

Talking Points Concerning the 2016 Homeless Persons Count in Ventura County

Prepared for the Interagency Council on Homelessness

The full Homeless Count Report can be found at:

www.venturacoc.org

The total number of men, women and children counted on January 26, 2016 on the streets or in a shelter or transitional housing program 1271. This Point-in-Time Count is a snapshot of the overall issue of homelessness in Ventura County. The Point in Time Count uses HUD's definition of homelessness that includes only those who are living in places not meant for human habitation or seeking shelter in specific programs.

A broader picture of at-risk populations can be found within the Department of Education and Healthcare systems which use a broader definition of homeless including families doubled up, couch surfing, or staying with friends/family.

In 2015:

The Ventura County Healthcare for the Homeless program saw 10,070 unduplicated patients classified as homeless under the HRSA definition.

3515 Patients received services at the One Stop program. Services include basic needs, medical case management and assistance in applying for mainstream benefits. The One Stop served 77 Veterans 34 of whom received VASH vouchers.

In 2015, 2-1-1 Ventura County reports 8,440 requests for housing related service. Of those calls, 2,126 requests were for Housing Expense Assistance & 1,755 for Emergency Shelter. The top unmet need categories for requests were Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing and Rental Assistance.

2016 represents a 10% decrease in the Point in Time Count, the lowest count since the first Ventura County count in 2007.

The Point-In-Time Count is a HUD required activity for the Continuum of Care program. HUD's guidance asks communities to conduct an overnight count. In communities like ours where there are a large number of unsheltered people, HUD allows for communities to count from dawn to late morning. Our count this year was from 7a.m. until late morning and no later than noon. In previous years, Ventura County conducted a street count that lasted all day.

The Continuum of Care plans to release "real time data" from the HMIS database to show the actual number of households requesting services from the Ventura County Continuum of Care Homeless Services System. Quarterly releases of data will be posted on the VC CoC website: www.venturacoc.org

The Ventura County Continuum of Care service system (per HMIS data) assisted 888 persons in obtaining permanent housing in 2015. In January 2016, the system exited 52 households to permanent housing.

The continued progress of reducing homelessness can be traced to the adoption of a housing first model among homeless service providers, a focus on homeless prevention efforts, rapidly re-housing families, and street outreach and engagement of chronically homeless persons. Collaboration among agencies, pooling of resources, and sharing of information have contributed to success in moving people off the streets and into housing.

494 of the 1271 (38.9%) of the people counted were in temporary housing (emergency shelter or transitional housing). The majority, 777 people or 61.1%, were on the streets. The 777 unsheltered count included 253 chronically homeless adults, 17 families with 62 children, 37 youth ages 18-24, 6 unaccompanied youth (under age 18) and 57 veterans of military service.

The homeless population was disbursed throughout Ventura County in a pattern that we have come to know: Oxnard ranked #1, Ventura ranked #2 in West County. The Winter Warming Shelter was located in Oxnard this year. The shelter historically alternates annually between Oxnard and Ventura. This was the second year in a row for Oxnard to host the shelter.

In East County, Simi Valley saw a significant decrease from 202 to 99. El Nino preparation efforts displaced many people from encampments this fall. 60 people were in camps in Simi Valley area that were offered services resulting in a portion being housed. Other efforts to prepare for El Nino weather displaced individuals in the unincorporated areas of the county.

Thousand Oaks saw an increase in their count numbers this year.

Other observations about the 2016 Ventura County Homeless Persons Count:

- The number of Chronically Homeless individuals countywide has dropped to 33% compared to over 50% of those counted in 2015.
- The CoC is setting System Wide Performance measures and implementing a Coordinated Entry System, "Pathways to Home". System Performance Measures will include:
 - Total Number of Homeless Persons in HMIS
 - Length of Time Homeless
 - Number of Exits to Permanent Housing + Retention
 - Monitoring progress on goals of ending Veteran Homelessness, Youth and Family Homelessness and Chronic Homelessness.
- Ventura County is a high cost/low vacancy area and units at market rate or more affordable rates are scarce within the community. The overall vacancy rate ranges from 1.5-3% and rents continue to increase. The lack of accessible affordable housing diminishes the progress in ending homelessness.

- The goal of ending veteran homelessness in Ventura County is within reach. Collaborations with the Department of Veteran Affairs and Salvation Army as the Supportive Services for Veteran Families provider will help to match eligible veterans with housing assistance. Landlords willing to accept VASH vouchers are still needed to help the community end veteran homelessness.
- The VC CoC invites landlords, property managers and developers who want to partner to make a difference to visit our Landlords page at www.venturacoc.org. There are many ways to assist!

Note: This report reflects only those individuals who were willing to participate in the survey and whom a surveyor could find on the day of the count. Some individuals refused to complete the survey or chose not to be “found” on survey day.