



The Cost of Homelessness

According to the 2014 point-in-time Homeless Census Count, there has been a 28% increase in the overall number of homeless over the prior year. More than 36,000 Southern Nevadans, including families, unaccompanied youth, and individuals of all ages, will be homeless at some point this year. While circumstances can vary, the main reason people experience homelessness is because they cannot find housing they can afford. It would seem the solution is simple: Provide more permanent affordable housing. However, each individual's journey into and out of homelessness is their own. The path of overcoming their barriers must be sustainable—whether it is bridge housing for families and youth who need short-term assistance, or addressing the more complex needs of veterans and the mentally ill, who are more often identified as chronically homeless.



While homelessness is temporary for a great number of people, the chronically homeless individuals are disproportionately represented among the most frequent and highest cost users of public services as a result of their physical health, mental health, and substance abuse challenges.

In order to build the most efficient and effective system of ending life on the streets, a holistic approach must be designed that starts with an understanding of the resources needed to end homelessness in Southern Nevada.

“The time has come to stop managing homelessness and start ending it.” -100Khomes.org

METHODOLOGY

UNLV graduate student researchers utilized existing homeless census data from the point-in-time count completed in 2014. To gather cost data associated with homeless sub-populations, interviews were conducted with representatives from nonprofit agencies in the local HUD Continuum of Care (CoC) program that work in some capacity with providing direct services to homeless individuals through various programs. Public cost data was collected from federal, state and local agencies in 2015.

The Cost of Homelessness in Southern Nevada

COST OF LIFE ON THE STREETS

To analyze public costs related to homelessness, the research team collected information via online research and personal interviews from the following public agencies:

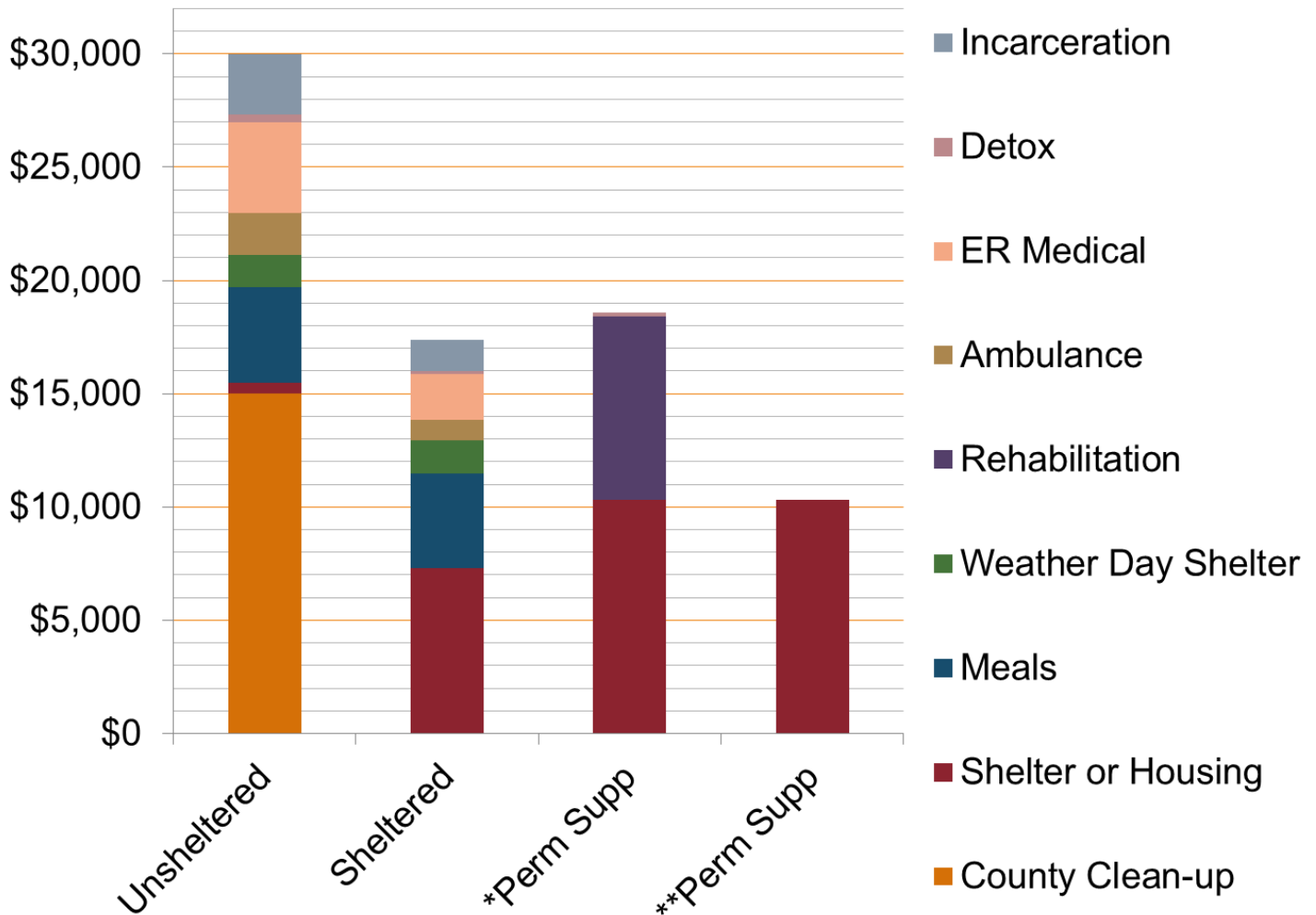
- City of Las Vegas Jail
- Clark County (CC) Business License Office
- CC Detention Center
- CC Department of Public Works
- CC Department of Social Services
- CC School District
- Regional Flood Control District
- University Medical Center
- WestCare Nevada

COST OF PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

In recent years, there have been more productive discussions about finding a solution to homelessness rather than simply managing the homeless while they remain on the streets, and the idea of providing housing for the homeless has been analyzed and advocated more and more prolifically. Referred to as the “Housing First” model, advocates argue that providing housing for homeless populations not only improves their living situations and allows them access to needed services more effectively, but also saves extensively on public costs and community resources.

| PUBLIC SERVICE | AVG COST (\$) | COST UNIT |
|--|---------------|--|
| Short-term Treatment: Triage/Mental Health Crisis and/or Stabilization/ Detox | \$318 | Per Admission (Avg 3 days, \$53/day) |
| Inpatient Treatment: Substance Abuse/Rehabilitation | \$8,125 | Per Admission (Avg 65 days, \$125/day) |
| Ambulance to Hospital | \$936 | Per Transport |
| UMC Emergency Room Visit | \$1,998 | Per Visit |
| Jail | \$1,530 | Per Stay (10 day avg, \$153/day) |
| Meals | \$4,179 | 2 meals per day for one year |
| Emergency Shelter—Nights | \$7,311 | \$20.03 per night for one year |
| Inclement Weather Shelter—Winter | \$1,588 | 1 Person per season (133 days/\$11.94 daily) |
| Inclement Weather Shelter—Summer | \$2,563 | 1 Person per Season (153 days/\$11.94 daily) |
| Public Clean-up: Property/streets/tunnels | \$1,500 | County labor & equipment costs to remove 1 encampment |

CHRONICALLY HOMELESS INDIVIDUAL COST COMPARISON* FOR ONE YEAR



*Costs are estimated based on case study profiles and research completed by UNLV researchers.

UNSHELTERED: 2 meals per day; use of inclement weather day shelters for 100 days (50 each season); 10 months on the street incurring monthly clean-up of the encampment; 2 months in the following: emergency shelter, 2 ER visits via ambulance, 2 short-term detox and incarceration (average visits).

SHELTERED: 2 meals per day; use of inclement weather day shelters for 100 days; nightly use of emergency shelter; one ER visit via ambulance; one instance of detox and incarceration.

PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE: *65 days in a stabilization detox program before entering a permanent supportive housing program for chronically homeless (**long-term cost).



Help Hope Home
Helping The Homeless in Southern Nevada



PROFILES OF CHRONICALLY HOMELESS

Agencies that work to create relationships with homeless individuals in the community and help to guide these citizens into supportive programs provide a vital service. HELP of Southern Nevada (HELP) offers such assistance and facilitates community partnerships. Their mobile services team builds relationships with the chronically homeless population, allowing HELP to guide these individuals into supportive services in the community. Recently, HELP was able to earn the trust of a group of individuals who had been living in parks and panhandling. HELP was able to assist one of these citizens by helping him enter the Salvation Army housing and job training program. Here, this man is currently in transitional housing as he trains for a job in the culinary field.

Two other homeless individuals in this group are veterans; as such, HELP guided them to Veterans Affairs, where they were able to apply for veteran disability benefits. HELP continued to work with them from the streets while their applications were being processed; six months later, these men received their veteran benefits. Because of the back-pay these men received, they were able to secure stable permanent housing for themselves and one of their partners, thus ending homelessness for three people. Such community collaboration is essential in ensuring the support for citizens in need.

“ We must offer housing first, not last, if we want to help people out of homelessness.”

-National Alliance to End Homelessness