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2024 Gaps & Needs Analysis

FL-519 Pasco County Continuum of Care

Promoting community-wide commitment to ending homelessness

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Prepared by Florida Housing Coalition

I. Overview

The Pasco County Continuum of Care (PCCoC) is the group of organizations and community partners working together to prevent and end homelessness within Pasco County Florida. PCCOC serves as the FL-519 Continuum of Care (CoC) identified with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Coalition for the Homeless of Pasco County (CHPC) is designated as the CoC's Collaborative Applicant and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Lead. Together, PCCoC and CHPC are responsible for implementing the community-wide response and developing an annual Gaps and Needs Analysis for the CoC coverage area of Pasco County in Florida. This Gaps and Needs Analysis provides an overview of the current programs, funding, housing capacity, and the persistent need for permanent affordable housing.

II. Key Insights

Insights are noted throughout the Gaps Analysis. Below is a snapshot of key insights.

1. **COC GOVERNANCE** - Fully utilize the CoC Governance structure including committees and workgroups to advance the CoC Strategic Plan.
2. **CONTINUE TO ADDRESS UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS** - 58% of people experiencing homelessness were unsheltered with no access to emergency shelter.
3. **INCREASE RESOURCES DEDICATED TO DIVERSION AND PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING** - 28% of households on the By Name List need Permanent Supportive Housing. Diversion can assist in reducing returns to homelessness and reducing the need for shelter, however there are no resources currently available through the CoC for diversion activities.
4. **SERVICE PROVIDER CAPACITY BUILDING AND EXPANDED DIVERSITY** - There were a total of 14 service providers addressing needs within the Pasco Housing Crisis Response System, of these only 4 providers were dedicated to Street Outreach, or Permanent Supportive Housing. Having more providers allows clients more choices about where they receive services and more opportunities for success and connection.
5. **LEARNING FROM LIVED EXPERTISE** - Implement strategies to ongoingly, meaningfully, and authentically engage people with lived experience of homelessness to help improve consumer experiences with access and participation in homelessness programming throughout the CoC.
6. **AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEED** - 57% of renters, or 16,437 renters in Pasco County are considered Extremely Low Income. For every 100 extremely low-income renters there are only 22 units of affordable housing available in Pasco County.

7 **SYSTEM PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT** - System Performance measures 4 and 7 need some attention to ensure participants staying in programs are increasing their income so that they can successfully attain and retain permanent housing.

III. Methodology

Qualitative and quantitative data were used to analyze gaps and needs. The overall work was overseen and guided by the lead agency/collaborative applicant, CHPC from October 2023 through December 2024. We gathered community feedback through surveys, focus groups, and regularly scheduled CoC Leadership Council and Committee Meetings with stakeholders, service providers, participants, and people with lived experience of homelessness.

In addition to surveys, focus groups, and regularly scheduled meetings, budgets, funding streams, deliverables, and specific data sources were thoroughly reviewed.

The analysis includes data from the sources listed below.

Point-in-Time Count (PIT): The PIT is a count of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January. Each count is planned, coordinated, and carried out locally.

Housing Inventory Count (HIC): The HIC is a point-in-time inventory of provider programs within a Continuum of Care that provide beds and units dedicated to serving people experiencing homelessness. This includes five program types: Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, Rapid Rehousing, Safe Haven, and Permanent Supportive Housing. It also provides a category for Other Permanent Housing (OPH).

System Performance Measures: The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires communities to measure their performance as a coordinated system and analyze performance by specific projects or project types.

Coordinated Entry System (CES) By-Name List: Coordinated Entry is a process developed to ensure all households experiencing a housing crisis have fair and equal access to housing resources. They are quickly identified, assessed for, and referred to these resources based on their needs. The CoC utilizes several data points to determine a household's needs. A standard assessment tool (VI-SPDAT) is also completed to assess an individual's or family's vulnerability and ensure the household is referred to the appropriate service or housing resource.

Longitudinal Systems Analysis (LSA): The LSA report is produced from a CoC's HMIS and submitted annually to HUD. It provides HUD and CoCs with critical information about how people experiencing homelessness use their system of care.

Surveys: The gap analysis provided two surveys. One was for stakeholders to complete about their experience with the housing crisis response system, and the second was for people with former or current lived experience to provide feedback on their interactions with the housing crisis response system.

IV. The Housing Crisis Response System

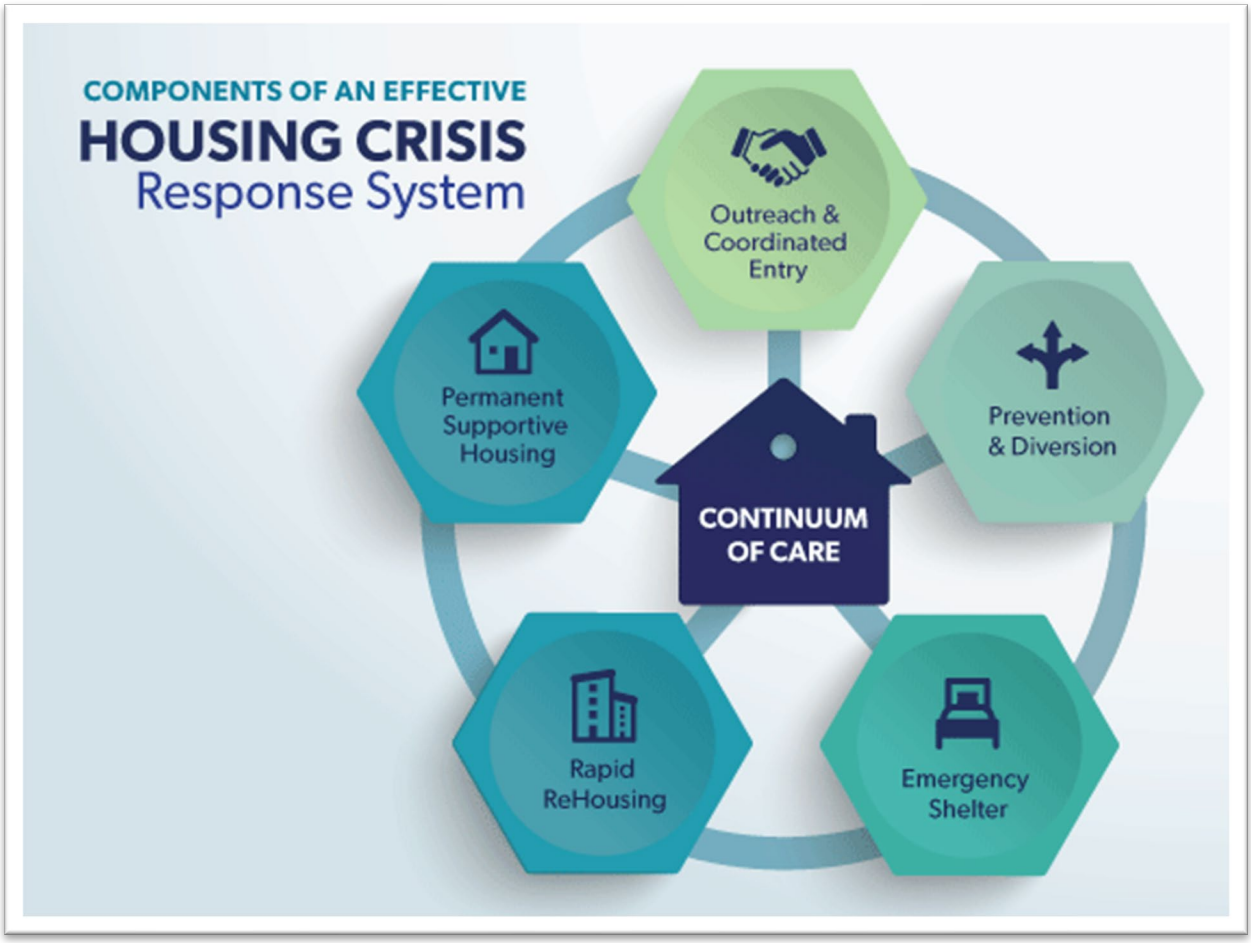

Figure 1: Housing Crisis Response System

The image above provides a snapshot of every community's main components in developing an effective Housing Crisis Response System. PCCoC has an established network of contracted service providers working collaboratively to address homelessness. The following table is representative of the available components and providers currently working within the Housing Crisis Response System.

SYSTEM COMPONENT	PROVIDERS
Homelessness Prevention	Coalition for the Homeless of Pasco County Community Hope & Intervention Project of Zephyrhills Metropolitan Ministries One Community Now St Vincent DePaul (SSVF)
Street Outreach	BayCare Coalition for the Homeless of Pasco County Sword and Spoon Metropolitan Ministries
Emergency Shelter	Ace Opportunities Catholic Charities of Pasco Coalition for the Homeless of Pasco County Youth and Family Alternatives (Youth) Sunrise of Pasco County (DV) St Vincent De Paul (SSVF hotel/motel)
Transitional Housing	Ace Opportunities Metropolitan Ministries The Rope Center Steps to Recovery
Rapid Rehousing	ACE Opportunities Coalition for the Homeless of Pasco County St Vincent DePaul One Community Now
Permanent Supportive Housing	BayCare (HOPWA) Coalition for the Homeless of Pasco County (Case Management) Pasco Housing Authority (EHV) St Vincent DePaul

Table 1: Pasco County CoC Housing Crisis Response System Partners

There were a total of 14 different providers listed. This Gaps Analysis will demonstrate how each of these components is working.

V. Landscape of Homelessness

The landscape of homelessness includes looking at the most recent Point-in-Time (PIT) Count data and looking back at trends to analyze who is experiencing homelessness and how that has changed over time. A detailed submission of the 2024 PIT is available in Appendix A.

2020-2024 Point-in-Time Count

Demographics	2020	2021*	2022	2023	2024
Total No. of Households	711	636	460	576	623
Total No. of Persons	898	857	589	680	731
Age					
Under 18	104	86	82	88	90
18-24	58	10	28	23	27
24+	772	225	477	569	614
Gender					
Female	327	152	237	300	264
Male	565	182	352	379	466
Transgender	2	0	0	0	0
Gender Non-conforming	4	0	0	1	0
Ethnicity					
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	831	288	515	629	650
Hispanic/Latino	67	46	74	51	81
Race					
American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous	6	0	6	5	5
Asian or Asian American	3	2	2	2	1
Black, African American, or African	82	58	43	92	96
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	1	1	0	3
White	772	259	485	563	581
Multiple Races	34	14	52	18	23
Veterans	92	54	44	58	66
Chronically Homeless	265	68	126	136	112
Sheltered	210	334	252	259	304
Unsheltered	688	523	337	421	427

Table 2: Pasco County CoC Point-in-Time Data 2020-2024

**In 2021, HUD allowed communities to cancel or modify the unsheltered survey portion of their counts based on the potential risk of COVID-19 transmission associated with conducting an in-person survey. As a result, HUD has excluded the unsheltered population sub-totals and all unsheltered sub-population data for this reporting period. The user is cautioned that the unsheltered and total homeless counts reported here may be missing data.*

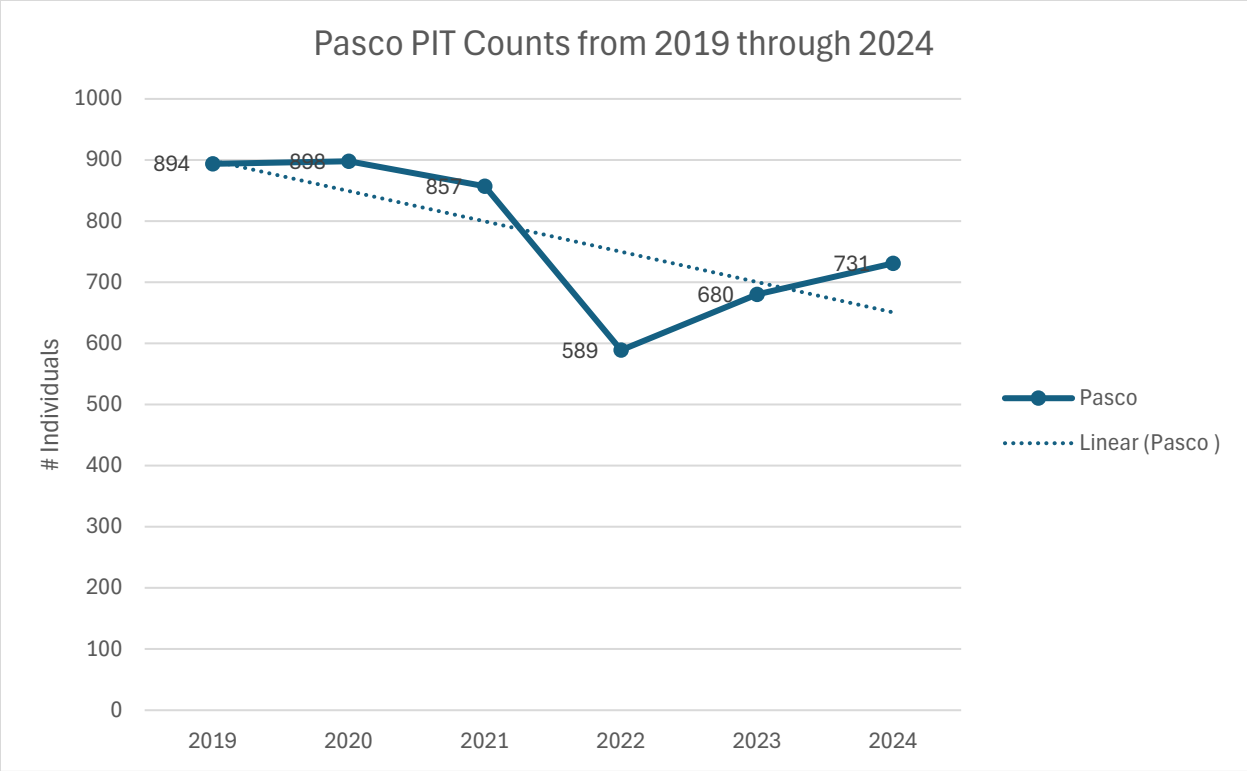

Figure 2: Pasco PIT Count Trends 2019-2024

Sheltered and Unsheltered Homelessness

In 2024, 58% of people experiencing homelessness identified through the Point In Time Count were unsheltered. Back in 2020, 76% were unsheltered, so there has been tremendous progress in addressing unsheltered homelessness in Pasco County since 2020.

As of 2024, Pasco has 58% of the homeless population identified through the Point In Time Count as experiencing unsheltered homelessness, a reduction of 18% from 2020.

Ninety-one percent (102 individuals) of those experiencing chronic homelessness identified through the 2024 PIT count were unsheltered.

	SHELTERED Adults	UNSHELTERED Adults	2024 PIT TOTAL Homeless Adults
Serious Mental Illness	102	145	247
Substance Use Disorder	92	104	196
HIV/AIDS	4	10	14
Survivor of Domestic Violence	4	10	14

Table 3: Pasco 2024 PIT Data on Sub-Populations

The above table detailing self-reported instances of mental illness, substance use disorder, HIV/AIDS, and survivors of domestic violence demonstrates higher needs among the unsheltered population for which temporary sheltering solutions, supportive services, and housing programming should be designed to meet these complex needs. This also demonstrates the need for outreach program staff to understand these potential barriers and be sensitive and aware of behavioral symptoms that may present among these clients upon interactions with outreach staff or assessors. This also demonstrates the need for low-barrier shelter and housing options that agree to work with a client who may have behavioral health symptoms while simultaneously ensuring safety for this vulnerable population.

Shelter and Transitional Housing Bed Counts and Utilization

The 2024 Housing Inventory Count (HIC) Report reflects bed availability the same night the Point in Time Count (PIT) was conducted. All emergency shelter, transitional housing, safe haven, and permanent housing beds are reported. The 2024 HIC reflects 216 beds available across ten emergency shelter projects, managed by 7 different service organizations, while the PIT only reported 120 persons occupying those beds. This means 96 beds were not utilized on the night of the HIC. Two projects were occupied and utilized at an average of 90% or higher. One project was utilized at an average of 80%. Two projects were utilized at a rate between 58% and 64%. One project was utilized at a rate of 44%. Four emergency shelter projects were under 13% utilized, including 3 projects with 0% utilization. One of the projects that was unutilized had 26 beds dedicated to children only.

There were 207 transitional housing beds available across eight transitional housing projects, with an average utilization rate of 89%. Out of 8 transitional housing projects, one was below 35% utilization, 4 were between 60% and 76% utilized, and 2 projects had between 95% and 100%. One project was overutilized at 137%. A complete detail of the HIC is available in Appendix B.

Individuals and Families

Adults experience unsheltered homelessness more often than families. 72% of adult-only households were unsheltered.

On the night of the January 2024 PIT Count, there were a total of 623 households experiencing homelessness. Forty-one households (7%) with 138 total persons (19%) identified as families, meaning the household comprised at least one adult and one child. No households with children identified as unsheltered, 21 households with 75 persons were in emergency shelters, and 20 households with 63 persons were in transitional housing. There was one household considered to be a child-only household representing one person.

Out of the 731 total persons experiencing homelessness, 427 (58%) were in adult-only households, representing 418 total households (67%). Forty-four adults were in emergency

shelters, 121 were in transitional housing, and 427 were unsheltered. Of note, 72% of individuals in adult-only households were unsheltered. For context and comparison, state-wide in Florida, for the 2023 PIT count, 59% of adult-only households were unsheltered. This means that for the Pasco coverage area, adult-only households experiencing unsheltered homelessness are 13% higher than the state-wide average in 2023. Nationally, unsheltered adult-only households made up 51% of adult-only households in the nation experiencing homelessness. Compared to the national average in 2023, Pasco unsheltered adult households are 9% higher than the 2023 national average. Implementing strategies to reduce the number of adult-only households experiencing homelessness needs to be considered as part of the priorities of the CoC in the coming year.

Age and Gender

Starting in 2023, the way in which HUD expected CoCs to collect and report age information changed. Previously, only three broad age buckets were collected and reported for the PIT count: Children under age 18, persons ages 18-24, and persons aged 25 and older. This method for gathering and reporting data left CoCs in a space of not truly understanding the older adult demographic identified through their PIT count. As of 2023, the reporting categories for ages changed to children under age 18, persons ages 18 to 24, persons ages 25 to 34, persons ages 35 to 44, persons ages 45 to 54, persons ages 55 to 64, and persons over age 64. Breaking age information into more categories allows CoC to track trends among certain age groups better and better understand potential resources and supportive services that can help these individuals achieve housing stability and self-sufficiency.

According to the 2024 PIT data, most people experiencing homelessness were over 25 years of age (84%), with the majority of adults over 25 falling between the ages of 35 and 44. There were 27 persons between the ages of 18 and 24. The chart below shows a two-year comparison of age categories to start identifying trends under these new age categories. Adults ages 65 or older make up about 5% of the unsheltered population, with 21 older adults experiencing unsheltered homelessness. The age category with the most significant increase was for 55-64 year olds, while the age category with the most significant decrease was for 45-54 year olds.

	2023 (680 total persons)	2024 (731 total persons)	Change
# of children (under age 18)	88 people (13%)	90 people (12%)	-1%
# of persons (18-24)	23 people (3%)	27 people (4%)	+1%
# of persons (25-34)	107 people (16%	104 people (14%)	-2%
# of persons (35-44)	161 people (24%)	167 people (23%)	-1%
# of persons (45-54)	172 people (25%)	141 people (19%)	-6%
# of persons (55-64)	90 people (13%)	146 people (20%)	+7%
# of persons (65 and older)	39 people (6%)	56 people (8%)	+2%

Table 4: Pasco 2023 and 2024 PIT Counts by Age Category

The CoC must assess potential trends among certain age groups in the coming year especially for those older adult age ranges between 45 and 65 or older.

Two hundred and sixty-four (36%) persons identified as female in the 2024 PIT count.

In households comprised of at least one adult and one child under age 18, 77 women/girls were identified as making up 56% of households with children. Sixty identified as men/boys, making up 43% of households with children. One person identified with more than one gender.

In households without children or adult-only households, 187 (32%) identified as women or girls, 405 (68%) identified as men or boys, and no one identified as having a culturally specific identity, transgender, non-binary, questioning, different identity, or as having more than one gender.

The table below compares PCCoC's number of people experiencing homelessness and percentages with the State of Florida and the United States. This PCCoC data is from the most recent 2024 Point in Time Count. [i]

Population	National	%	Florida	%	Pasco	%
Overall	653,104	100%	30,756	100%	731	100%
Individuals	467,020	72%	22,925	75%	593	81%
People in Families with Children	186,084	28%	7,831	25%	138	19%
Chronically Homeless Individuals	143,105	22%	5,400	18%	112	15%
Veterans	35,574	5%	2,558	8%	66	9%
Unaccompanied Youth	34,703	5%	1,213	4%	10	1%
Sheltered	396,494	61%	15,274	50%	304	42%
Unsheltered	256,610	39%	15,482	50%	427	58%

Table 5: Pasco Data Comparison with National and State Averages for 2024

The table above demonstrates the need for attention to solutions addressing unsheltered homelessness and veteran homelessness.

Multi-Year Snapshot

There has been a 18% decrease in homelessness overall from 2019 to 2024, representing a decrease of 163 persons.

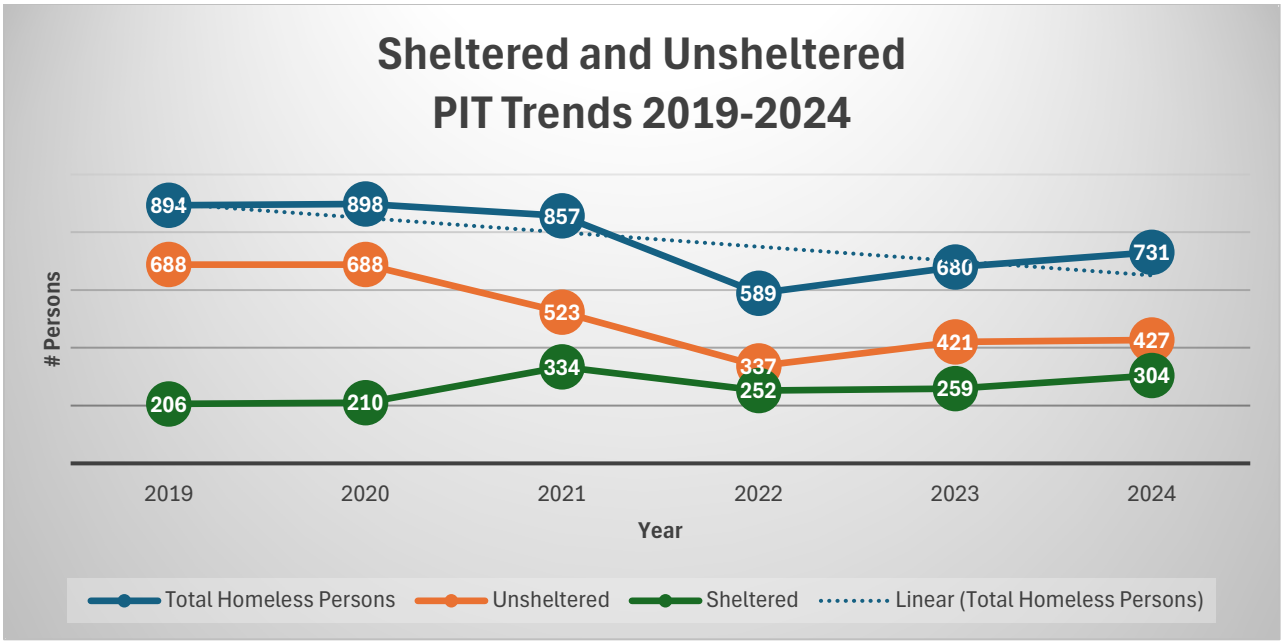

Figure 3: Pasco County CoC Point-in-Time Count Total Persons 2019-2024

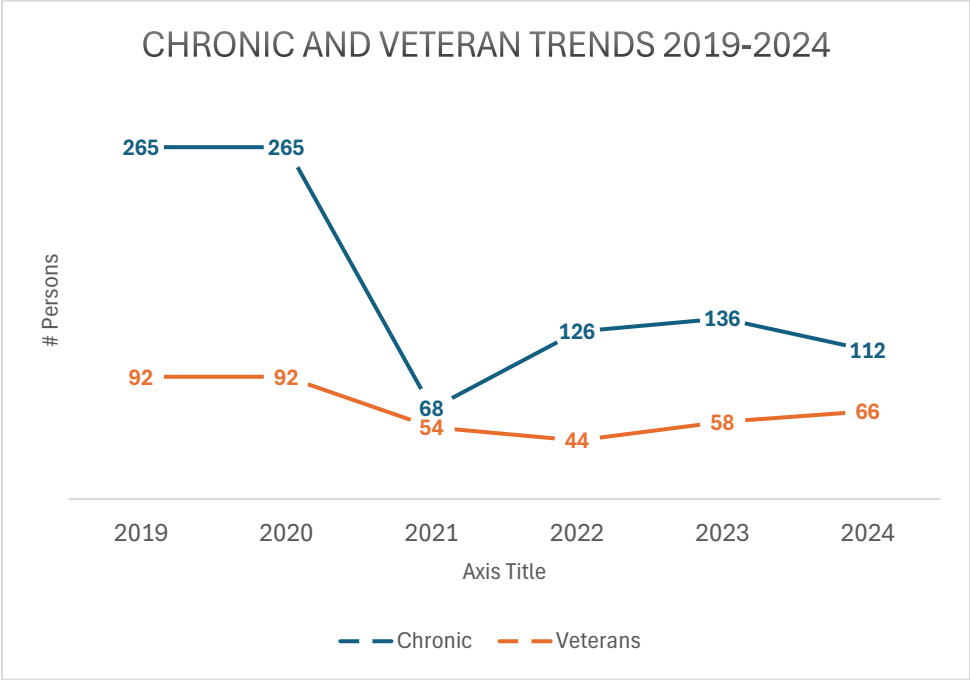

Figure 4: Point-in-Time Count Trends for Chronic and Veterans 2019-2024

Since 2019, Veteran Homelessness has decreased by 28%, or 26 veterans. Chronic homelessness has decreased significantly by 58%, or 153 people. There are two significant opportunities for the CoC to focus on in the coming year. Setting achievable targets for veteran and chronic homelessness with monthly goals for permanent housing placements will help ensure the CoC is

monitoring and forcing a continued reduction in homelessness among these two populations. It is also recommended that the CoC consider pursuing the goals for ending homelessness for veterans and the chronically homeless population under the guidance of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness and engage in technical support available through the Community Solutions Built for Zero movement to help communities measure progress with ending homelessness in meaningful and impactful, action-oriented ways. All resources dedicated to veterans are currently not fully utilized, including VASH vouchers. Optimizing efficiency with existing resources could be the step that ends veteran homelessness in Pasco County.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Schoolchildren

As reported through the McKinney-Vento school district program[ii], the PIT Count does not include homeless schoolchildren. Many homeless schoolchildren are in doubled-up situations or living in hotels. Those living situations do not align with HUD's definition of literal homelessness, so they are excluded from the PIT Count. This is an important population to consider as the families' housing instability dramatically impacts children's social determinants of health. Though some of these families are adjacent to the homeless response system, they are often one crisis away from experiencing literal homelessness. These families represent a gap in the Housing Crisis Response System that cannot be addressed until additional federal, state, and local resources are prioritized for this population. This data also highlights a quantifiable need for expanded homelessness prevention and diversion programs to support these households. Also of significant note, the school system identified 236 unaccompanied homeless youth as part of their homeless counts. During the 2018/2019 school year, 1,908 students were identified as homeless and in 2022/2023, 1,773 students were identified as homeless, showing a 7% reduction over the five year span in youth homelessness within the Pasco County school system.

District	Shelters	Shared Housing	Other	Motels	Total Homeless
Pasco	91	1,362	76	244	1,773

Table 3: 2022-2023 Department of Education Homeless Student Count Data

By-Name List

28% of households are waiting for Permanent Supportive Housing.

62% of households are waiting for Rapid Rehousing assistance.

10% need access to Emergency Shelter.

The PIT Count provides a one-day snapshot of homelessness in the community. Different perspectives are available through the Coordinated Entry process and the By-Name List. The Coordinated Entry System utilizes a process that assesses, prioritizes, and refers households to

the appropriate housing interventions. The prioritization and referral process uses the By-Name List, which is a prioritization list of households who have been assessed and are waiting for housing. The standardized assessment tool of the Pasco County Coordinated Entry System is the Vulnerability Index – Services Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT). The VI-SPDAT outcomes are a numerical score. The higher the score, the higher the acuity of the household. The Pasco County CoC Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures detail the prioritization process for individuals, families, and special populations.

The Pasco County CoC continues to utilize the VI-SPDAT for prioritization, but that assessment tool is no longer supported. Studies have found that the VI-SPDAT can have racial and gender bias. Below is a quick snapshot of By-Name List data as of 12/31/24. A detailed Coordinated Entry BNL Data Summary is in Appendix C.

COORDINATED ENTRY and BY-NAME LIST DATA

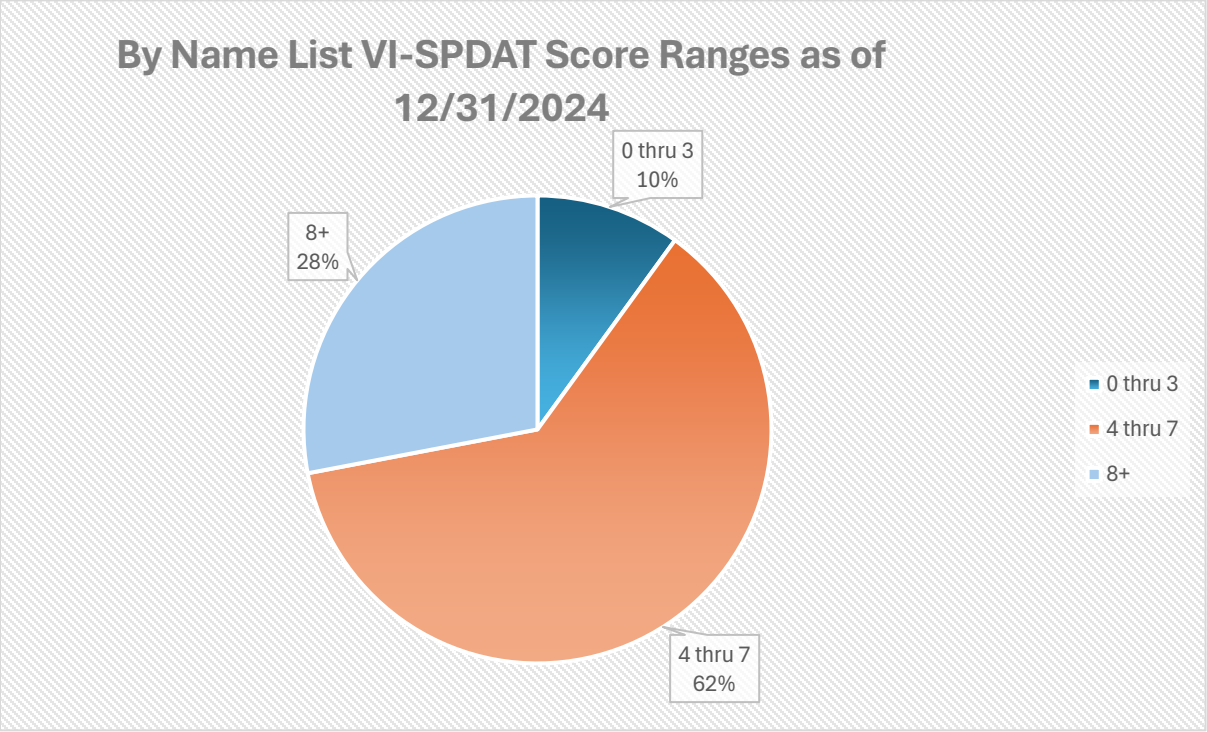

Figure 5: Pasco BNL VI-SPDAT Scores

The above pie chart details the total persons (532) identified through the Coordinated Entry System who are seeking housing and services and actively experiencing homelessness as of 12/31/24. The majority of people assessed through CE and on the BNL (62% or 331 people) need Rapid Rehousing as the intervention that will solve their homelessness. The 2nd highest need is Permanent Supportive Housing, with 28% or 148 individuals needing this intervention to resolve

their homelessness. Only 10% or 53 people on the BNL need emergency shelter with case management services, according to their VI-SPDAT assessment scores.

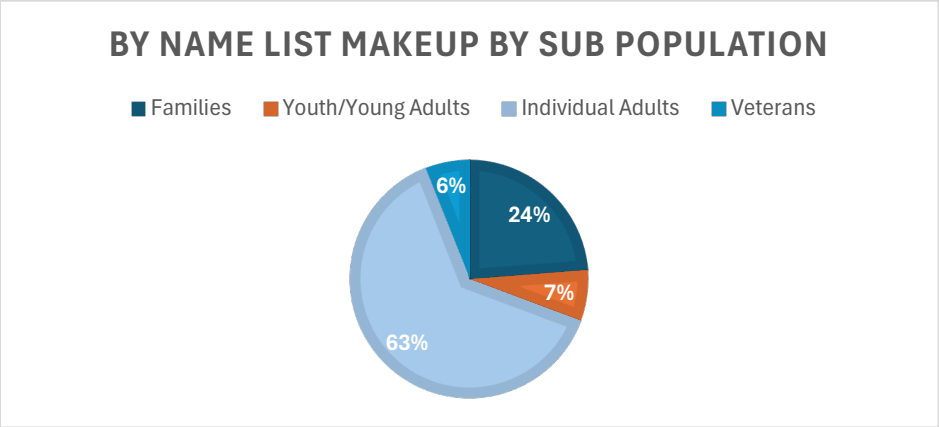

Figure 6: BNL Household Types

Most (63% or 339 people) represent single adult households with no children. A total of 128 households, or 24% of the BNL, represent Families with a child or children under the age of 18, and a total of 35 households represent 7% of the BNL as youth or young adult households ranging in age from 18 to 24. Veterans represent 6% of the BNL with 30 total veterans.

VI-SPDAT SCORE RANGE	Families w/ Child(ren)	Youth/Young Adults Ages 18-24	Individual Adults	Veterans	Totals
0-3 Emergency Shelter	14	3	30	6	**53**
4-7 Rapid Rehousing	80	24	207	20	**331**
8+ Permanent Supportive Housing	34	8	102	4	**148**
Population Category Totals	128	35	339	30	**532**

Table 5: Pasco VI-SPDAT Score Ranges by Household Type

The figures and charts above demonstrate that 339 individuals and 128 families await permanent housing. The figure below details the monthly income for adults on the BNL seeking permanent housing. All information is self-reported at the time of the CE Assessment.

COORDINATED ENTRY MONTHLY INCOME RANGES

Monthly Income Range	# of Adults
NO Monthly Income	164
$1-$1,000	85
$1,001-$1,500	37
$1,501-$2,000	21
$2,001 or more	27

Table 6: Pasco BNL Monthly Income Ranges

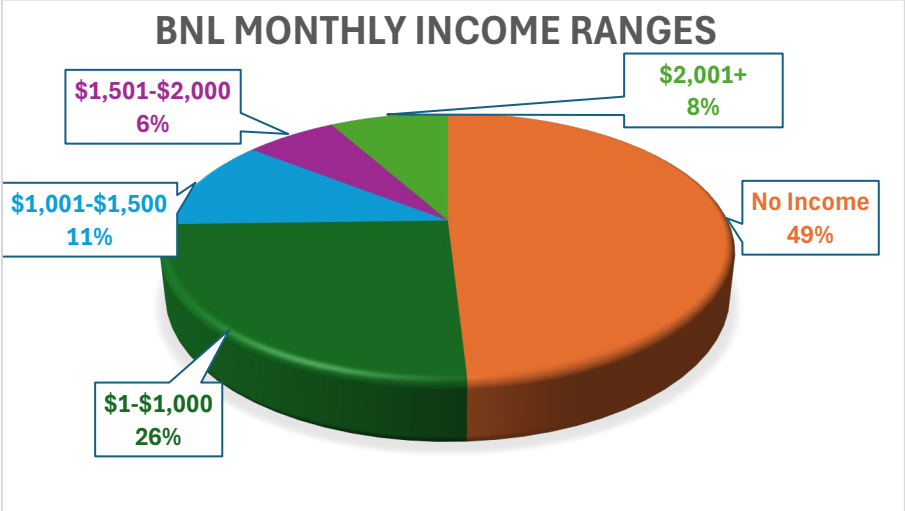

Figure 7: Pasco BNL Monthly Income Ranges

VI. Racial Equity

Racial and ethnic diversity are essential considerations when serving marginalized populations that often are impacted by long-standing systemic discrimination. Diversity is especially important in leadership and service staff. It should reflect the people served, providing more opportunity for initial connection between clients and staff upon initial engagement. Across the nation, homelessness is more common among Black/African American households, given the percentage of the general population they represent. Utilizing the HUD CoC Analysis Tool, CoCs are able to highlight some critical areas of opportunity to expand diversity and inclusion.

- **Families with children in the homeless service system represent 12% more Black homeless families than the general homeless population.**
- **In general, there is insignificant racial and ethnic disparity when comparing the general population of Pasco county to the population in poverty and experiencing homelessness.**

CoC Analysis Tool – The CoC Analysis Tool assists communities by comparing their homeless service data to general census data, showing any difference in who is represented in the homeless services system compared to the area's general population. Based on this tool, 1% more Black homeless individuals are represented in the homeless service system than the general

population of Pasco County. Families with children in the homeless service system represent 13% more Black homeless families than the general population. A fully completed CoC Analysis Tool is available in Appendix D. We also recommend that every CoC do an annual assessment of the demographic associated with the CoC Governance Board, front-line service providers staff, as well as middle management and leadership at individual service organizations, to ensure alignment with the population that needs services.

VII. Housing Capacity

- **From 2023 to 2024, each category of housing has expanded except for transitional housing.**
- **The most significant changes are the increase in emergency shelter and rapid rehousing beds**

The information below is from the Housing Inventory County (HIC) Report completed by the PCCoC and submitted to HUD. The table details the types of beds, reviews the totals for 2023 and 2024, and examines bed utilization rates as well as the increase/decrease in beds from 2023 to 2024.

Project Type	2023 Total	2024 Total	2024 Utilization	Increase/ Decrease
Emergency Shelter	119	216	42%	+97 beds
Transitional Housing	224	207	80%	-17 beds
Safe Haven	0	0	N/A	N/A
Rapid Rehousing	178	250	100%	+72 beds
Permanent Supportive Housing	414	426	72%	+12 beds
Other Permanent Housing	511	511	55%	No change
Total Beds	**1,446**	**1,610**	**70%**	**+164**

Table 74: 2023 & 2024 Housing Inventory Count Information (Measure of Supply)[iii]

From 2023 to 2024, each housing category expanded except for transitional housing, and other permanent housing. The most significant changes were among emergency shelter and rapid rehousing beds. Emergency shelter utilization low with a utilization average among all emergency shelter programs at only 42%. Sunrise of Pasco County and the CHPC Students in Transition shelter programs had the highest utilization rates between 90 and 97%, there were three emergency shelter projects utilizing no beds on the night of the 2024 PIT count, there was one shelter project only being utilized at 13%, two projects being utilized between 44 to 58%, and one project utilized at 80%. Over all effort needs to be made to ensure all emergency shelter beds are dedicated to appropriate subpopulations and tracked in HMIS to demonstrate higher

utilization rates. Also ensuring that shelter beds are low barrier can contribute to higher utilization rates.

Another opportunity is to more fully utilize Other Permanent Housing beds. These beds are mostly voucher based beds and barriers like finding agreeable landlords may be the most significant challenge here. Efforts to increase Other Permanent Housing Bed utilization should be made to ensure that at least 85% of these beds are utilized. Utilizing these beds at 85% or higher can put the Pasco Housing Authority in a position to apply for more vouchers for Pasco residents.

Housing Cost Burdened

This gap is mentioned throughout the report and is heavily supported by data and community feedback. Many people experiencing homelessness fall into the 0-30% Area Median Income (AMI) range. Pasco County has a significant need for affordable housing units for households within the 0-30% AMI range; nearly 57% of all renters in this AMI range are cost burdened and spending 50% or more of their income on rent[iv], which significantly increases their risk of housing instability and homelessness.

Pasco's 16,437 renters are cost-burdened and spending more than 50% of their income on rent. This represents nearly 57% of all renter households in the 0-30% AMI range. For every 100 renters who have a household income of 30% AMI or below, there are only 22 units of affordable housing available. This data point clearly shows the extreme competition for affordable housing that ELI households have to contend with in Pasco County.

VIII. Funding

- **From 2020 to 2024, funding dedicated to the CoC through HUD and the State of Florida has increased 5%.**

The past three years have brought unprecedented funding into the Pasco County CoC, mainly related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The CARES Act alone authorized $5 billion in Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding to recipients in the United States, allowing Continuums of Care to make substantial investments into street outreach, homelessness prevention, rapid rehousing, and emergency shelter programs. A typical year of ESG funding for the Pasco CoC is approximately $172,000; for fiscal years 2021, 2022, and 2023, an additional $3.5 million was infused into the local housing crisis response system through ESG-CV funding, and another $44.5K was granted through ESG-RUSH in 2022/23. The table and graph below detail funding sources for the Pasco CoC from 2021 through 2024, with FY 2020/2021 being a typical year. In FY 2022/2023, Hurricane Ian brought additional disaster funds through the ESG-RUSH program. Additionally, from 2022 to 2023 there was a significant increase in State Challenge Grant funding

and Staffing Grant Funding for CoCs to address homelessness interventions named in their CoC Plan.

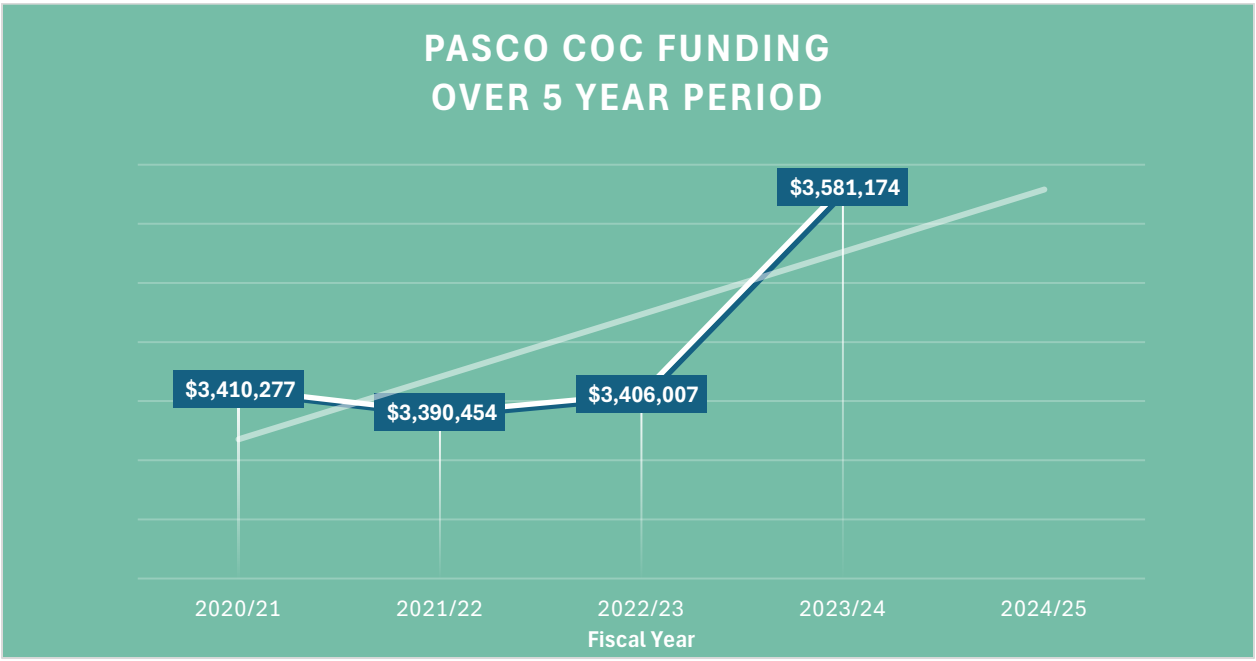

Figure 8: Pasco CoC Funding 2020-2024

The table below offers a snapshot of the FY 2023-2024 funding from state and federal sources to address homelessness, separated into interventions that address homelessness or functions of the CoC. A complete list of funding sources, recipients, and deliverables is available in Appendix E.

FY	Challenge	ESG	ESG-CV	ESG-RUSH	TANF	Staffing	HUD CoC	FY Total
2023/24	$748,704	$189,500	$0.00	$0.00	$32,250	$185,895	$2,424,825	**$3,581,174**
2022/23	$119,000	$172,000	$721,955	$44,543	$32,250	$107,143	$2,209,116	**$3,406,007**
2021/22	$119,992	$172,000	$1,175,960	$0.00	$32,250	$107,143	$1,783,109	**$3,390,454**
2020/21	$119,000	$172,000	$1,651,960	$0.00	$0.00	$107,143	$1,360,174	**$3,410,277**

Table 8: Pasco CoC Funding 2020-2024 By Funding Stream

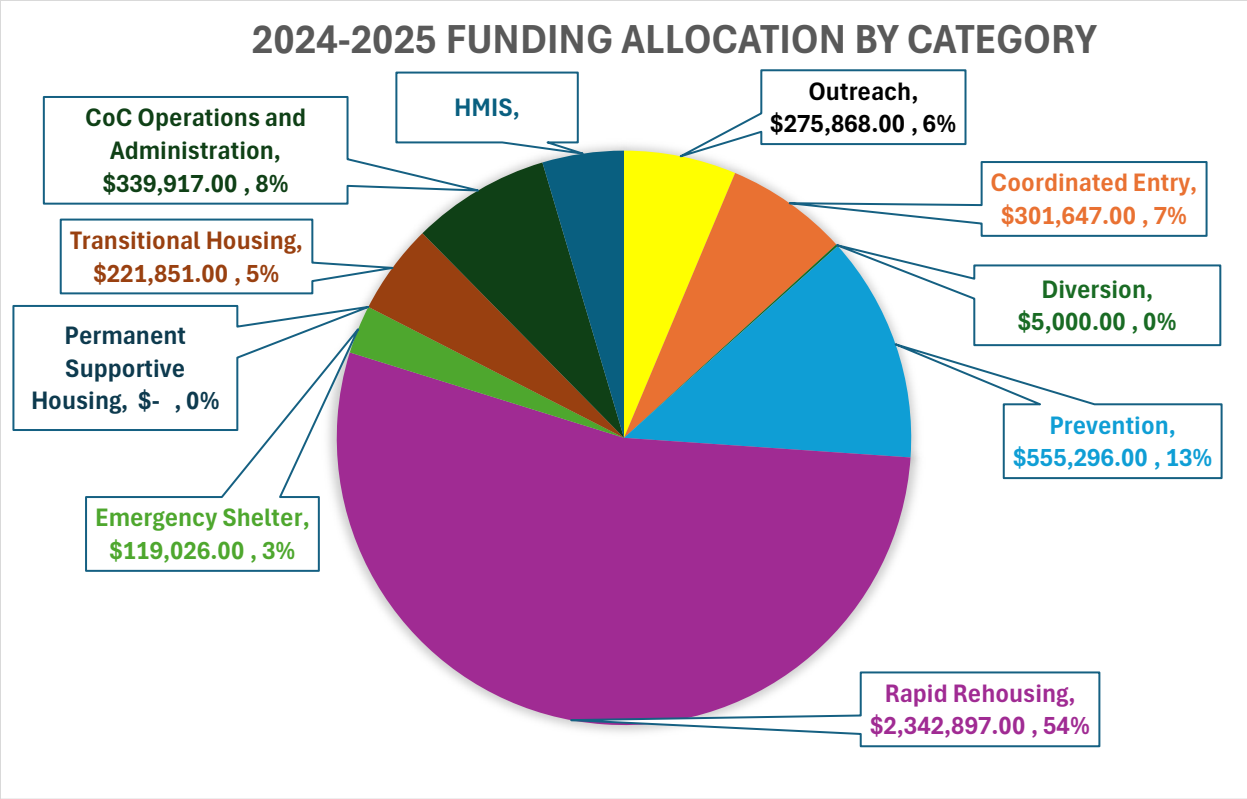

Figure 95: FY2023/2024 Continuum of Care Funding by Housing Crisis Response Component

Intervention	FY 2024-2025 Funding	Deliverables/Actual Served
Street Outreach	$275,868.00	1,080 individuals
Coordinated Entry	$301,647.00	N/A
Diversion	$5,000.00	N/A
Prevention	$555,296.00	390 individuals
Rapid Rehousing	$2,342,897.00	515 individuals
Emergency Shelter	$119,026.00	68 individuals
Transitional Housing	$221,851.00	128 Individuals
Permanent Supportive Housing	$0.00	N/A
CoC Operations and Admin	$339,917.00	N/A
HMIS	$200,000.00	N/A

Table 9: Pasco CoC Funding and Deliverables for 2024/25 by Housing Crisis Response Component

Based on the deliverables, the actual number of individuals served, and the total allocated to each intervention, the following approximate cost can be discerned to help understand the cost to deliver such services within the Pasco County CoC.

- Street Outreach services average $255 per person served
- Homeless Prevention services average $1,424 per person served
- Rapid Rehousing services average $4,549 per person served
- Emergency Shelter services average $1,750 per person served
- Transitional Housing services average $1,733 per person served

IX. System Performance

- **The percentage of people staying in HUD CoC-funded programs who have increased their overall income is inconsistent from 2019 through 2023 and generally falls far below the national average.**
- **The percentage of people exiting street outreach programs to temporary or permanent housing is inconsistent and fell far below the national average in 2019 and 2022 showing a need for consistent strategies to increase temporary and permanent housing exits from street outreach programs.**
- **Successful exits from permanent housing and retention of permanent housing beyond 6 months should also be monitored and strategies to improve permanent housing placement and retention of permanent housing should be put in to place.**

Relying upon System Performance Measure data generated for 2019 through 2023, performance trends regarding increasing income among program stayers was identified.[v] This area of system performance should be actively monitored, and strategies to improve performance for these measures should be implemented. Below are the trends identified for each of the HUD CoC System Performance Measures along with guidance on strategies to improve those needing attention.

Length of Time Homeless

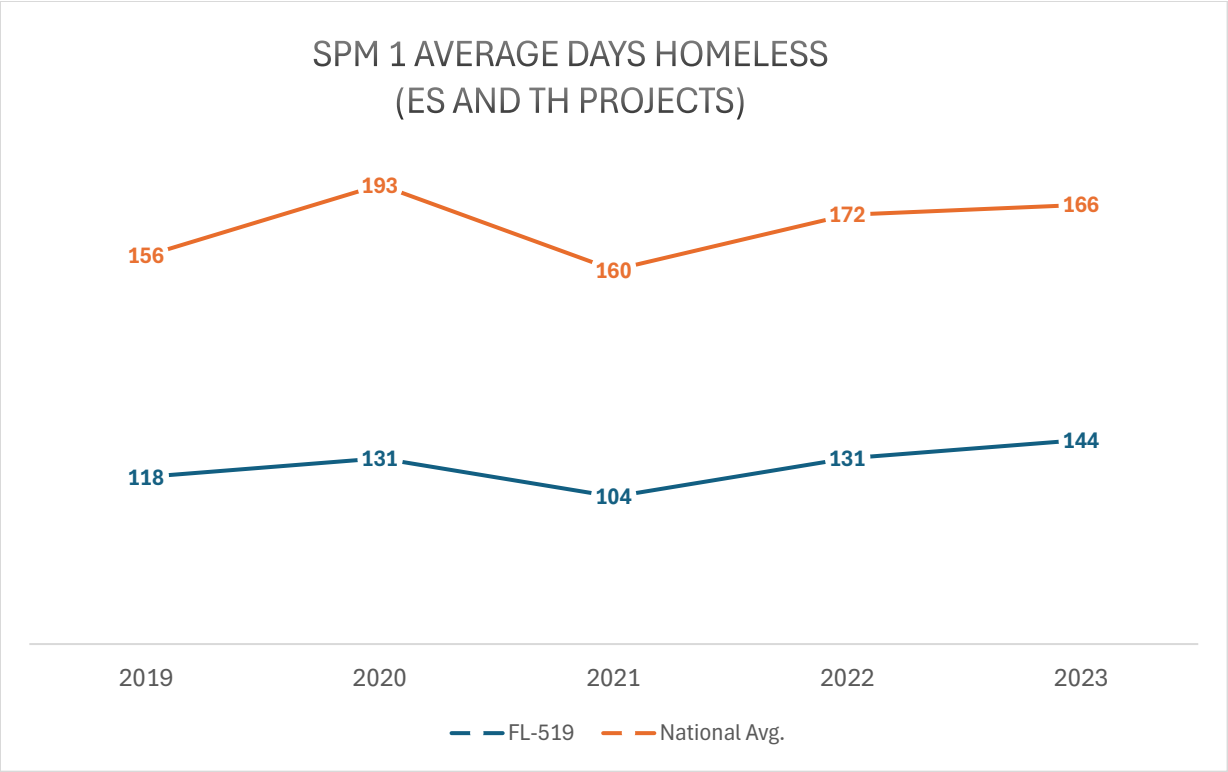

Figure 10: Length of Time Homeless 2019-2023

Since 2019, the length of time (LoT) homeless has increased by 26 days for the Pasco County CoC, however, the length of time homeless withing Pasco is still far below the national average. Maintaining best practices around shelter and transitional housing stays that are housing-focused will help maintain lower average days homeless and remain under the national average. Increasing access to affordable housing and permanent supportive housing will also support households moving out of homelessness into permanent housing opportunities. Remember that this measure does not consider the length of time homeless for those unsheltered and not enrolled in ES or TH.

Returns to Homelessness

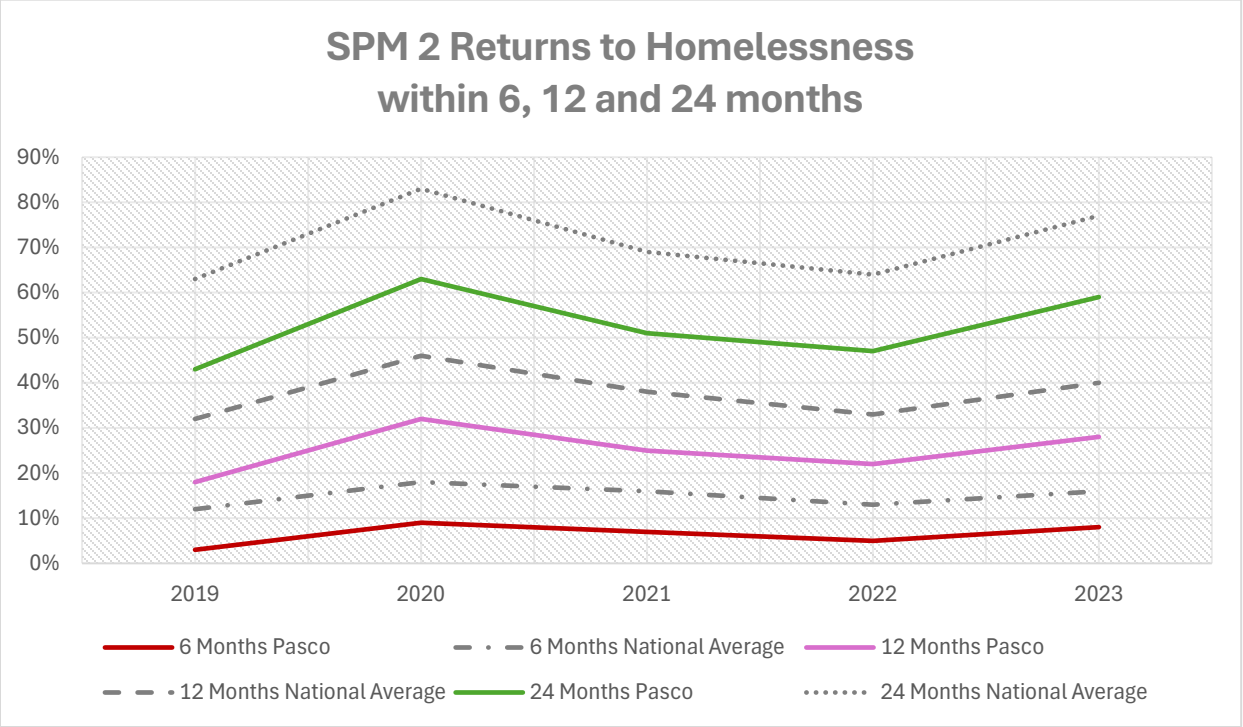

Figure 11: System Performance Measure 2 Returns to Homelessness within 6, 12 and 24 months 2019-2023

Returns to Homelessness data are consistent and well below the national averages for 6, 12, and 24 months. Homelessness prevention, emergency shelter diversion, rapid resolution, and eviction prevention programs are all effective interventions to continue this trend. Prioritizing formerly homeless households who have been permanently housed within the past two years for homeless prevention resources is also an effective way to manage returns to homelessness.

Annual HMIS Counts

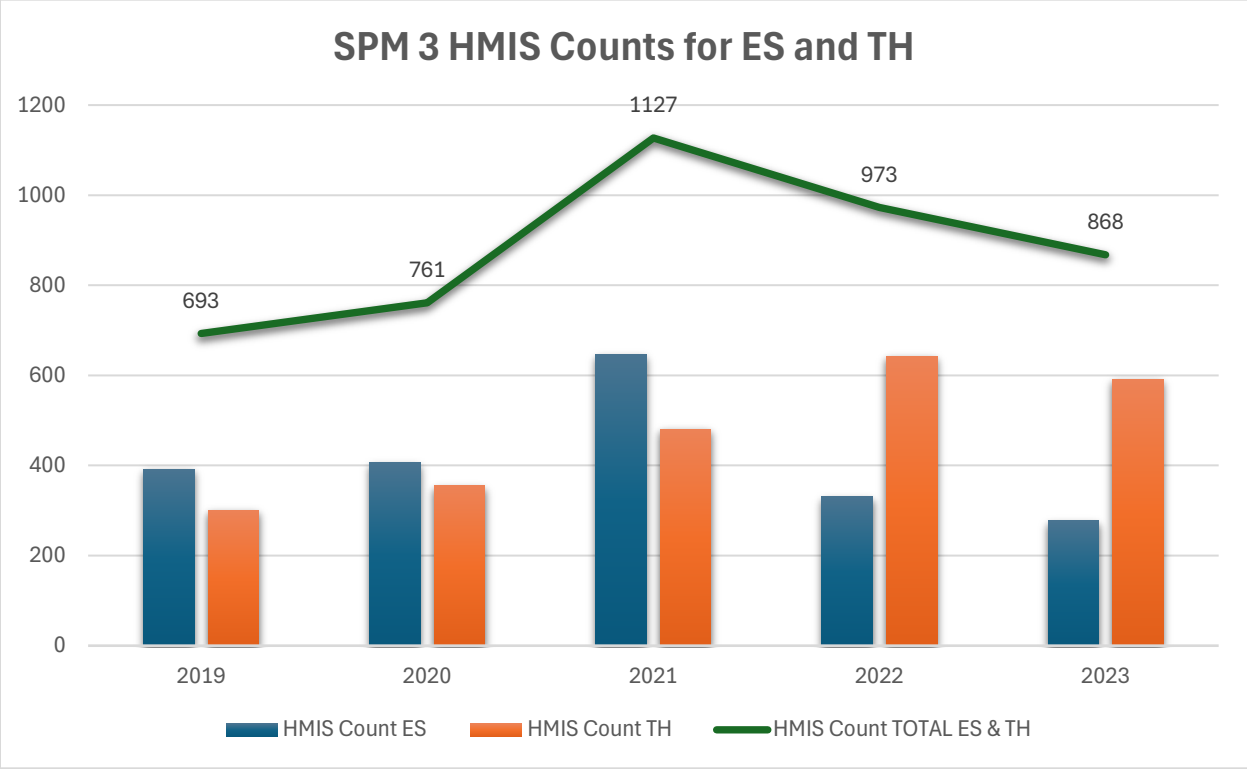

Figure 12: System Performance Measure 2 Returns to Homelessness within 6, 12 and 24 months 2019-2023

Looking at the 12 months of October 1 through September 30 each year, HMIS is utilized to more accurately count the number of people entering emergency shelters and transitional housing programs. These annual counts can be more informative than Point in Time count data and highlight programs' utilization over longer periods rather than just one night. Since 2019, the number of individuals identified as homeless and enrolled in an emergency shelter or transitional housing program has increased by 25% or 175 people. Some of the increase in annual counts for ES and TH programs can be attributed to expansion of emergency shelter beds within the system.

Increased Income Among System Leavers and Stayers

Increasing a program participant's income is one of the most effective strategies for improving self-sufficiency and their ability to maintain permanent housing outcomes. These measure trends indicate the highest need for attention and improvement among the Pasco County CoC. Consistency in data collection and annual updates is essential to quality data for this measure. Recording all changes in a participant's income through the annual update feature in HMIS helps ensure that any increase in income, even if only a few dollars, is recorded and reflected in this measure. Improved practices around income data updates in HMIS should be considered for all HUD CoC-funded projects to improve this measure. Also, it is essential to increase supportive services to ensure participants have access to mainstream benefits and skill-building that will

help them increase their incomes. Quality case management is also instrumental in ensuring participants reach their income goals to achieve self-sufficiency.

The following two tables depict income data for system leavers, those who exited or left the program between October 1 and September 30.

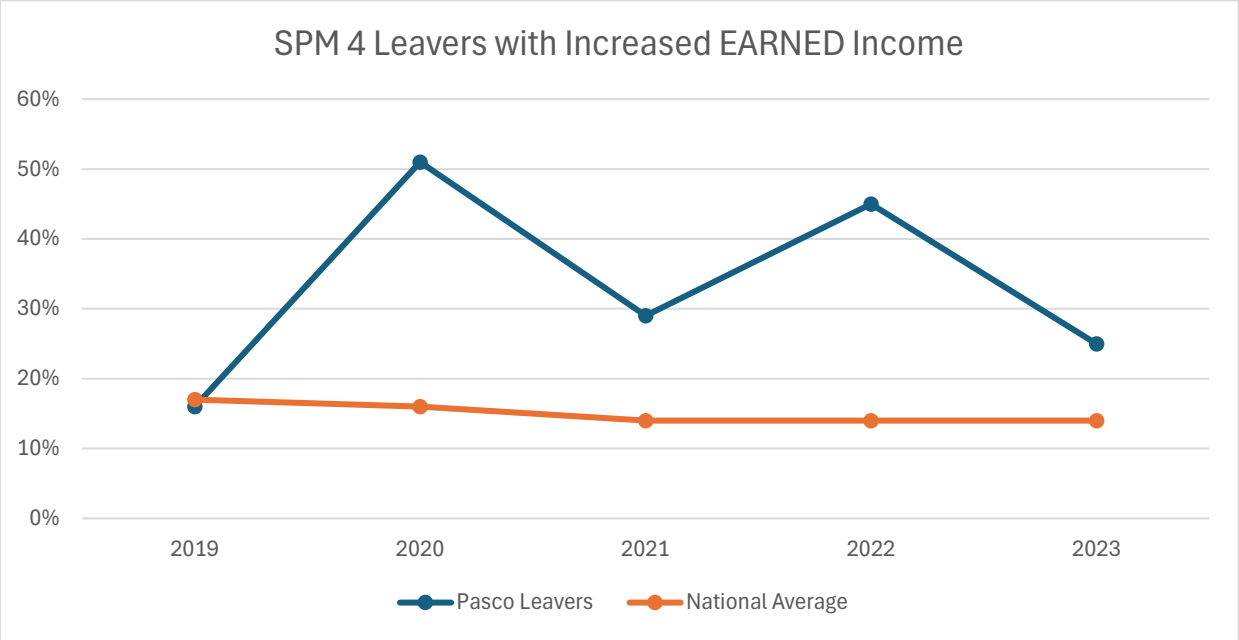

Figure 13: System Performance Measure 4 Leavers with Increased Earned Income

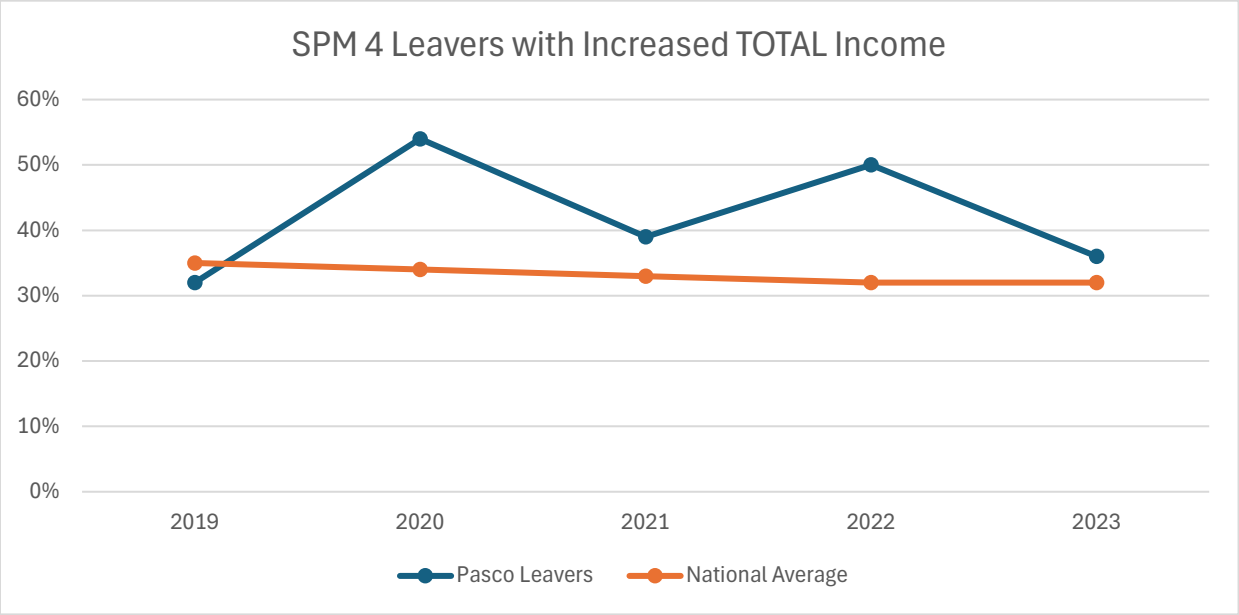

Figure 14: System Performance Measure 4 Leavers with Increased Total Income

As demonstrated in the graphs above, data from year to year regarding people leaving HUD CoC-funded programs about their income is inconsistent and does not align with national trends. This is likely a data quality issue and a service provider capacity issue in delivering consistent services that help participants build income. The data indicates that in 2020 and 2022, some effort was put into improving this system performance measure; however, according to 2023 data, this measure dropped. As the CoC sets goals for System Performance, looking at trends with the national average will help identify an achievable target and improve this outcome to align with the nation.

The graph below depicts income growth for system stayers, those who stayed in the program through September 30 of that year. It is also important to help these participants build income so they can move on from programming and exit programs to a less intensive intervention or complete self-sufficiency.

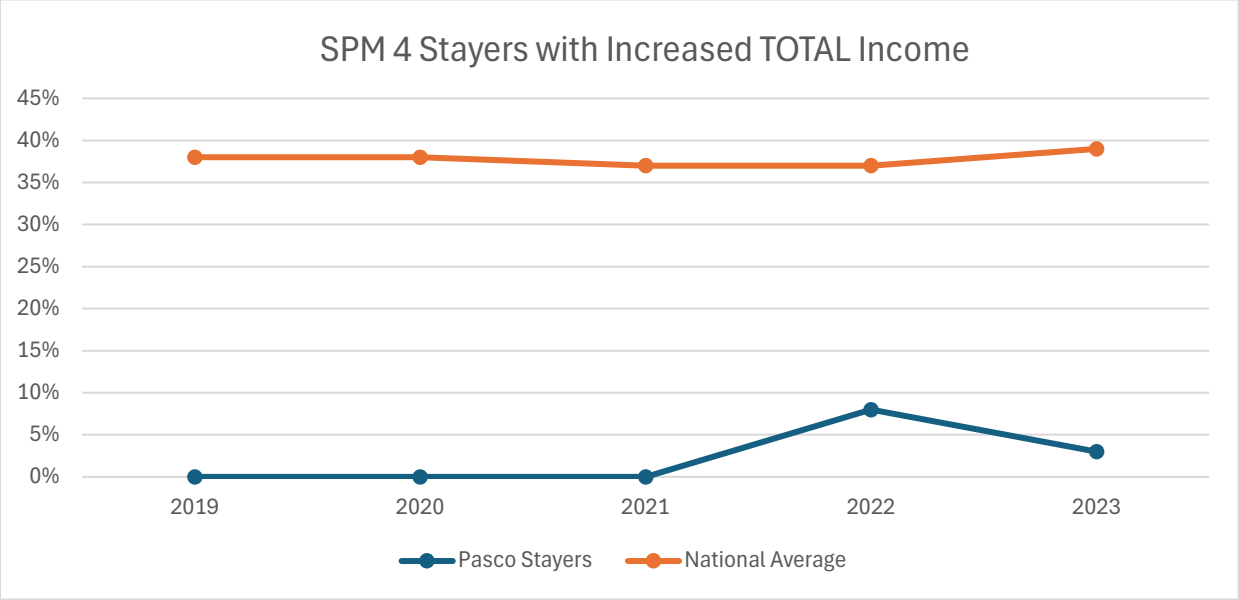

Figure 15: System Performance Measure 4 Stayers with Increased Total Income

This is the most concerning of the measures reviewed. Generally, around 38% of system stayers nationwide achieve increased income. However, three of the five years for the Pasco CoC indicate that 0% of system stayers increased their income. In 2022, the Pasco County CoC showed that 8% of program participants did increase their income, but this is still 29% below the national average for 2022. Significant effort and strategy need to be implemented to improve this measure. Over time, if this is unaddressed, this can contribute to an increase in returns to homelessness due to households and individuals exiting homeless programming not having adequate income to maintain stable housing.

First Time Homeless

CoCs across the nation are always looking at strategies that decrease the number of people who experience homelessness for the first time within their community. Often, diversion and prevention programs are key in reducing first-time homelessness. To measure first-time homelessness utilizing HMIS data, someone is considered to be homeless for the first time if they have not received services in HMIS for the past 24 months. Something identifiable with the PCCoC data for this measure is that it does not demonstrate the national trend of first-time homelessness increasing but rather shows a decrease in first-time homelessness.

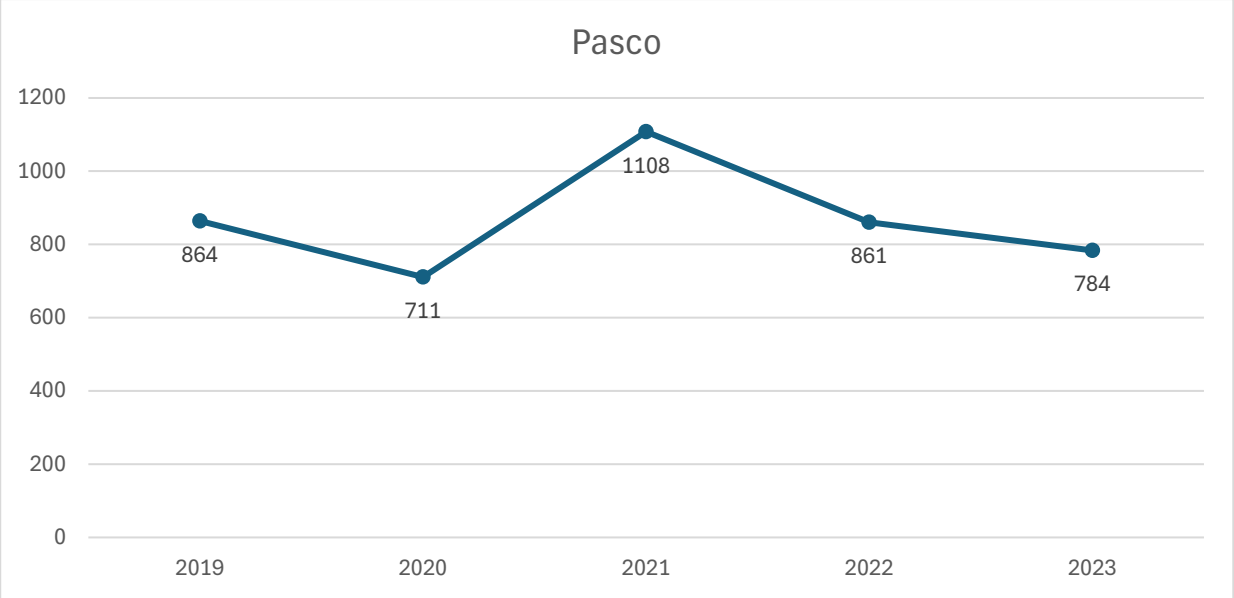

Figure 16: System Performance Measure 5 First Time Homeless

From 2020 to 2023, nationally, first-time homelessness has increased by nearly 30%. However, the PCCoC SPM data indicates that first-time homelessness has had its peak in 2021 with 1108 people experiencing first time homelessness, then a consistent and sizeable decrease through 2023 with 784 people experiencing first time homelessness, a reduction of 29%. This is possible through ramping up investments in diversion, prevention, and rapid resolution programs. This measure needs thorough investigations to determine if an implemented strategy has caused this variance in trend as compared to the rest of the nation. Upon examination of the climate of the local affordable housing stock and eviction rates, those seem consistent with the rest of the nation and would not have significantly attributed to the reduction in this measure.

Permanent Housing Placements

The final System Performance Measure looks at exits to permanent housing and retention of permanent housing beyond 6 months. The following three graphs depict successful exits from Street Outreach (SO), Emergency Shelter (ES), Transitional Housing (TH), and Rapid Rehousing (RRH) programs. This data helps CoCs understand which programs are most effective in helping participants gain permanent housing and stability.

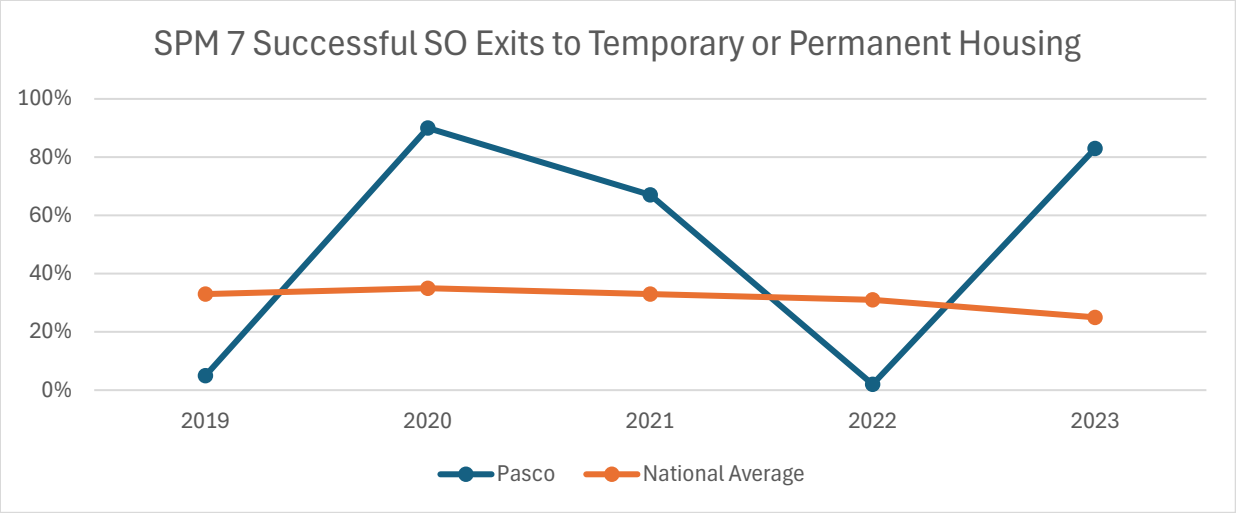

Figure 17: Street Outreach Exits to Permanent Housing 2015-2023

As indicated in the graph above, successful exits from Street Outreach programs significantly improved from 2020 to 2021, and again in 2023. In 2023, 83% of those exiting street outreach programs were to temporary and permanent housing which was 60% higher than the national average for that year. Looking at years 2020, 2021 and 2023 and replicating strategies that improved this measure to be so far better than the national average should be continued. Likely this is related to data entry and quality issues rather than change in service and housing availability alone.

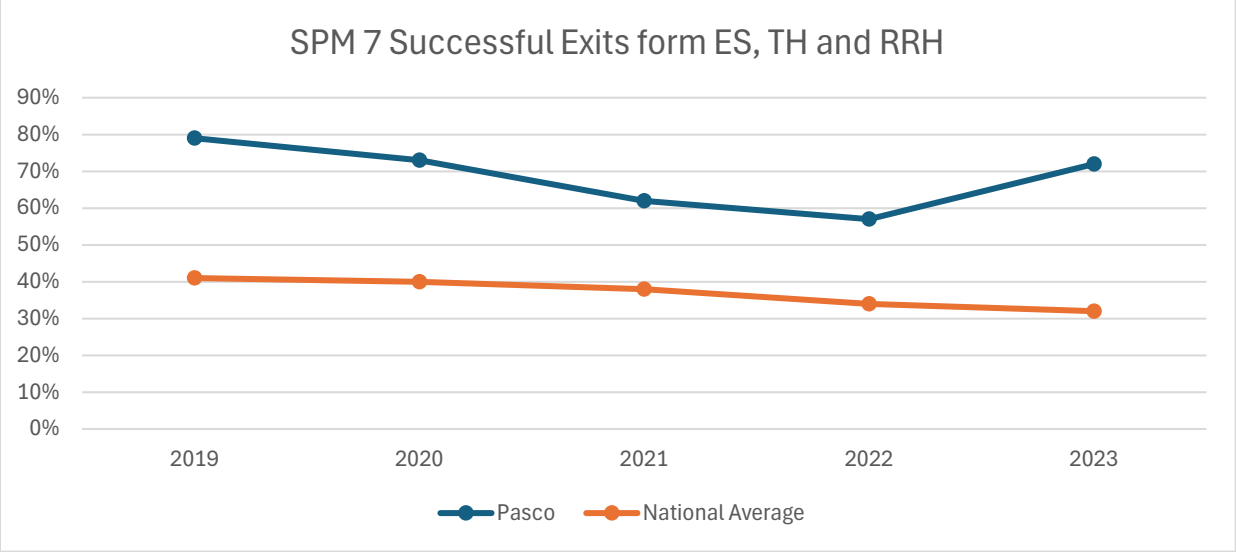

Figure 18: Street Outreach Exits to Permanent Housing 2015-2023

As indicated in the graph above, PCCoC consistently performs better than the national average for successful exits from ES, TH, and RRH. Specifically, in 2023, successful exits were 40% higher

than the national average for these program types, with 72% of participants moving into successful placements.

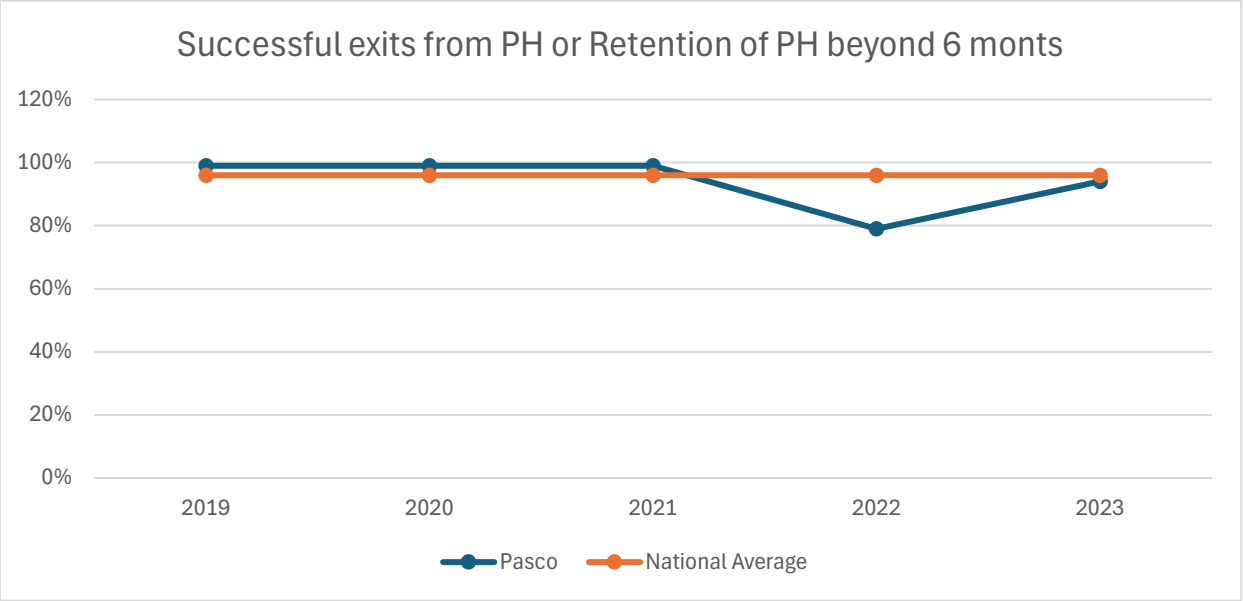

Figure 19: SPM 7 Successful Exits from Permanent Housing or Retention of Permanent Housing 2019-2023

The above graph indicates that PCCoC is slightly above the national average in exits to PH from PH and retention of PH in 2019 through 2021; however, in 2022 and 2023 this measure for Pasco dropped below the national average. This needs to be monitored and strategies need to be put in place to improve this measure for 2024 and beyond.

Retention of permanent housing is critical and a great predictor of how much needs to be devoted to homelessness prevention. Another System Performance Measure correlated to the reduction in retention of permanent housing is measure 4, which measures how many people leaving CoC-funded permanent housing projects have shown an increase in income. Assisting these program participants with increasing their incomes increases their chances of retaining stable, permanent housing in perpetuity and should be a priority moving forward.

Longitudinal Systems Analysis and Stella Performance

Stella Performance (Stella P) is a tool made available to CoCs by HUD to provide data visualization of the Longitudinal Systems Analysis (LSA) datasets to help communities understand how their homeless response system has been performing on critical performance measures. These visuals generated by Stella P. illustrate how households move through the homeless system and visualize system performance. Stella P includes HMIS data from emergency shelters, transitional housing, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing. Stella P does the analytical heavy lifting so CoCs can focus on planning and improving their local housing crisis response systems. The full detailed System P report is available in Appendix F. Below are figures from the Stella P report demonstrating critical areas that need attention by the CoC in the coming months and years.

Days Homeless Trend

For each reporting year, households with at least one day in ES, SH, TH, or RRH or at least one day in PSH prior to move-in are included in this trend analysis. For each year, this is the average cumulative, unduplicated number of days that the households were served in ES or TH projects and RRH or PSH prior to move-in. As you can see, adult-only households between 2022 and 2024 decreased in the average number of days homeless. All household types combined for the 2024 LSA submission demonstrated an average of 116 days homeless or nearly 3.8 months of homelessness.

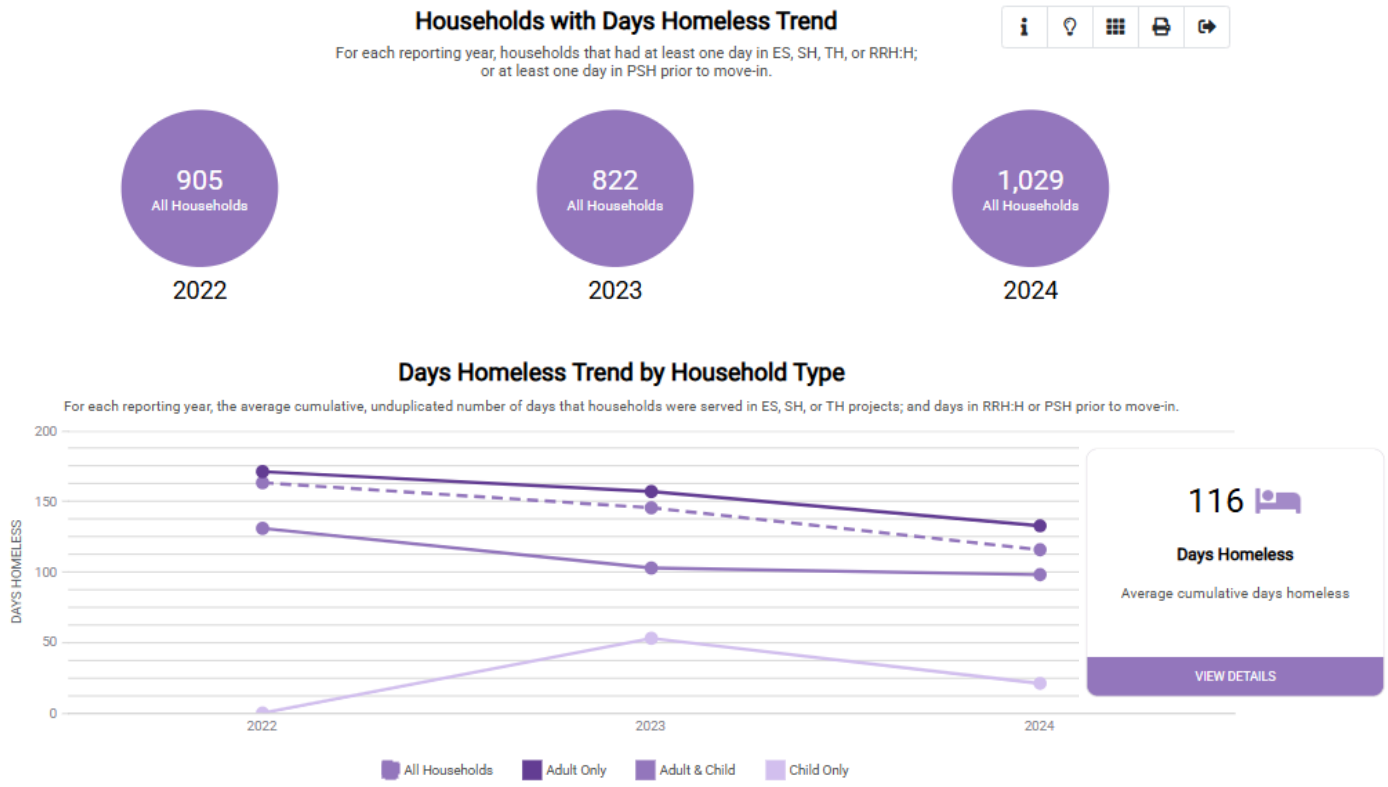

Figure 20: Stella P LSA Visualization on Days Homeless for 2022-2024

Exits to Permanent Housing Trend

The measure of exits to permanent housing for a CoC is equally important as the length of time homeless. The visualization below demonstrated a trend of relatively consistent permanent housing placements for the CoC ranging between 51% to 63%. The 2023 LSA submission demonstrated the highest percentage of exits to permanent housing at 63%. Access to affordable housing units, housing navigation (search and location) services, landlord incentives, use of master leasing, and increased effort to collect housing placement dates for participants that

disappear from programming unannounced are all ways to improve housing placement outcomes.

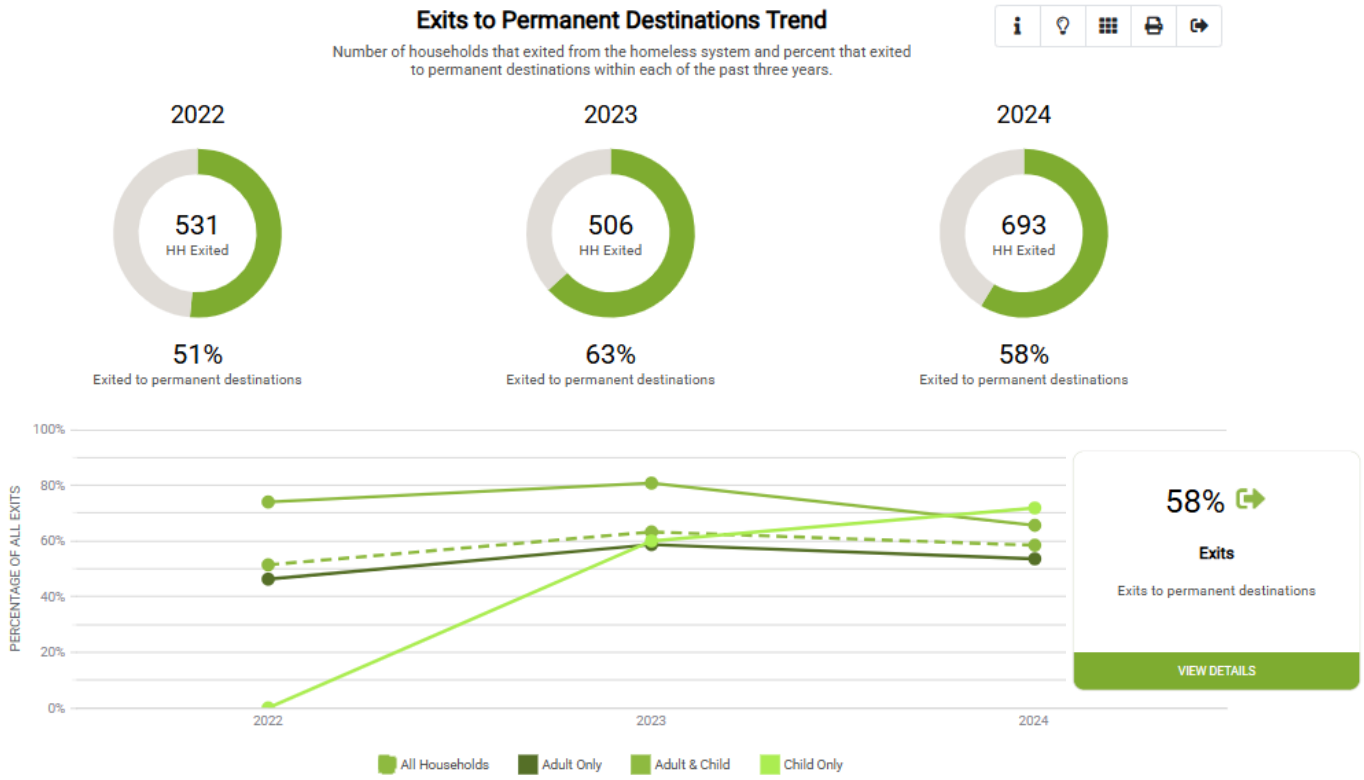

Figure 21: Stella P LSA Visualization on Exits to Permanent Destinations for 2022-2024

System Performance Map

One of the most valuable visualizations generated by Stella P is the System Performance Map. Households use different combinations of project types when they are served in the homeless system. These project-type combinations are referred to as "Pathways." Each pathway has a different average cumulative days homeless, exits to permanent housing, and returns to the homelessness system. The system map shows the performance of the main project types ES, TH, RRH, and PSH. This visualization for the 2024 PCCoC LSA data demonstrates the following highlights;

Emergency Shelter Pathway

1. Approximately 34% (349 households), are entering the system through Emergency shelter and have an average length of homelessness of 52 days per household. 61% (128 of 209 households) are exiting to permanent destinations.

Rapid Rehousing Pathway

2. Twenty five percent (417 households) of households are entering the system through RRH and have 75% (164 of 219) achieving permanent housing placements. This pathway demonstrates an average of 59 days homeless, slightly longer than the emergency shelter pathway.

Permanent Supportive Housing Pathway

3. Less than 1% (9 households) are entering the system through PSH. This pathway demonstrates the longest average number of days homeless prior to housing move-in, with 334 days, or just under one year. Three percent (1 of 35 households) of households move on from PSH to other permanent housing destinations. This pathway needs the most attention with regard to increasing access to PSH and exiting from PSH to other PH options.

Transitional Housing Pathway

4. This is the pathway with the most entries into the system at 40% (475 households) enter the system by way of TH. These households experience an average of 145 days of homelessness per household. One hundred and eleven or 49% of exiting households move on to permanent housing destinations.

Returns to Homelessness

5. On average, returns to homelessness occur within 83 days of exit to permanent housing. Follow-up and targeted prevention and diversion programs can help decrease returns to homelessness and improve this outcome for CoC.

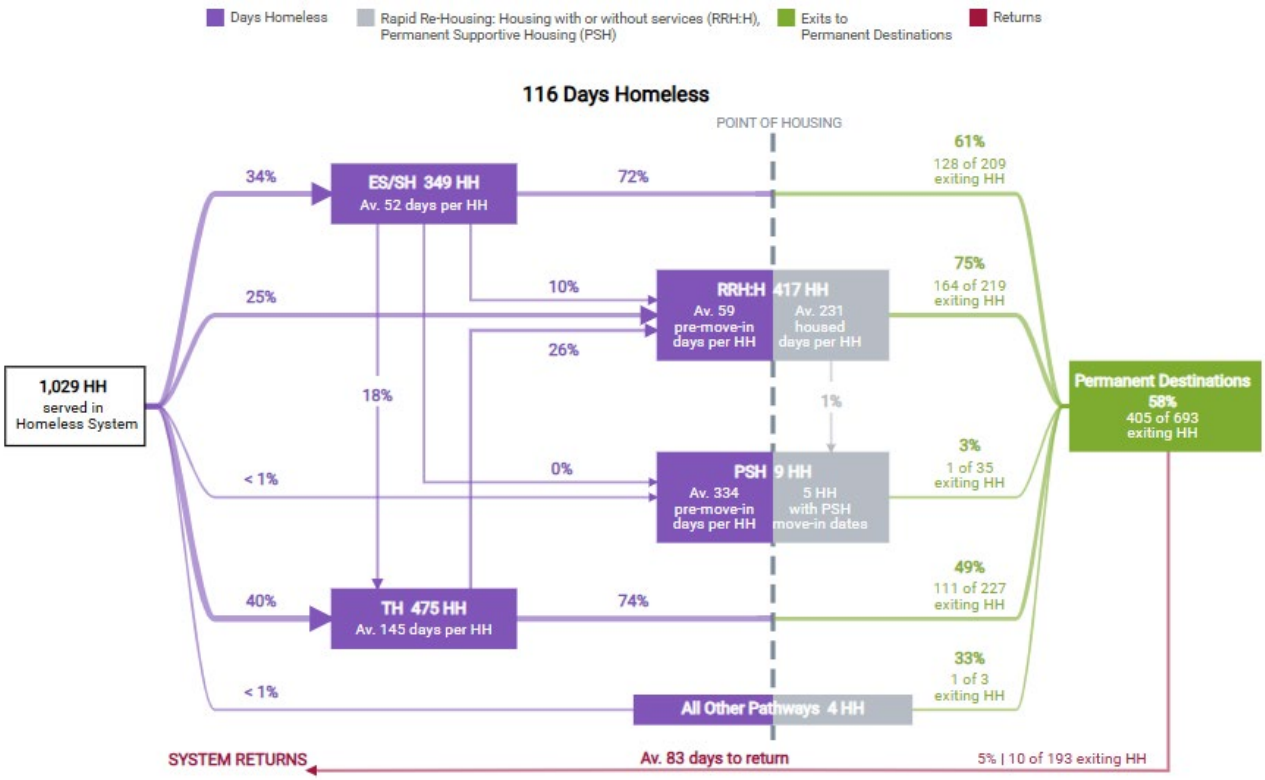

Figure 22: Stella P LSA Visualization of System Performance Map for 2024

X. Community Feedback

A vital part of completing this Gaps Analysis was soliciting community feedback. Stakeholders were incredibly generous with their time responding to surveys. We solicited feedback in two main ways: 1) Surveys of stakeholders and people with lived experience, and 2) focus groups with those with lived experience of homelessness. Florida Housing Coalition facilitated small focus groups of 3-5 people who have had the experience of homelessness on site in cooperation with service providers in Pasco County. Overall there was a tremendous amount of participation in surveys and focus groups making this component of the analysis well rounded and insightful.

- **28% of stakeholders participating in the survey stated they had prior experience of homelessness themselves.**
- **67% of stakeholders participating in the survey felt increasing affordable housing units available for extremely low-income households would show the biggest reduction in homelessness.**
- **43% of stakeholders identified expanding emergency shelter as the most effective response to unsheltered homelessness.**

Stakeholder Surveys

A total of 54 surveys were completed by community stakeholders representing law enforcement, local governments, faith community, healthcare, service providers, legal services, social services, behavioral health, advocates, and other community representatives. A total of respondents identified as either a social service provider, homeless service provider, or other non-profit, making up the largest group (48%) completing the survey. There was no survey participation from the education sector, employment or training service providers, the business sector, child welfare, or juvenile justice systems, indicating these cross-system partners should be engaged and encouraged to join the work of the CoC going forward.

The majority of stakeholder surveys were completed by frontline support staff, such as case managers, outreach specialists, and intake specialists, with 37% of survey responses coming from this group. Twenty-six percent of survey respondents came from leadership positions, such as executive directors and CEOs of organizations.

A total of 58% (15 people) identified as stakeholders who have also experienced homelessness in the past; this is an incredibly valuable perspective to consider in the CoC's leadership and decision-making.

The largest percentage of stakeholders (33%) ranked “Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing” as the most effective way to help people move out of homelessness. When stakeholders were asked what the most effective response to addressing unsheltered homelessness is, solutions were fairly divided. Forty three percent (4 people) selected emergency shelter.

An outstanding 67% (36 people) stated that increasing the number of general housing units for those with extremely low incomes would be the action that could be taken to reduce homelessness locally.

Respondents were fairly divided as to success in coordination and planning activities addressing homelessness with 35% (19 people), described the coordination and planning activities to address homelessness as good or very good, 29% (16 people) described coordination and planning as neutral or they were unsure. While 35% (19 people) described coordination and planning as poor or very poor.

When stakeholders were asked what significant barriers prevent households from moving out of homelessness, the most common answer was the lack of affordable housing, representing 52% of respondents or 28 people. Also of significant note, criminal backgrounds were mentioned by 22% of respondents or 12 people.

Detailed aggregate responses for stakeholder surveys are available in Appendix G.

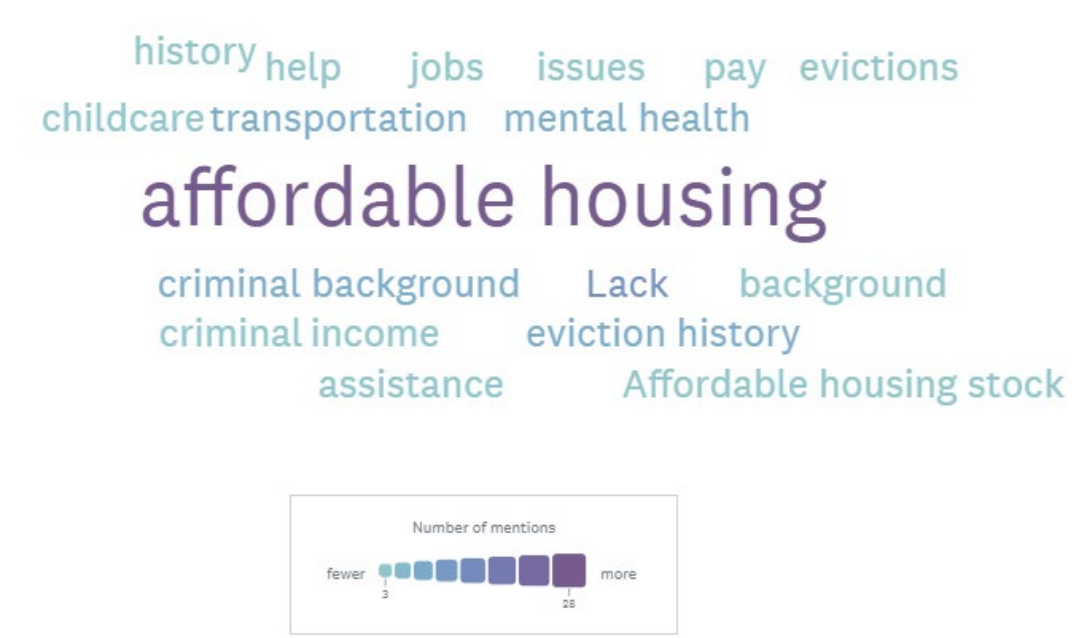

Figure 23: Stakeholder survey results on barriers preventing households from moving out of homelessness.

Lived Experience of Homelessness Surveys

A brief but purposeful 6-minute survey was designed as a more accessible means to capture quantitative feedback. Primarily consisting of multiple choice, the survey asked about things like contributing factors to homelessness, experience navigating services as well as services most used or desired. Outreach workers and other frontline staff supported participation by distributing and helping respondents complete the survey, which controlled for people who had not experienced homelessness or did not reside in Pasco County.

There were 12 respondents, only seven were eligible respondents, having lived experience of homelessness in Pasco County. At the time of the survey, when asked about their current living situation, 3 respondents were in housing and renting while the other 4 were either experiencing homelessness in a place not meant for human habitation or preferred not to answer. One respondent is currently and has been living unsheltered for more than 5 years.

Respondents were asked, “What were the main reasons that led to your homelessness?” For those currently unsheltered, the number one reason was the inability to pay rent, utilities or mortgage. Following that, mental health, having a disabling condition, conflict with loved ones and financial crisis were all next as attributing common factors.

We know that poverty and homelessness are inextricably linked. Insights from respondents highlighted their challenges to get into housing with the resources they have. While their statements further affirm what service providers know, it is also not lost on clients, who are also

our community members, that: Too little income combined with the low to no availability of low-cost housing results in many people experiencing literal homelessness – or housing instability.

While 100% of respondents, housed and not, chose lack of income as a challenge experienced while trying to get into housing on their own, 67% of unsheltered respondents and 100% of those housed at the time of the survey said that a lack of support system is and was a barrier as well. Including, no rental history, landlord discrimination and lack of housing options that are pet friendly.

Transportation and housing assistance have undoubtedly been the most difficult assistance to obtain in Pasco County - per all respondents. Yet, security deposit, rental assistance, and case management made the difference for the housed survey participants.

Housing eligibility pre-screening or referral, rental application and delinquent utility bill assistance, peer specialists', and more affordable housing options are widely suggested as feedback from those closest to the problem – those with lived experience.

“Working full time single mother and cannot qualify for assistance due to me ACTUALLY working! However, not enough income to actually LIVE off of!”

Confidence in housing and homeless service providers to house those that were living on the street at the time of the survey – was slim to none. When given the opportunity to provide any additional feedback or comments, “Working full time single mother and cannot qualify for assistance due to me ACTUALLY working! However, not enough income to actually LIVE off of!” while another community member expressed, “I am not the only one who had a career, became disabled and now are experiencing homelessness due to low income and the [rising] cost of housing.” These sentiments are in alignment with what the sector has known for a while now. Homelessness at its core – is a widespread complex systems issue; however, it’s solvable.

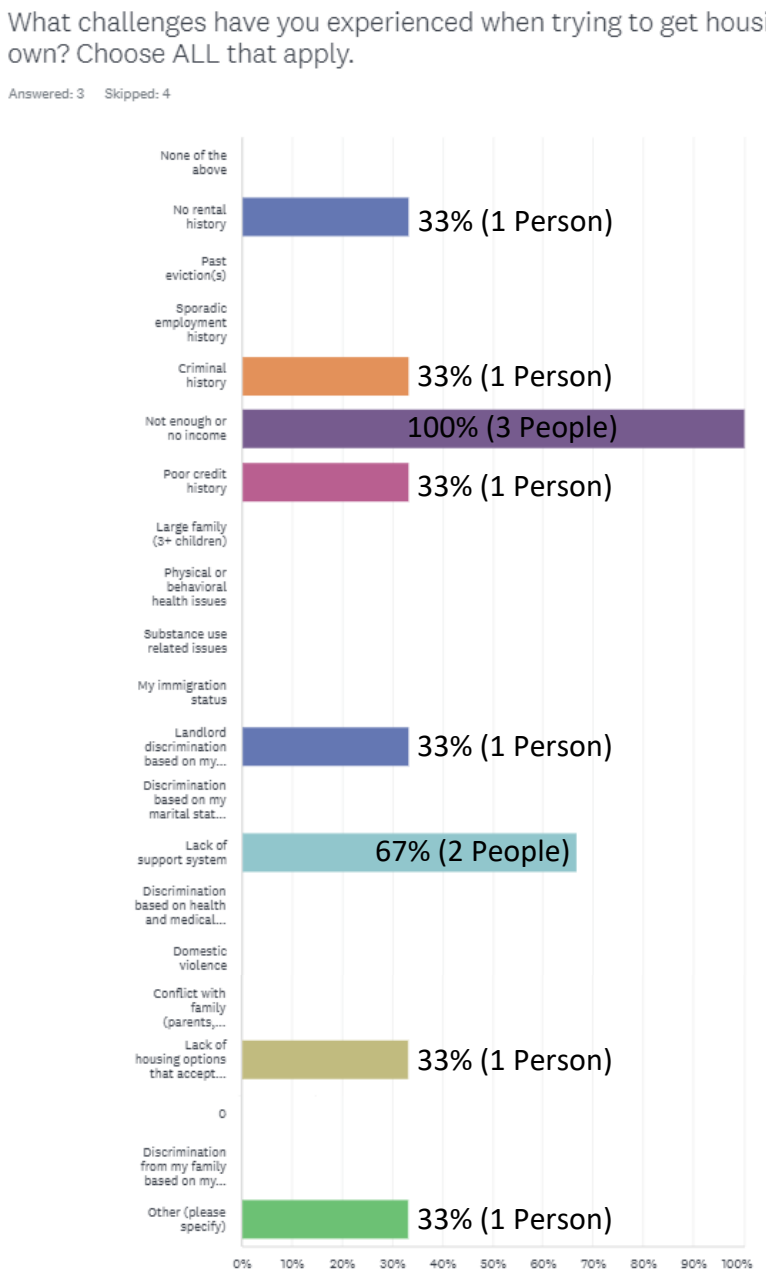

Figure 24: People With Lived Experience Survey Challenges in Getting Housing.

Lived Experience Focus Groups and Interviews

Focus groups can forge a path to include the voices of those most impacted. Our team worked with temporary shelter and street outreach service providers to create accessible and intentional opportunities to - just listen. We held four one on one interviews, and three focus groups, one at a temporary residential program and two on-site a community lunchs and through outreach. In total, there were 19 respondents, and the sessions lasted for approximately 1 hour. $25 Visa gift cards were provided for all participants to compensate them for their time and for sharing their experiences. The following questions were asked, though facilitators had the flexibility to modify questions based on responses by the participants and the flow of the conversation.

When you first found yourself without a place to live, where was the first place you went to get help in Pasco County?

Repeatedly, Metropolitan Ministries, Sword and Spoon, and the Rope Center were mentioned as first stops for help. St. Vincent's DePaul, Hudson First Baptist and Three Crosses, which is no longer operating, were also agreed upon amongst the first session of unsheltered respondents.

How did you find out about the place you went? Was it easy to find help?

Many participants shared how they Googled places. Some labeled that "a dead end" while others stated they found that they could submit inquiries for intake or phone calls. Cold calling places many times over left many frustrated in what could arguably be the most vulnerable experience of one's life. In each location, one person's answer was often validated by others at the table, which affirmed shared experiences.

Additional quotes from participants regarding how they found out about the place they went to and if it was easy to find:

"They found us – through outreach." "Brigade. Brian told us about the Coalition. I get mail here now."

"A social worker helped me get to shelter. My probation officer is in Pasco. I needed to get back. My P.O. has been my support system. I never had a P.O that actively cared. This one cares."

What did that agency help you with and was it helpful?

A one-on-one interviewee walked through his experience of homelessness and how his perspective made the difference. "The Salvation Army provided many shelters out of the area. It was a dead end. I got more help talking to people that were out there before me. I went to churches. Anyone could go! You didn't have to be homeless. People just showed up as community. They provided meals – I never begged. It was a nice place to be."

During your housing crisis, what services are, or have been, the most helpful?

Many mentioned free meals and food, community gatherings at churches, Metropolitan Ministres and the Coalition for the Homeless of Pasco County were also consistently mentioned. Many others expressed their gratitude for the educational and workforce opportunities. Respondents shared how they've obtained their GED and Phlebotomy certification – all paid for.

"Metro has been most helpful. Laundry, showers, clothing, mailbox, household items, a key to your room, security..." On Metro Ministries: "When I came here, I already had my license to be an LPN. Since being here, I've gone back for my RN."

"I came to the Coalition daily to take showers, so I could look presentable and look for a job'"

Having to obtain background checks for services and program intake was a shared frustration about what is not helpful.

For those of you who are homeless right now, where do you stay most of the time?

Respondents that are staying in temporary shelter, families with children, named the organization. For those unsheltered – "the woods" was the primary answer. One detailed his cycle of using his monthly SSI to stay in a motel until it depleted and then back to the woods.

For those of you who are not homeless anymore, where did you stay most of the time?

For families, the car was the number one answer. In an interview, a respondent detailed the specific building he stayed behind on US 19, the people who bothered him, as well as the things he lost from being out there.

Quotes from participants regarding where they stayed most if the time:

"I have bad social anxiety. I stayed in the woods because it was a familiar place, and I wanted to stay in that area. I started working with the Coalition to get my mail."

Has anyone ever completed an assessment or a list of questions with you and tell you it was to help you get into housing? (This question is to see if people are on the Oneby1 List also known as the By-Name List)

The Brigade, Sword and Spoon, St. Vincent's DePaul, The Coalition were all named as places that assisted with a housing assessment. Although some didn't know if they'd ever completed one.

Quotes from participants regarding completing a housing assessment:

"No, I really wasn't looking either. Later, I looked into it when I needed it. I called Jennifer at the Coalition. She called HUD and got me in an emergency housing voucher. I just renewed my lease for the third year. I'm still there."

“I’ve been waiting 2 months for an inspection from the Housing Authority. The lady has been out. She was out of town last week.”

“I needed a house because of my son's autism. He’s so loud. We can’t stay in an apartment.”

If yes, were you able to get into housing after you did the assessment? If not, how long have you been waiting?

Some waited 2 – 3 months on an emergency housing voucher, while others are still waiting. Most of those unsheltered expressed having waited anywhere from 3 to greater than 10 years and counting. The longest length of time homeless disclosed during one session was 15 years.

Common answers here were losing assistance due to not finding an affordable unit within the allotted timeframe, and the complaints about the paperwork needed to apply for housing assistance with the Coalition.

What have been the biggest barriers to getting back into housing?

Housing prices, employment, and low and inconsistent income were repeated. One respondent attributed his barrier to housing to his substance use disorder.

While you were homeless, were you ever discriminated against because of your race, gender, religion, age, disability, or another reason? Please explain.

There was a resounding “yes” at each focus group. Respondents talked about experiencing discrimination from the police, in stores, overall community members. Unsheltered respondents talked about having a “homeless look”. “The homeless look is a backpack and if you ride a bike.

“Everyday. Just for being homeless,”

“I have difficulty processing my sentences at times, especially under pressure. People tend to not be patient and judgmental.”

How could services and programs be improved to help people experiencing homelessness?

Transportation assistance, greater food choices for children, showers coupled with clean clothes, access to phones and technology, employment opportunities at the organizations were just a few answers aside from the obvious – housing resources and funding. Compassion, patience, staff willing to help people.

“When I was homeless, I saw that most of those people needed mental health and help with substance use. They couldn’t get out of it; they were stuck. They weren’t bad people. They were just addicted.

“More case managers. They forget who you are. There are not enough to take care of people.”

“Have more focus groups to see what is needed.”

Other Notes and Themes

Participants expressed that they appreciated the opportunity to talk and share their experience. One respondent at the temporary shelter location, at the end, thanked the facilitator for sharing their lived experience. The respondent mentioned that it helped put her at ease as that was her first time participating in something like that. Another underscored the value of having someone that was relatable facilitate the session. They felt seen and heard. The facilitation at the lunch and outreach session had a much different tone. The facilitator, while having lived experience of family homelessness, was a middle-aged Black woman. The respondents were mostly White men, wide range of ages, having primarily experienced unsheltered homelessness on the street. Trust and respect were key toward meaningful engagement. The respondents trusted the service providers that hosted the routine Sunday lunch. Their invitation and encouragement to participate paved the way. Respondents began to invite and save a space for their friends to participate. Respect was reciprocal between the facilitator and respondents and commonalities were realized. There were others willing to take part even after being told we had run out of gift cards for compensating participants.

Participants in each focus group discussed the importance of employment and opportunities to use and increase their skillset to achieve what success looked like to them. In addition, transportation was noted to be difficult to access to visit organizations and find work while equally, the lack of opportunities and limited resources in Pasco were one of the most mentioned barriers. With that, many participants expressed immense gratitude to service providers and community members, by name, that genuinely cared and helped them along their way. The focus groups had common themes regarding housing, employment, and discrimination because of housing status. Still, a key takeaway is that each person in each focus group had an individual story with nuances and complexities that resonated with their peers. Support and the community created amongst each other exemplified hope and a will to keep going.

The response to homelessness in Pasco County must include this qualitative data in addition to the quantitative data analysis. These focus groups helped us understand that community members experiencing homelessness need access to resources that provide safety and stability and their perspectives to be valued. The way that communities show they value feedback is to ensure that lived experience feedback is seen and implemented in the work moving forward.

XI. Endnotes

[i] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *The 2023 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress Part 1: Point in Time Estimates of Homelessness, December 2023*, https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2023-AHAR-Part-1.pdf

[ii] Florida Department of Children and Families, *Florida's Council on Homelessness Annual Report, June 2024,* https://www.myflfamilies.com/sites/default/files/2024-07/Council%202024%20Annual%20Homelessness%20Report%20%28002%29.pdf

[iii] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. *Point-in-Time Count and Housing Inventory Count.* Accessed through HDX 2.0 and https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hdx/pit-hic/.

[iv] Florida Housing Data Clearinghouse, Shimberg Center, University of Florida, *Affordability Data by County*, flhousingdata.shimberg.ufl.edu/affordability

[v] HUD Exchange, *CoC System Performance Measure Data,* https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/system-performance-measures/#data