

Through the Give 10 Interest Profiles we received, **Housing and Homelessness** was identified as a commonly shared interest among Give 10 members. This Focus on Giving explores a local challenge – chronic homelessness.

**? What is chronic homelessness?**

Individuals who are chronically homeless have experienced homelessness for at least a year – or repeatedly – and most likely struggle to manage a long-term, serious mental illness, chronic health condition, substance use disorder, or physical disability. Without effective support it is difficult to access, afford, and maintain housing. Without addressing ongoing vulnerabilities, people can experience long or repeated episodes of homelessness. Chronically homeless individuals account for about 25% of the homeless population nationwide. Permanent supportive housing programs that align housing, case management, and supportive services demonstrate positive results. Nationally, investments in permanent supportive housing have helped to reduce chronic homelessness by 27% over the past decade.<sup>1</sup>

**? What is one aspect of chronic homelessness that we may not always think about?**

**Housing as healthcare.** The majority of persons experiencing chronic homelessness self-report having medical concerns and would benefit from a medical diagnosis and assisted treatment. Homelessness quickly exacerbates medical challenges and increases mortality rates. Acute physical or behavioral health conditions, medical crisis, severe trauma, or any long-term disabling condition can make securing and holding on to a household challenging without attentive case management and supportive services. People experiencing chronic homelessness can be most effectively medically treated when stably housed and connected to preventative and primary care. Housing and health coordinated responses can also divert costs from expensive emergency crisis services to appropriate systems of care.

**? What is one strategy our community uses to address chronic homelessness?**

- Homeward 2020 and Homeward Alliance partnered to create the **Housing First Initiative (HFI)**, a two-year pilot project based at the Murphy Center. (The housing first model is “an evidence-based, permanent, supportive housing intervention for chronically homeless individuals that has the potential to improve health outcomes and reduce costs to health care and other public safety net programs. The model offers housing to individuals prior to any engagement or commitment to supportive and health services.”<sup>2</sup>) HFI collects and reports data on persons experiencing homelessness in Fort Collins for six months or longer, pilots housing first solutions through local partnerships, and provides intensive case management to transition participants from homelessness to housing. To explore the model, current data, and outcomes visit: [www.homeward2020.org/housing-first-initiative](http://www.homeward2020.org/housing-first-initiative). Through the interactive dashboard, you can learn more about common characteristics among the approximately 375 individuals in Fort Collins who have been experiencing homelessness for six months or longer including demographics, income, contributing factors, and HFI program status.

<sup>1</sup> <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/who-experiences-homelessness/chronically-homeless/>

<sup>2</sup> [www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/PSD\\_SDOH\\_Homelessness\\_long.pdf](http://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/PSD_SDOH_Homelessness_long.pdf), page 8

## ? What else can communities do to address or prevent chronic homelessness?

- Develop adequate housing retention and stabilization services to support people as they continue working toward security and growing resiliency once housed.
- Involve landlords in supportive housing solutions through partnerships that support the landlord-tenant relationship.
- Manage institutional discharges from foster care, criminal justice system, mental health facilities, emergency rooms, addiction treatment centers to assure no one is released from care and case management into homelessness.



## Volunteer Opportunities

- Volunteer at a local emergency shelter ([Catholic Charities](#) or the [Fort Collins Rescue Mission](#)) and talk with people experiencing homelessness.
- Donate needed supplies or volunteer with organizations like [Faith Family Hospitality](#) or the [Murphy Center](#). (Check their websites to know which supplies are needed.)
- Create a team to participate in a [One Village One Family](#) project, sponsoring and supporting a local family transitioning into housing.



## Local Organizations

- [Homeward 2020](#)
- [Homeward Alliance](#)
- [Murphy Center for Hope](#)
- [Outreach Fort Collins](#)
- [Neighbor to Neighbor](#)



## Interested in learning more?

Visit the following websites to learn more about chronic homelessness.

- [Housing First: Ending Homelessness, Transforming Systems and Changing Lives](#)
- [How Health and Homelessness are Connected-Medically](#)
- [Ted Talks: The Issue of Homelessness, a Basic Primer](#)
- [Changing Minds](#)
- [Corporation for Supportive Housing's Frequent Users Systems Engagement \(FUSE\)](#)
- [National Alliance to End Homelessness](#)
- [National Healthcare for the Homeless Council](#)
- [Center for Evidence-Based Solutions to Homelessness](#)

---

## FEEDBACK?

We hope you found this issue of Focus on Giving informative. As always, we'd love your feedback. Don't hesitate to reach out to Sara Maranowicz, Community Programs Director, at [sara@bohemianfoundation.org](mailto:sara@bohemianfoundation.org) to share your thoughts or recommendations for future newsletters.

You may update your [Give 10 Interest Profile](#) preferences at any time.