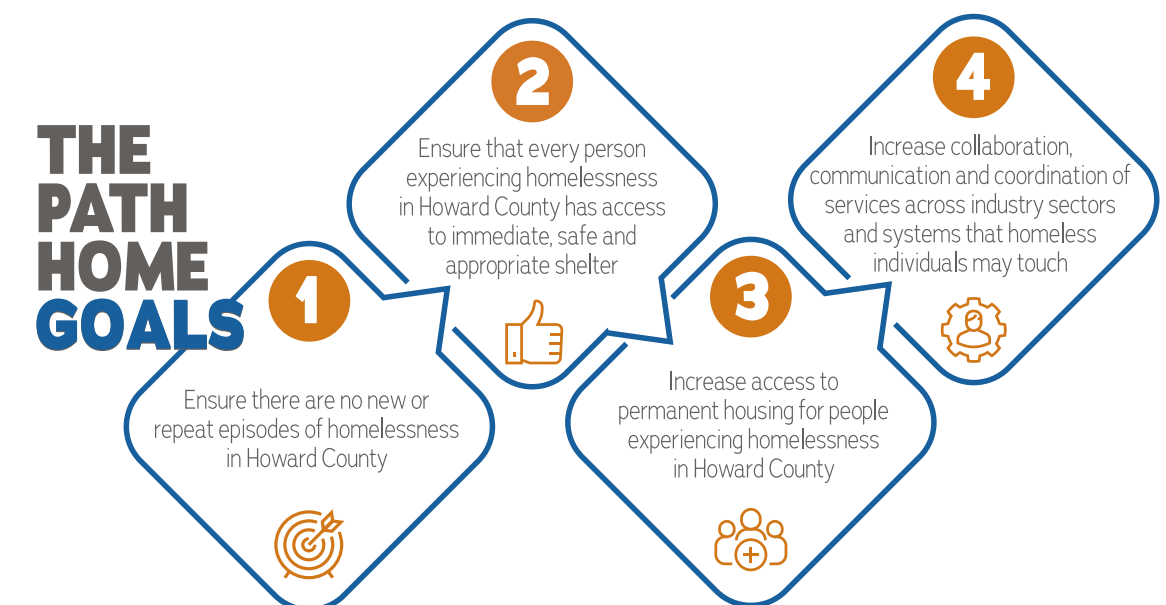
Pivot to COVID-19 Response

Two months after the introduction of The Path Home, the homeless response system was confronted with an unprecedented public health emergency. Initially, our focus was on meeting the needs of homeless people living outdoors, for whom even hand-washing can be a challenge. Then, we turned our attention to those in shelters, where it was difficult to prevent community spread among individuals-in-need and the dedicated staff who care for them. We learned a lot about the severe health consequences of COVID-19 on the homeless, and we worked hard to adapt to new ways of delivering services in a COVID-19 safe way. Today, PPE, social distancing, testing, and vaccines are all part of our new reality as we return our attention to The Path Home. We note what we've accomplished ahead of schedule out of necessity in the pandemic, and what had to be deferred.

This is a progress report of our accomplishments under The Path Home and progress toward making homelessness a rare, brief and one-time experience.



The system evaluates progress against goals on a number of outcome measures. Here are four goals for the past fiscal year (2022) and the year prior (2021).





24/7 HOUSING CRISIS HOTLINE

Access to All Homeless Services

Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center

410-531-6677



EVICTON PREVENTION

- Community Action Council, Inc.
- Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center



STREET OUTREACH

- Humanim, Inc. (Assistance for Unsheltered)
- Day Resource Center (Services Center for Unsheltered)



TEMPORARY SHELTER*

- Grassroots (Emergency and Cold Weather Shelter)
- HopeWorks (Emergency Confidential Shelter)
- Springboard (Domestic Violence and Youth Assistance)



REHOUSING SERVICES**

- Bridges to Housing Stability (Rehousing/Supportive Housing)
- Volunteers of America (Supportive Housing)
- Humanim (Supportive Housing)
- House Howard (Housing Voucher Programs)

* TEMPORARY SHELTER - UNMET NEEDS

- Insufficient Emergency Shelter Capacity
- No Age-Appropriate Shelter Options for Unaccompanied Youth
- Few Shelter Options for Large Families

** REHOUSING - UNMET NEEDS

- Insufficient Housing Subsidies
- Low Inventory Available of Affordable Housing
- No Affordable Inventory of Senior Housing


**Continuum
of Care**

Accomplishments

Since the beginning of The Path Home, the system and its participating agencies have:

1) Responded to COVID-19

- a. Non-congregate Shelter — Using available hotel space, the system reduced density in its primary shelter and expanded emergency shelter beds to protect the health and safety of those who had been unsheltered, living in tents, cars or other places not meant for human habitation. Hotels were also used as a safer way to offer cold-weather shelter, which previously had been done in churches and synagogues. Vaccine clinics were conducted for sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness.
- b. COVID-19 Positive Sheltering — Forging relationships with the Howard County Office of Emergency Management, Health Department and the hospital, the Office of Community Partnerships identified isolation space and provided assistance for individuals who tested positive. Seven COVID-19 positive individuals were provided emergency shelter, food, medical support and housing assistance.

2) Used COVID-19 as an opportunity to find lasting solutions

During non-congregate shelter, homeless services providers offered case management and resources on-site at hotels to ensure that everyone had a permanent housing placement plan, rather than returning to unsheltered living situations. Seventy-five individuals were housed in non-congregate shelter and received assistance with permanent housing.

3) Created openings in permanent supportive housing

There is often a wait for permanent supportive housing, in which people with disabilities receive rent subsidies and case management. Clients who no longer needed case management were provided move-on vouchers, opening slots in permanent supportive housing for people who needed more support. Fifteen households moved into independent living arrangements with housing subsidies, creating opening for 15 additional households to be accepted into Permanent Supportive Housing.

Accomplishments, continued...

4) Assisted homeless individuals with disabilities with mainstream vouchers

During Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2022, the Office of Community Partnerships and CoC Service Providers partnered with House Howard Housing Commission to house and connect 40 clients to mainstream vouchers.

5) Used benchmark data to evaluate the system

For the first time, during Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2022, the system measured its performance outcomes against specific goals identified in The Path Home. One such goal was 82% of people housed would remain housed for at least 24 months. The actual outcome was 85% remained housed. *See additional outcomes on page 3, "System Benchmarks."*

6) Developed uniform program standards for Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Rehousing

With the assistance of a consultant, the system developed documented program standards that support performance benchmarks that identify a program as effective or ineffective. They include qualitative program operating procedures that are used to help our programs meet the performance benchmarks. In addition, program standards address our philosophy and design standards that include guidance on the broader role that permanent supportive housing and rapid rehousing program should play in ending homelessness.



Nikki worked as a home assistant to young people with disabilities for four years, when in late 2021 an angry client threw a metal object at her, badly damaging her wrist. She had surgery and was slowly recovering after months of physical therapy. She was ready to resume working, when her landlord told her she and her four children had 30 days to move because her house was being sold. Nikki spent two frantic months finding a new place to rent, but lacked the money for the critical security deposit and first month's rent. Her 17-year-old was looking forward to a triumphant high school graduation — not to becoming homeless.

Finally, as she and her children began sleeping short-term with a variety of friends and relatives, and she was preparing to move her family's belongings into storage, she was referred to Bridges to Housing Stability. "If Bridges didn't help, she wouldn't be able to get help from anywhere. She would have been homeless for a long time," said Bola Afolabi, Bridges' Housing Stability Program Manager.

Nikki had already found another townhouse she could rent if she could come up with money for the deposit. Bridges was able to help her with flexible financial assistance and reassure the landlord that she will be a dependable tenant. Now, things have mostly settled down, she said, and she is back at work. Nikki said she has only warm thoughts about Bridges. "I love the help I got," she said.

Accomplishments, continued...

7) Updated tasks and priorities of The Path Home Implementation Plan

Some tasks were completed ahead of schedule out of necessity during COVID-19 (such as launching a street outreach program), while others were deferred. Reviewing all the goals from The Path Home, the Coalition created new priorities and deadlines, and a new tracking system to make sure tasks were accomplished on schedule.

8) Added Landlord Engagement

The system filled a new position, Landlord Navigator, to lead our efforts on recruiting and incentivizing property owners to accept tenants exiting homelessness, to help case managers locate appropriate housing options for clients with challenging housing barriers, and to support housing placements for clients in need of subsidies to gain permanent housing. The Landlord Navigator, Erica Smith, facilitated rehousing over 60 clients in the last 12 months using various forms of housing vouchers and subsidies.

9) Began targeted assistance for youths exiting foster care

In partnership with the Housing Commission and the Department of Social Services, youth services providers, the homeless response system launched a housing voucher program for youth leaving foster care, a population that is particularly vulnerable to homelessness. This housing resource provides a housing voucher for three years, allowing youth to stabilize in housing and work on income and educational goals to sustain longer-term housing after the subsidy expires. In the last 12 months, four youth have been awarded housing vouchers under this program.



Snapshots...

Chris was met in the Walmart parking lot late at night by Humanim Street Outreach worker, Matt Dixon. He'd been panhandling and sleeping nearby. He moved into Grassroots Cold Weather Shelter and worked with staff to begin the process of a housing plan. He transferred over to Grassroots shelter near the end of winter. During Chris' time in shelter here, a caseworker helped him navigate a very confusing road toward getting housing. Due to his history, he was put at the top of the list for Leola Dorsey (a permanent supportive housing program), where he moved in early August and will continue to have access to support from case managers from Volunteers of America and our staff at the Day Resource Center.

Initiatives for the Current Fiscal Year

Building on our current accomplishments, this fiscal year (July '22 through June '23) the Coalition to End Homelessness has prioritized the following:

1) Expanded street outreach

By June 30, 2023, we will add a second Street Outreach Case Manager to help locate and assist people living in unsheltered locations — addressing housing barriers, connecting them to supportive services and housing options to resolve their homelessness.

2) Plan and implement a diversion program

Diversion will allow us to identify and resolve housing crises early, helping individuals and families avoid the traumatic experience of homelessness, reducing the need for shelter spaces, and reserving rehousing assistance for those hardest to serve.

3) Addressing racial disparities

Make a data-driven effort to identify and address racial disparities that show up in our service delivery to individuals and families that experience homelessness. Racial equity training will be provided for the Coalition Board and for our non-profit service providers to ensure equitable access and services delivery in our community.

4) Expand partnerships

Under the goal of increasing representation within our Coalition, the Board will seek out new partners whose missions and services touch clients served by the homeless response system. This includes members of the public, private and non-profit sectors. This will help ensure that individuals and families who experience homelessness in Howard County have access to a better coordinated, wider range of services.



Snapshots...

Tom receives ongoing pain management services for his back and neck, at times limiting his ability to work. His housing was unstable as he moved from relative to relative in Howard County. As of March 2021, he officially became homeless, and connected with Humanim's Street Outreach Program. He moved into the Grassroots shelter when space became available in July 2021. He was then referred to Bridges to Housing Stability for Rapid Rehousing services. His housing advocate at Bridges went with Tom on apartment tours, paid for application fees, and reviewed the lease so Tom understood the terms of the agreement. They also talked about budgeting and helped him set up a bank account. He was approved for a mainstream housing voucher for homeless individuals from the Housing Commission on October 25, 2021, and moved into a one-bedroom apartment on November 1. His housing advocate brought him a welcome basket with food and household items to help him get settled, then visited monthly to ensure he was connected to therapy and psychiatric rehabilitation services. For the last year, Tom has paid his portion of the rent. Tom reported he is at peace and no longer experiencing stress. He works full time. After work, he looks forward to coming home to his own place.



Howard County

Office of Community Partnerships

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Find us @HoCoCommunity

