

# Lake County Housing Plan

No Place Like Home

May 2019 REVIEW DRAFT

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## SUMMARY

### Purpose

The purpose of the No Place Like Home (NPLH) Program is:

*To acquire, design, construct, rehabilitate, or preserve permanent supportive housing for persons who are experiencing homelessness, chronic homelessness or who are at risk of chronic homelessness, and who are in need of mental health services.*

<http://hcd.ca.gov/grants-funding/active-funding/nplh.shtml#background>

### Population to be Served

The NPLH funds are to serve adults with serious mental illness, children with severe emotional disorders and their families, persons who require or are at risk of requiring acute psychiatric inpatient care, residential treatment, or outpatient crisis intervention because of a mental disorder with symptoms of psychosis, suicidality or violence AND who are homeless, chronically homeless, or at risk of chronic homelessness.

“At risk of chronic homelessness” includes persons who are at high risk of long-term or intermittent homelessness, including persons with mental illness exiting institutionalized settings with a history of homelessness prior to institutionalization, and transition age youth experiencing homelessness or with significant barriers to housing stability.

### Program History

In 2004, California voters approved Proposition 63, also known as the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA). The act provides funding for various county mental health services by increasing the tax paid by those with incomes above \$1 million. This income tax increase raises \$1.5 billion to \$2.5 billion per year, over \$14 billion since its inception. The MHSA program as subsequently amended can additionally provide Permanent Supportive Housing to homeless persons who have serious mental health disorders.

In 2016, the Legislature created the No Place Like Home program to further fulfill what is believed was an original intent of the MHSA program: to build and rehabilitate housing for those with mental illness who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless. The Legislature tried to appropriate money from the MHSA two years ago to fund this program, but that effort was challenged in court. The voter approval of Proposition 2 on the November 2018 California ballot allows the NPLH program to continue in two ways:

- Approved the use of MHSA Funds for the NPLH program. No more than \$140 million of MHSA funds can be used for NPLH in any year.

- Authorized \$2 billion in borrowing - The measure allows the state to sell up to \$2 billion in bonds to pay for NPLH. Bonds would be repaid over many years with MHSA funds.

### Current NPLH Program Status

The NPLH Program regulations are codified in the California Welfare and Institutions Code. The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) will manage the program, in consultation with the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission and the No Place Like Home Program Advisory Committee which includes legislative, other state and local representatives and political appointees. NPLH funding will be distributed among eligible counties both by a noncompetitive allocation and through a competitive process over several rounds among similarly-sized counties. Lake County's noncompetitive allocation, as of HCD's most recent memo dated 10-30-18, is \$557,845.

### Need for NPLH Housing Plan

One of the threshold requirements counties must meet to access funding under the No Place Like Home program is to submit a plan specifying goals, strategies and activities both in process or to be initiated to reduce homelessness and make it non-recurring. Projects counties propose under NPLH must be connected to the goals and strategies counties identify in these plans. Therefore, the plan must be developed in cooperation with all local entities and individuals engaging with the targeted populations.

This document is designed to meet both the regulatory requirements and the intent of the NPLH program. It must be adopted by the Lake County Board of Supervisors and submitted to HCD, along with the county's request for reservation of its noncompetitive allocation, no later than August 15, 2019. The county will have until February 15, 2021 to submit a complete, formal application for one or more qualifying NPLH supportive housing projects to HCD utilizing those reserved funds.

This document also contains information that can satisfy the requirements of other homelessness assistance and prevention programs offered through HCD, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and other governmental agencies and private entities. It is the intent of this plan to facilitate the provision of projects and programs within Lake County that will benefit its homeless and at-risk residents. The provided information also may serve as the starting point for other entities, particularly nonprofit groups working with special needs groups such as veterans, disabled or youth, to launch further needs assessments that can result in new and successful funding pursuits.

## **LAKE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

Lake County, home to the largest natural freshwater lake in California, is a geographically large but isolated rural county accessed only by two-lane roads over intercoastal mountain ranges, about 110 miles both northwest of Sacramento and northeast of San Francisco. The county has a 2019 population of approximately 65,000 persons, of which about 9,400 are school-aged children. Its economy is based mostly on agriculture, tourism and recreation, although the largest employers are local government, school districts and two critical access hospitals. Its two incorporated cities, Lakeport and Clearlake, are situated on Clear Lake's northwestern and southeastern shores, respectively. Although Lakeport is the county seat, Clearlake's population of approximately 15,000 persons substantially exceeds that of Lakeport's 5,134 residents.

Lake County has some of the poorest, most unhealthy citizens in the state. The 2019 County Health Rankings and Road Maps, a report annually produced by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI), concluded that Lake County is the unhealthiest of the state's 58 counties based on a variety of mental and physical outcomes. One huge factor cited is that 30 percent of households with minor children live below the poverty line.

Further, over the past several years a number of natural disasters have severely impacted Lake County and its residents. The 2015 Valley, Jerusalem and Rocky Fires resulted in the loss of almost 1,600 homes and devastated the communities of Middletown, Cobb, and Whispering Pines. Clayton Fire in 2016 resulted in the loss of an additional 250 homes in and around the Clear Lake/Lower Lake area. Again in 2017, the Sulphur Fire took another 158 homes in the Clearlake Oaks and Clearlake Park areas. Winter storms in 2018 pushed Clear Lake to its highest level since 1998, inundating homes, flooding streets and bringing some aspects of life in Lake County to a halt. In all, approximately 6 percent of the county's housing stock have been lost over the past four years. Many families were already living in poverty and the long term effects of losing their homes and property will continue to present the community with additional challenges, including homelessness.

## **PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

The NPLH regulations require that the county housing plan be developed with public input; entities and individuals to be consulted specifically include the following:

- County representatives with expertise from behavioral health, public health, probation and criminal justice, social services, and housing;
- The local Continuum of Care (CoC);
- Housing and homeless service providers, especially those with experience providing housing or services to the chronically homeless;

- County health plans and health care providers, especially those implementing pilot or other programs that would allow the county to use Medi-Cal or other non-MHSA funding to provide or enhance services provided to NPLH tenants, or to improve the tracking of health outcomes in housing;
- The public housing authority; and
- Representatives of family caregivers of persons living with serious mental illness.

In Summer 2018, Lake County Behavioral Health Services contracted with Paragons, LLC, a consulting firm with a long presence in Lake County, to prepare the No Place Like Home housing plan. Paragons' principal consultant and her team had originally prepared the county's first MHSA housing plan ten years ago. A process meeting all NPLH requirements was designed and approved by Behavioral Health Services Department, then work began. The Lake County CoC became an ad hoc committee for the process and therefore was directly and continuously engaged with this plan.

Two surveys were designed and launched. The first survey was for persons in government service, public agencies, private organizations and healthcare working with the homeless, at-risk of homelessness, and the mentally ill, either directly as part of their assignments or through contact during the course of their work. The second survey was directed to the consumer; this survey was completed by consumers/clients with or without the assistance of a provider. A copy of the two distributed surveys is contained in the appendix to this report.

The first survey was emailed to all contacts by the head of the county's Behavioral Health Services Department. The consultant later followed up with non-responders. Although not all agencies responded to the survey request, input in the NPLH plan was obtained from all the following over the course of development:

- Representatives from Lakeport and Clearlake governments
- Lake County Board of Supervisors
- Lake County Behavioral Health Services Department
- Lake County Department of Social Services
- Lake County Housing Commission (public housing authority)
- Lake County Public Health
- Lake County Probation Department
- Lake County Superior Courts
- Clearlake and Lakeport Police Departments
- Lake County Sheriff's Office
- Lake County Office of Education
- US Department of Veterans Affairs
- Local affordable housing managers
- Supportive Services for Persons with Disabilities
- Lake County Continuum of Care
- Housing and homeless service providers
- Ford Street Detox and Emergency Housing

- Hilltop Sober Living
- North Coast Opportunities
- Lake County Interfaith Council
- Redwood Coast Regional Services
- Lake County food banks (Clear Lake Gleaners, etc.)
- St. Vincent de Paul Society
- Salvation Army
- Catholic Charities of Sonoma, Napa and Lake counties
- Lake Family Resource Center (domestic violence shelter)
- Lake Ministerial Association warming center (winter shelter)
- Sutter Lakeside Hospital
- Adventist Health Clearlake Hospital
- Lake County Tribal Health Consortium
- Lakeside Community Clinic
- Clearlake VA Clinic
- Representatives of family caregivers of persons living with serious mental illness
- Senior Centers
- Senior caregivers
- Providers with experiencing providing housing or services to those who are chronically homeless
- Individuals self-identifying as mental health consumers

Client surveys were completed by 131 individual participants; some homeless encampment occupants were interviewed as well. The complete report dated November 2018 can be found as an appendix. This report contains data as well on the responders, including homelessness status. Client comments were further utilized to develop the goals and strategies of this housing plan. Please see the section on Quantifying the Homeless for a description of the client survey findings.

The consultant team also hosted a focus group in February 2019 for local governments, agencies and individuals particularly interested in the development of housing for the targeted clientele. Approximately 25 persons representing 20 entities attended. Their collective recommendations on potential housing projects and supportive programs are incorporated in this plan as well. The minutes, with participant input, are attached in the appendix section.

Over the past three years, Lake County Behavioral Health Services, along with other public and private partners, already had been conducting multiple planning activities concerning homelessness and housing needs. During each of these planning processes, outreach was done through community-wide annual *Soberest* events sponsored by Lake County Behavioral Health Services. Providers of homeless services in mental health/substance abuse along with consumers and staff of homeless services were interviewed. Findings were incorporated into the current 2017-2020 Mental Health Services Act Three Year Program and Expenditure Plan. This NPLH plan continues to build off these earlier MHSA activities.

The Lake County Continuum of Care, comprised of representatives from all segments of federal, state and local governments, nonprofit and healthcare agencies, faith-based groups and concerned individuals who work with the homeless and at-risk populations or were themselves homeless at some point, served as an ad hoc planning committee for this process. This entity has existed in its present form only since 2014, conducting its own first HUD Point in Time homeless count in 2015. Prior to that, Lake County had been a part of two different multi-county consortiums after an early version of the county CoC, first formed in the 1990s, had become inactive. The CoC was regularly updated on the NPLH plan development process, with members participating in filling information gaps or making further outreach attempts when necessary. The result is a NPLH housing plan that is comprehensive – a good reflection of Lake County’s current homelessness picture and its collective efforts to tackle the problem.

## **PLAN ELEMENTS**

*Note: This NPLH housing plan will be approved and then utilized by County of Lake, through its Board of Supervisors. However, the county’s two incorporated cities, Lakeport and Clearlake, are vested partners in solving the housing and mental health needs of the chronically homeless mentally ill. Therefore, this section includes the adopted goals, strategies and activities of all three governmental entities as discussed herein. Directly-related agencies include the Lake County Continuum of Care and the Lake County Community Action Agency, operated through the nonprofit North Coast Opportunities; their own goals, strategies and activities for the chronically homeless mentally ill problem are included as well as part of this section.*

### **Description of Lake County Homelessness**

Defining homelessness:

HUD homeless assistance programs which fund Continuums of Care use a limited definition of homelessness as provided in the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009:

- 1) *An individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence;*
- 2) *An individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;*
- 3) *An individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including hotels and motels paid for by Federal, State or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, congregate shelters, and transitional housing);*
- 4) *An individual who resided in a shelter or place not meant for human habitation and who is exiting an institution where he or she temporarily resided;*



- 5) *An individual or family who will imminently lose their housing [as evidenced by a court order resulting from an eviction action that notifies the individual or family that they must leave within 14 days, having a primary nighttime residence that is a room in a hotel or motel and where they lack the resources necessary to reside there for more than 14 days, or credible evidence indicating that the owner or renter of the housing will not allow the individual or family to stay for more than 14 days, and any oral statement from an individual or family seeking homeless assistance that is found to be credible shall be considered credible evidence for purposes of this clause]; has no subsequent residence identified; and lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing; and*
- 6) *Unaccompanied youth and homeless families with children and youth defined as homeless under other Federal statutes who have experienced a long-term period without living independently in permanent housing, have experienced persistent instability as measured by frequent moves over such period, and can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time because of chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance addiction, histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse, the presence of a child or youth with a disability, or multiple barriers to employment.*

[https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HEARTH\\_HomelessDefinition.FinalRule.pdf](https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HEARTH_HomelessDefinition.FinalRule.pdf)

This definition generally precludes homeless persons who are couch-surfing or living in substandard housing conditions. However, other federally and state-funded programs use more encompassing definitions. For example, health centers funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) use the following:

A homeless individual is defined as “an individual who lacks housing (without regard to whether the individual is a member of a family), including an individual whose primary residence during the night is a supervised public or private facility (e.g., shelters) that provides temporary living accommodations, and an individual who is a resident in transitional housing.” A homeless person is an individual without permanent housing who may live on the streets; stay in a shelter, mission, single room occupancy facilities, abandoned building or vehicle; or in any other unstable or non-permanent situation. An individual may be considered to be homeless if that person is “doubled up” or “couch surfing,” terms that refer to a situation where individuals are unable to maintain their housing situation and are forced to stay with a series of friends and/or extended family members. In addition, previously homeless individuals who are to be released from a prison or a hospital may be considered homeless if they do not have a stable housing situation to which they can return. A recognition of the instability of an individual’s living arrangements is critical to the definition of homelessness.

Public schools also by federal regulation collect data on homeless students. In this instance, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act provides a more inclusive definition of homelessness than what is permitted CoCs when conducting PIT counts. For this special population, the term “homeless children and youths”

*(A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (within the meaning of section 103(a)(1)); and*

*(B) includes--*

*(i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;\**

*(ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (within the meaning of section 103(a)(2)(C));*

*(iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and*

*(iv) migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).*

<https://legcounsel.house.gov/Comps/Elementary%20And%20Secondary%20Education%20Act%20Of%201965.pdf>

The California state legislature is considering adoption of an official definition of the homeless. One such recent definition was originally contained in AB 67:

*An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence or an individual who resided in a shelter or place not meant for human habitation and who is exiting an institution where the individual temporarily resided.*

For purposes of the NPLH program, HCD utilizes the most recently published HUD PIT sheltered and unsheltered counts as local homeless estimates for funding distribution purposes. Because the program deals with supportive housing for the chronically homeless mentally ill, HCD provides the necessary definitions for persons to be served by the program. Otherwise it does not define the broad category of who can be considered homeless.

Quantifying the Lake County homeless:

- Local governments data

As required by California law, all three governmental agencies have adopted a 2014-2019 Housing Element as part of their respective General Plans, long-term planning documents covering a range of mandatory and discretionary focus areas. According to HCD, the agency responsible for certifying housing elements with state law, the two

cities have compliant elements but County of Lake does not. However, the county in April 2019 submitted a revised 2015 element addressing most of HCD's concerns regarding previously-submitted elements (minus noted sections where it intends to discuss recent wildfire impact on its housing stock and the county's ability to address all unmet needs) and is awaiting HCD review on this latest version.

Both Lakeport and Clearlake cite the Continuum of Care's HUD 2014 Point in Time (PIT) count when attempting to quantify its respective jurisdiction's homeless population. The problem, however, is that in 2014 the CoC included five counties, of which Lake was one (Colusa, Glenn, Trinity and Tehama were the others). Therefore the homeless numbers were combined and could not reliably be extracted for any one county. Clearlake makes a particular point that domestic violence victims, most often single women with minor children, need more emergency shelter options but that the county's single facility serving that special group is located in the unincorporated county. All three governmental entities do a good job identifying the particularly vulnerable groups, such as single parent households with children, the elderly and the disabled, by numbers and by income groupings, but most of the information was based on now-dated 2000 US Census tables. The recently-revised 2015 Lake County housing element did the best job of trying to document homelessness needs, providing data from both the new Lake County Continuum of Care (first HUD PIT count 2015) and a local faith-based homeless advocacy group that in 2008 utilized the HUD estimate that at, on average, communities had one to 1.5 percent of its population homeless at any given time. That amounted to 639-959 homeless persons within Lake County in 2008.

- Lake County Continuum of Care 2018 HUD Point in Time Count

The Lake County CoC conducted a mandatory 2019 PIT count; however, the sheltered persons portion of that count is still unavailable. Therefore, this report is utilizing the completed 2018 PIT homeless count information. The entire HUD report is attached as an appendix.

The NPLH plan specifically requires discussion of particular homeless population segments. Details specific to this housing plan are presented below. Please note that the data include information on the NPLH-targeted populations of single adults, families and unaccompanied youth (through age 24).

Lake Co. Continuum of Care Point in Time Count 2018	UNSHELTERED	SHELTERED	TOTAL
Persons in households without children			
Age 18-24	26	1	27
Over age 24	502	12	514
Persons in household with min.1 child, 1 adult			
With children under 18	30	6	36
Persons age 18-24	2	5	7
Persons over age 24	25	0	25
Persons in households with only children	6	0	6
<b>Total Homeless Persons</b>	<b>591</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>615</b>
Households without children	232	13	245
Households with at least one adult & one child	25	5	30
Households with only children	6	0	6
<b>Total Homeless Households</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>281</b>
(included in the above count)			
Chronically homeless in households w/o children	75	0	75
Chronically homeless households w/min. adult + child	3	4	7
Chronically homeless households w/only children	0	0	0
<b>Total Chronically Homeless Persons</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>84</b>
Parenting youth under 18	0	0	0
Parenting youth 18-24	0	5	5
<b>Total homeless parenting youth</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
Children of parenting youth	6	0	6
Other special groups by # of individuals			
Severely mentally ill	80	8	88
Chronic substance abuse	81	9	90
Veterans	11	1	12
HIV/AIDS	0	0	0
Domestic violence victims	0	0	0

The following table illustrates the 2018 homeless distribution around the various county communities where counts were conducted:

Table 1. PIT Homeless Information by Region, 2018

Region	# Homeless	# Street Homeless	# Sheltered	# Couch Surfing*	Observation Tool
Clearlake/Clearlake Oaks/Lower Lake	293 Adults 26 Children 319 Total	164 Adults 21 Children 185 Total	7 adults	30 Adults 9 Children 39 Total	122 Adults 5 Children 127 Total
Kelseyville	14 Adults 3 Children 17 Total	8 Adults	1 Adult 3 Children 4 Total	0	2 Adults
Lakeport**	54 Adults	15 Adults	15 Adults	3 Adults	24 Adults

	<u>22 Children</u> 76 Total	<u>13 Children</u> 28 Total	<u>9 Children</u> 24 Total		
Lucerne***	36 Adults, <u>11 Children</u> 47 Total	36 Adults, <u>11 Children</u> 47 Total	0	N/A	0
Middletown	46 Adults <u>5 Children</u> 51 Total	35 Adults <u>3 Children</u> 38 Total	0	N/A	11 Adults <u>2 Children</u> 13 Total
Nice/Upper Lake****	39 Adults <u>8 Children</u> 47 Total	39 Adults <u>8 Children</u> 47 Total	0	N/A	0
<b>Totals</b>	482 Adults <u>75 Children</u> 557 Total	297 Adults <u>56 Children</u> 353 Total	23 Adults <u>12 Children</u> 35 Total	33 Adults <u>9 Children</u> 42 Total	159 Adults <u>7 Children</u> 166 Total

\* Not counted as homeless for HUD PIT reporting purposes

\*\*More than 1 in 3 homeless (41%) in Lakeport are children.

\*\*\*Nearly 1 out of 3 homeless (31%) in Lucerne are children.

\*\*\*\* Nearly 1 out of 5 homeless (21%) in Nice/Upper Lake are children.

- NPLH plan client outreach survey

The following is an analysis of completed client surveys:

Overall client survey findings:

The overall findings show variations primarily by age, location, education, housing situations, needs for stability, services used and length of time without stable housing.

The specific key attributes of the population studied are:

- The majority of the respondents were 18 to 64 years of age (n=118, 90%); the largest age group was 45 to 54 years of age (n=29, 22%),
- Slightly more than half are male (n=71, 54.2%) with only one person being transgender/non binary,
- The zip code where the greatest number of respondents reside is iClearlake (n=52, 40%),
- Most respondents were white/Caucasian (n=90, 69%),
- The majority had not graduated high school or had a high school degree as their highest level of education (n=85, 65%).
- Almost one-quarter (n=32, 24%) were homeless.
- Finances (n=89, 67%) and sustainable income (n=71, 54%) were the biggest obstacles to obtaining a stable living environment and ideal housing situation respectively.
- Almost half (n=63, 48%) lived alone with 54 respondents (41%) living in a family household.
- The most commonly used agencies and services were those provides by the Department of Social Services (n=59, 45%) and many respondents used services from multiple agencies; 21 (16%) respondents reported using no services.

- The preferred living environments varied with no one type being a strong preference.
- More than three-quarters of respondents (n=107, 82%) were **not** veterans.

Specific attributes:

The variations noted below could be used to target interventions.

*Age.* There is a significant number of respondents who are homeless in Clearlake. This group is primarily between the ages of 18 and 24 with limited education. They are in need of transportation and stable employment.

*Substance abuse.* People who have used services for alcohol and other drugs are from a variety of ages, more likely to be male and have higher levels of education when compared to all of the respondents, and have a wide variety of assistance needs.

*Victims.* People who receive victim services are primarily female, have a variety of race/ethnic backgrounds, do not seek out substance abuse assistance, have limited education, and need assistance with finances, transportation and physical health. All of the people who sought out assistance for domestic violence were women; they need financial and social services assistance.

*Veterans.* Veterans are primarily male, have higher levels of education, use a variety of service agencies, and have slightly higher mental health and drug issues than non-veterans.

*Education.* People who did not graduate high school tend to have long-term homelessness.

*Service agencies.* Lake County Behavioral Health Services sees a diverse population with varied needs. A large percentage of their clients who participated in the study have been without permanent housing more than three times (n=15, 40%) and for over three years (n=12, 32%).

*Length and frequency of time without permanent housing.* People who are frequently without permanent housing and for longer periods of time have needs related to finances/stable income, transportation, and social services. This population has varied preferences for housing types and tends to be single.

- Filling the homeless identification gaps

In general, HUD and other homeless assistance sources allow the use of certain assumptions and extrapolations when quantifying special needs groups, especially when resources, local expertise and assistance, and physical constraints such as rural locations warrant. As mentioned earlier in this section, the affordable housing industry accepted standard is that a community will have one to 1.5 percent of its population homeless at any given time. Based on Lake County's estimated 2019 population of 65,000 a conservative one percent, or an estimate of 650 homeless persons, can be

used. This homeless number also corresponds closely with the 2018 CoC PIT count data and therefore appears reliable.

### *Children*

The Lake County CoC 2018 PIT count identified 3 households with minor children and 6 unaccompanied minor children as homeless. Since the homeless households data do not provide number of children, the county estimate for homeless children must come from other sources. According to the 2018 KidsData.org annual report from the Lucille Packard Foundation for Children's Health, Lake County in 2016 was fifth in the state with 10 percent of its public school students meeting the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless; California as a whole had a homeless student rate of 4.4 percent. According to the Lake County Office of Education, county public schools had a 2018-2019 enrollment of 9,643. If the 10 percent homeless incidence rate holds true, approximately 960 minor children would meet the homelessness criteria being used.

The 2018-2019 enrollment report for the Lake County Office of Education includes 462 students classified as "homeless youth." There is no further indication as to the percentage of these students who may be suffering from "severe emotional disturbance," one of the special needs groups with the NPLH program. Lake County has two public schools for children with special behavioral needs:

- 1) The Hance Community School outside Lakeport provides an alternative learning environment for middle and high school students (grades 7-12) who are experiencing difficulties in a traditional school setting or who are exhibiting negative behavior patterns in school or in the community. The program serves students who have been expelled from school, identified as habitually truant by a Student Attendance Review Board, placed on probation by the court, or otherwise referred by a school district, probation, or social service agency. Counseling and other support services are provided by public and community agencies. The 2018-2019 enrollment report indicates 12 students, although this enrollment can fluctuate through the school year.
- 2) The other comparable school is the Clearlake Creativity School, where students come from districts across Lake County. They are referred through the Individualized Education Program process and are only accepted if they have been diagnosed with emotional disturbance and are not successful in their home school. The 2018-2019 enrollment report shows 24 students.

If 10 percent of these schools' students, or about 4 youth, are homeless, they likely would be classified as homeless youth with severe emotional disturbance for the purpose of this plan. It is not known if the 6 unaccompanied youth under 18 identified in the CoC's 2018 PIT count attend school. The Office of Education states that, along with its students living in foster care, the students of Clearlake Creativity School have a higher than average reporting of "adverse childhood experiences" (such as physical abuse or parental abandonment) that can contribute significantly to negative adult

physical and mental health outcomes. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the US Department of Health and Human Services, the majority of homeless youth are 13 or older and have higher rates of mental health problems and substance abuse than their peers. Up to 50 percent or more have been involved in the foster care system as well, and 20 to 35 percent of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ. The 2015 dropout rate for students enrolled in grades 9-12 was 10 percent (California overall was 11 percent), another risk factor for youth homelessness.

### *Veterans*

Another often-used estimate comes from the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). According to the VA, generally about one-fourth of the local homeless are veterans. This translates to 163 persons in Lake County if using the 650 homeless persons benchmark. About one-half, or 81, are Vietnam-era veterans, categorizing them as elderly. According to the US Interagency Council on Homelessness, about half of homeless veterans also have a mental illness, typically PTSD or bi-polar disorder. Three-fourths, or an estimated 122 homeless vets, have problems with alcohol, drugs or mental health. Therefore a reasonable assumption is that one-half of the county's homeless veterans likely have co-occurring disabilities or disorders.

### *Mentally Ill*

According to the US Interagency Council on Homelessness, about one-third of the homeless have untreated psychiatric illnesses. Using the 650 homeless persons estimate, Lake County may have about 220 mentally who are homeless and not accessing services. As part of its mission, Lake County Behavioral Health Services provides recovery-oriented services that include assistance with establishing stable housing. Its 2017-2020 Mental Health Services Act Annual Update and Three-Year Program and Expenditure Plan specifies strategic actions in assisting county residents with mental illness, including those with co-occurring (mental health and substance use) disorders. It is the lead agency for the County of Lake NPLH plan.

### *Chronically Homeless*

Although the VA estimates that at least one-third of homeless veterans meet the definition of chronically homeless, housing advocates use 25 percent as a rule of thumb for the number of chronically homeless among the homeless population. Using the same homeless number of 650 persons, therefore, provides an estimate of 162 persons who are chronically homeless. They are disabled by a mental or physical disorder, and they have been either homeless for a year or more or have had at least four episodes of homelessness in the previous three years. Of this subgroup, at least one-third are generally found to be severely mentally ill. Again, this translates to a current Lake County estimate of 55 persons who meet the NPLH target clientele of the chronically homeless mentally ill. This number is not inconsistent with the 2018 CoC PIT count; data collected are just categorized differently.



## **Challenges and Barriers to Serving the Homeless**

Working to identify a population that often does not want to be found is a challenge. Larger cities and counties with vast more experience than Lake County in tackling the challenges and barriers when working with the homeless have discussed these problems through the years, with many published documents sharing their insights available to those in the industry. But Lake County has unique challenges. These were all identified, and repeatedly emphasized in many instances, during the outreach process for this NPLH plan.

Lake County-specific challenges and barriers:

- **Local economy**

Lake County's unemployment rate, at about 8 percent, is higher than the state's 5 percent average. But that provides an incomplete picture. The county has one of the highest concentrations of elderly, with 25 percent ages 65+. Forty percent of these seniors qualify as low income, with 10 percent falling below the poverty level. In some areas of the county, including the City of Clearlake, up to 50 percent of the working age adults describe themselves as disabled and unable to work. One-fourth of all county households, and over one-third of households with minor children, also live below the poverty line.

- **Lack of affordable housing**

Over the past four years, devastating wildfires and severe Clear Lake flooding resulted in the loss of about 2,000 housing units, many of them occupied by low income households. These losses accounted for about six percent of the county's year-round housing stock. Emergency housing is almost nonexistent but is discussed in detail in the Local Resources section. Lake County needs active, knowledgeable affordable housing advocates and developers.

Since 75 percent of the county's very low-income households pay more than 50 percent of monthly income towards housing, it is apparent that new housing units must include rent subsidies. Additional HUD Section 8 vouchers are not available, and HUD-VASH (Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing) vouchers are limited and difficult to competitively access for local use. Programs like Rapid Re-Housing and Emergency Solutions Grants that can provide move-in costs and other financial support can greatly assist, particularly as a gap filler while new housing units are being developed.

- **Aging population**

Lake County already has one of the oldest populations in the state. The previously-cited 2019 County Health Rankings and Road Maps also concluded that the county's already-aging and unhealthy citizens will continue to increase. This age group typically

lives on a fixed income and is unable to cope with any household emergency. Mental health and alcohol use issues further exacerbate this state, creating an at-risk for homelessness situation.

- Youth opportunities

Outside of school activities, little is available to youth isolated from the rest of the world in a rural county with minimal public transportation. The county's rates for teen smoking, drug use, pregnancy and dropping out of school and other risky behaviors that increase the likelihood of depression and homelessness exceed California rates. More programs such as the 6-bed teen emergency shelter and the youth drop-in center, both in the Clearlake area, provide teens a temporary respite but allows them to access services they might not seek out on their own.

- Limited public transportation

Lake County is geographically huge. It can only be accessed by the outside world via two-lane roads over mountains. Within the county, car travel from the northwest town of Upper Lake not far from the Mendocino County line to the southeast town of Middletown not far from the Napa County line will take a full hour. California's largest natural lake, Clear Lake, sits in the middle of the county, with the cities of Lakeport and Clearlake along with several unincorporated towns along its shores. With 100 miles of shoreline, people must drive around the lake via shoreline highways even though one town may be less than one air mile from another across the lake. Although the county has a public transportation system, the routes are infrequent due to funding and ridership constraints.

- Lack of services and service providers

With a small tax base, the county's local governments do not have the financial resources larger, more urban communities enjoy, yet the local demand for services is great because of the economy and demographics. Even when funding is available, recruitment of qualified persons for necessary programs can be difficult. Higher educational and technical training opportunities are not available (two outside community colleges do have campuses here with limited class selections), and adjacent counties with more attractive wages often hire away trained personnel.

- Seasonal and invisible homeless

Lake County's economy outside of education and government services is largely agricultural- and tourism-based. Both are seasonal, typically low-paying sources of employment. The county does see during harvest periods a significant influx of migrant and other non-local seasonal workers who come for work, especially the intensive work in the fields and packing sheds where long six days/week, 12 hours/day shifts provide a substantial portion of these workers' household incomes. Yet Lake County has a severe shortage of licensed farmworker housing units and the fires and floods have further

reduced the number of affordable units, if any were available for short-term rent. These seasonal workers more than often end up living in unpermitted campgrounds without proper sanitation or in homeless encampments along creeks or in fields in the county's agricultural areas. They meet most homeless definitions but do not access services, often because they are undocumented and monolingual. These unhealthy living conditions can result in local problems; local officials would also be surprised how many of these migrants include minor children who travel with their parents as they follow the row and citrus crops from the Central Valley into Lake County for its pear and grape harvests then on to Oregon or Washington for the apples and cherries.

- Not understanding the need and issues

"If we build it, they will come." Unfortunately, many persons in Lake County believe that withholding services to those they consider are degrading the local economy will result in those persons relocating to places with services. Not providing services to the homeless and those at-risk only keeps them homeless. Education on these issues is key, particularly for first responders, and is also an important strategy of the Lake County CoC. Please also see the discussion below on local efforts to educate the community on homelessness issues.

Local efforts to decriminalize homelessness:

Lake County does not currently have a program to prevent criminalization of the homeless. But several recent informal discussions between law enforcement and Lake County Behavioral Health Services have focused on preventing criminalization of homelessness through local implementation of programs being tried elsewhere. The aim is to provide an alternative to involvement in the criminal justice system for people experiencing homelessness and to offer additional opportunities for supportive service intervention and care for this population.

#### *Forensics Team*

The Forensics Team is a program operated by Lake County's Behavioral Health Services and funded by MHSA. This team operates within the county's Mental Health Adult System of Care and works closely with Adult Probation. It provides mental health services, alcohol and drug treatment, and housing services to seriously and persistently mentally ill individuals who are on probation and at risk of re-offending and incarceration. This team works very closely with the criminal justice system to assess referrals for serious mental illness and provide rapid access to a treatment plan with the appropriate mental health, substance abuse and housing services needed.

#### *Outreach Program*

The proposed Outreach Program will work to engage and stabilize homeless individuals living outside through consistent contact to facilitate and deliver health and basic needs services and secure permanent housing. This program, using California Emergency

Solutions and Housing (CESH) Program funding passed through the Lake County CoC, will operate as an entry point into the coordinated entry system for unsheltered persons and works to locate, engage, stabilize and house chronically homeless individuals and families. The outreach team will identify individuals living on the streets, assess their housing and service needs, and facilitate connections to shelter, resources and services. The program includes a relationship with the local governments' code enforcement officials, helping to ensure that violations of local codes due to homeless persons seeking alternative methods of survival (such as encampments and unsafe housing conditions) are not criminalized, or that their criminal justice status is not jeopardized due to minor infractions.

#### *Law Enforcement Education & Representation on the Continuum of Care*

Lake County's Continuum of Care includes representation from the county sheriff's and two cities' police departments. It continues to provide law enforcement with information and training to ensure local law enforcement is knowledgeable about issues relating to homelessness. The goal is to promote positive law enforcement policy and practice, reduce criminalization of homelessness, promote support for homeless services, and create empathy and understanding for persons experiencing homelessness within Lake County.

#### *Partnership with Probation Department*

On October 7, 2017, Governor Jerry Brown signed Assembly Bill No. 210 (AB 210) into law. AB 210 allows counties to create a multidisciplinary team of services providers who can share confidential information in order to better and more quickly serve homeless households. In response, the CoC is in the process of developing protocols with the county Probation Department and other affected agencies to expedite identification, assessment, and linkage of county services to homeless households with criminal backgrounds. The goal of this new program will be to prevent the further criminalization of these households as they navigate community reentry and to reduce the collateral consequences of their previous and ongoing criminal justice involvement.

#### **Coordinated Entry System:**

Coordinated entry systems (CES) are intended to help communities share vital information on available resources among all agencies and entities serving the same population, in this case the homeless and those at risk of homelessness. The system also allows data, including client information, to be shared as necessary so that each client can receive services from a variety of entities that meet his or her particular needs. Since the lack of funding and resources are always a concern, especially in small rural counties such as Lake County, the CES allows the prioritization of people who are most in need of assistance. On a broader scale, the CES can provide information to CoCs and other stakeholders about program needs and gaps to help

communities strategically allocate their current resources and identify the need for additional resources.

In 2017, Lake County Department of Social Services and North Coast Opportunities, a nonprofit agency serving Lake County as its community action agency, jointly invested in housing navigation software to support, coordinate and locate housing for homeless or at-risk of homelessness persons. Client support included case management, housing location services, and assistance in completing rental applications to move into housing and out of homelessness. This software has not been fully utilized as of this date due to limited staff and the funding to purchase additional components. Current users also complain that the maintenance of client confidentiality is a concern with this software. Therefore, its use across governmental and nongovernmental agencies could be a problem.

According to the 2017-2020 MHSA Three Year Program and Expenditure Plan, CES data indicate that services are not supporting households with behavioral health concerns to the same extent as other households not facing the challenges of serious mental illness or health or behavioral health concerns. This certainly can be due to a variety of factors, including outreach efforts to this hard-to-reach special needs group. The CoC is considering the purchase of a new software system which, while comprehensive in data gathering, also maintains client confidentiality even while being accessed by many service providers. If the software is indeed purchased, the county's Behavioral Health Services will oversee its maintenance and distribution.

## **Lake County Resources to Address Homelessness**

### **Local government:**

The county and its two cities all agree that they do not have the resources to fully tackle the homelessness problem. Lake County Behavioral Health Services, in great part thanks to both the availability of MHSA funding and forward-thinking leadership, has taken the lead on behalf of the entire county to pursue the No Place Like Home funding and develop much-needed permanent supportive housing for the chronically homeless. All three governments have provided in their respective Housing Elements policies and goals to facilitate affordable housing, including emergency shelters, in cooperation with outside for-profit and nonprofit developers, by fast-tracking permits, allowing ministerial (over-the-counter) approvals of small board and care homes, and providing government surplus properties when suitable and available for affordable housing. Ministerial projects also skip public hearings where the "not in my back yard" affordable housing opponents have the opportunity to politically kill these projects. Therefore these governmental efforts can translate into huge financial contributions, often qualifying as required local match for some funding sources, towards housing projects that will make them feasible to develop.

### **Tribal governments:**

Lake County has seven federally-recognized Native American tribes within its borders; six of those provide some housing to tribal members either on trust land or fee simple properties. These units are provided either free or at deep rental subsidy. Although homelessness among tribal members exists, Lake County has no data on numbers. But the tribes do receive annually funding formula allocations through the federal Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act (NAHASDA), and these funds can be used to address tribal homelessness problems.

#### Other State, Federal Agencies:

Federal and state programs can fill local needs unmet because of the local economy. Lake County utilizes federal funding for HUD Section 8 and HUD-VASH (Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing) vouchers to provide monthly rent subsidies to qualified households, although both programs are limited in capacity and cannot meet local demand. The county Social Services Department can also assist households in emergency situations with temporary housing assistance using these outside funds.

#### Nonprofits:

Local governments look to the nonprofit community to provide projects and programs the governments cannot provide because of limited staffing and funds. Another huge advantage in California is that nonprofit housing developers are generally exempt from the Article 34 referendum requirements. Article 34 was a 1950 voter-approved California constitutional amendment that states that no local government may "develop, construct or acquire" any "low-rent" housing "unless approved by a majority of qualified electors of the city, town or county" at the ballot box. By utilizing nonprofits as affordable housing developers, local governments can work towards meeting their state-mandated housing unit development goals without the trouble, and often impossible, task of convincing the local voters that housing is necessary, even when it's for the chronically homeless mentally ill targeted by the NPLH program. Luckily for Lake County, the Rural Communities Housing Development Corporation (RCHDC), based in nearby Mendocino County, is a very experienced affordable housing developer with several Lake County projects in its extensive portfolio.

#### Hospitals and Health Care Facilities:

Health facilities, particularly hospital emergency rooms, are often the first access point for the mentally ill homeless who otherwise are unwilling to utilize other available programs and interventions. The county's two critical access hospitals and its healthcare partners, known as the Lake County Collaborative of Health and Community-Based Organizations, also do a great job with their required health needs assessments. Data produced can then be used by other providers to develop goals and strategies for their own programs. On July 1, 2019 a new California law regulating homeless patient discharges will turn hospitals into local housing partners. The following are the key provisions:

- 1) The law will require general acute care hospitals, acute psychiatric hospitals and special hospitals to "include a written homeless patient discharge planning policy and process within the hospital discharge policy."
- 2) Hospitals must also log all homeless patient discharges and offer patients a meal, clothing, necessary medications and transportation upon discharge. In addition, local governments may pass ordinances for stricter requirements on discharges.
- 3) The law seeks to prevent improper discharges — sometimes referred to as patient dumping — in which homeless patients are sent to shelters that cannot take them in or are left to recover on the streets.
- 4) The legislation does not outline specific penalties for hospitals that fail to follow these protocols, but facilities could face consequences from the California Department of Public Health and the federal government.

#### Faith-Based Organizations:

Lake County has no open, year-round homeless shelters. The special needs shelter programs are listed later in this plan. Two years ago the local ministerial association established a warming center during the coldest part of winter, providing a hot meal and warm bed to those who otherwise would be sleeping in the cold. This year's warming center was operated out of a local church in Lakeport. This same group is planning to take a mobile shower this summer to areas frequented by the homeless, including churches that regularly distribute food bags to those who need them.

#### **Current housing projects and programs addressing homelessness**

The following nonprofit housing projects and programs, while not permanent supportive housing except for NCO's New Digs Program, provide shelter with services to some of the county's most vulnerable homeless:

Rural Communities Housing Development Corporation, Ukiah

Bevins Court Apartments

10 1-bedroom subsidized rental units for low-income persons with mental illness

Adventist Health Clearlake

Restoration House/Project Restoration, Clearlake

10-bed transitional housing respite facility for high-risk individuals

Lake Ministerial Association

Hope Harbor Warming Center, Lakeport (church facility)

24 beds, December-February only; dinner plus to-go breakfast and bus tickets

Lake Family Resource Center

Rape and domestic violence emergency shelter, Kelseyville

31 beds for adults, adults with children

Domestic Violence Housing First

Victims are stabilized with housing then provided additional supportive services

Transitional Housing Program

Financial and supportive services to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and/or stalking victims for up to 12 months

Lake Community Pride Foundation

The Safe House, Clearlake

6-bed homeless youth emergency shelter

Redwood Community Services

The NEST (Nurturing, Education & Skills Training), Lower Lake

13-bed pregnant and parenting teen homeless shelter

Tule House

Residential rehabilitative facility for individuals recovering from drugs or alcohol abuse

North Coast Opportunities

New Digs Rapid Rehousing Program

Move-in costs, monthly subsidies, direct client assistance and referral

### **No Place Like Home Goals and Strategies**

Programs such as No Place Like Home that provide qualifying individuals and/or families with the rights of tenancy in a long term housing unit of their own are referred to as Housing First or Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). The tenants are free to stay as long as they want if they are able to fulfill the terms of their lease. The program includes supportive services that are voluntary and typically offered on site. This is a “housing first” approach which delineates itself from other programs that offer support services but do not offer housing. A housing first approach is defined as “an approach that centers on providing homeless people with housing quickly and then providing services as needed.”

The greatest challenge to a “housing first” approach is the lack of available supportive housing units. In Lake County, RCHDS’s 10-unit apartment project in Lakeport for persons with mental health issues is the closest, and only, project that might be considered a supportive housing project. Therefore, Lake County has the unique opportunity to literally build from the ground up.

The adopted 2014-2019 Housing Elements for the county and two cities all contain goals and strategies to address homelessness and the need for additional affordable



housing. This plan's outreach process also identified several goals and strategies to provide housing in particular to the chronically homeless mentally ill. The following consolidates those ideas.

#### Goals:

- To better identify and quantify all segments of the chronically homeless mentally ill population (veterans, unaccompanied youth, domestic violence victims, etc.);
- To provide appropriate, effective and coordinated services to each identified group;
- To develop partnerships with affordable housing developers and service providers experienced in supportive housing for the NPLH targeted clientele; and
- To dedicate Lake County and CoC resources in support of service to ending homelessness in the county, particularly for the chronically homeless mentally ill.

#### Strategies:

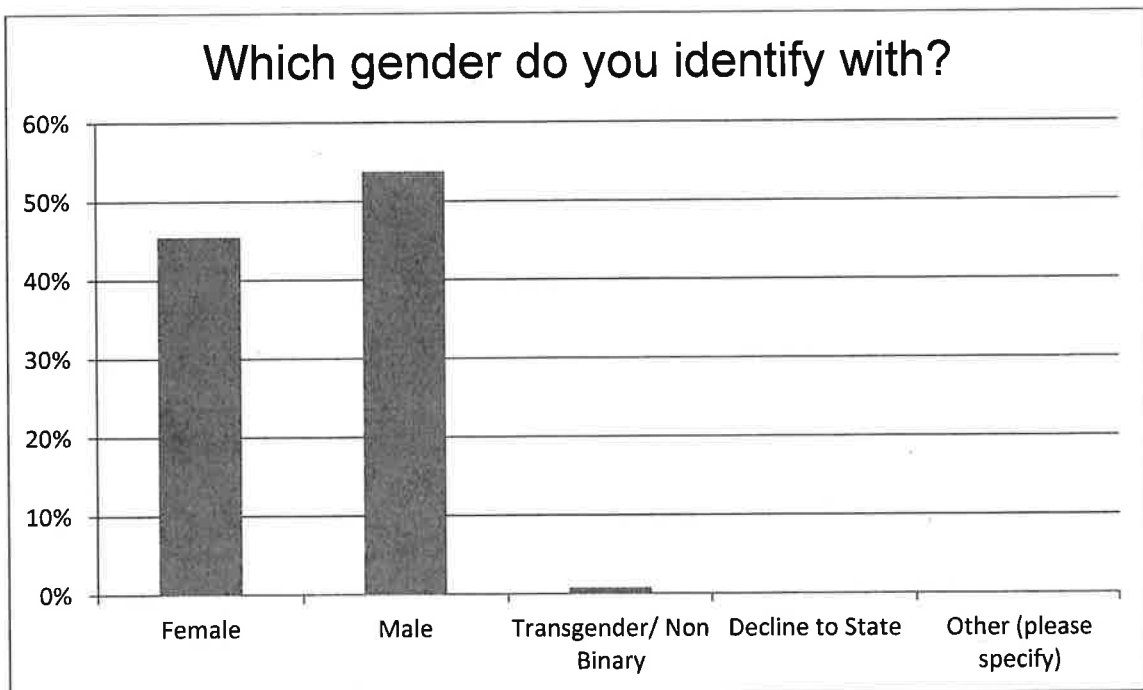
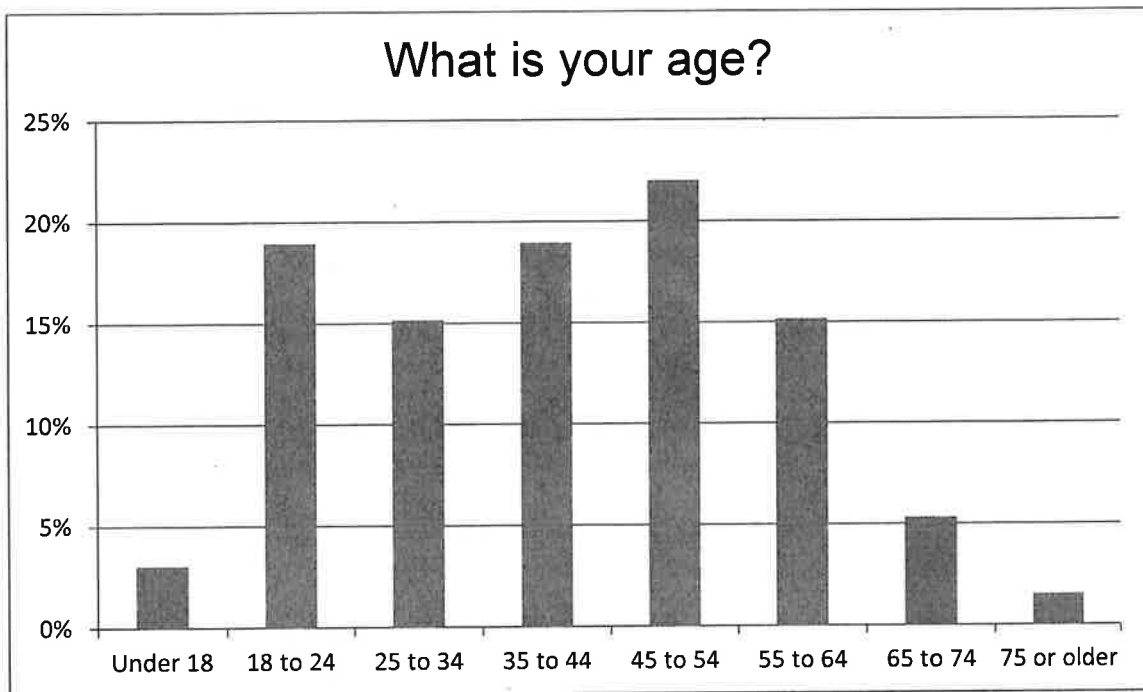
- Expand the CoC's role to include service as a Housing Task Force.
- Through the CoC, conduct regular HUD-mandated Point in Time counts that thoroughly assess all homeless needs through extensive outreach to all population segments, particularly those suspected of being undercounted due to location, language, age, fear of law enforcement or domestic violence, or immigration status.
- Support the development of housing projects and programs that adopt the Housing First model for special needs groups, particularly the chronically homeless mentally ill.
- Support projects that meet all required federal, state and local habitability standards related to safety, sanitation, and privacy and have the highest likelihood of tenant access to and use of appropriate supportive services.
- Prioritize projects competing for finite funds by:
  - 1) their assistance to people with the most urgent and severe needs;
  - 2) developer's capacity to own and operate a permanent supportive housing project for the targeted tenants;
  - 3) the feasibility of the proposed supportive services plan, including coordination with the county and its partners (including CoC membership); and
  - 4) the developer proposes a financially feasible project with reasonable development and sustainable management costs.
- Assist as requested with the development of smaller board and care homes for the target population.

## **Housing Solutions**

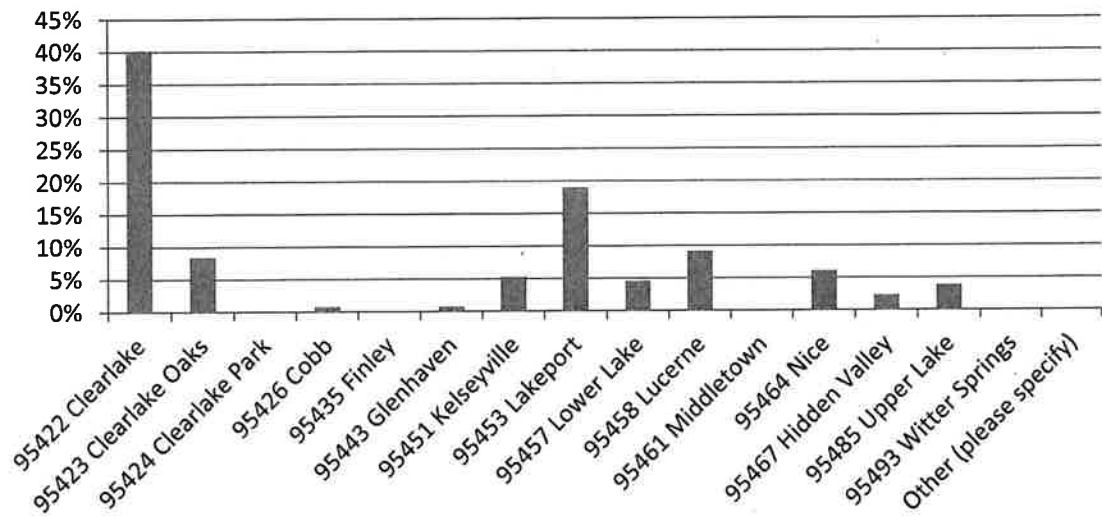
The following project types are examples of common permanent supportive housing models. They are not listed in any preferential order:

- Multifamily housing project with on-site supportive services
- Multifamily housing project with off-site services within walking distance (less than 1 mile)
- Single-room occupancy (SRO) units with on or off-site services
- Shared housing, scattered site; services off-site with transportation if necessary
- Cooperative or limited-equity housing with rental subsidy; services on or off-site
- Co-housing project; services on or off-site
- Mobile home park with individual household units; on or off-site services
- Privately-operated board and care homes with transportation to service providers
- Residential second units on private properties; services off-site

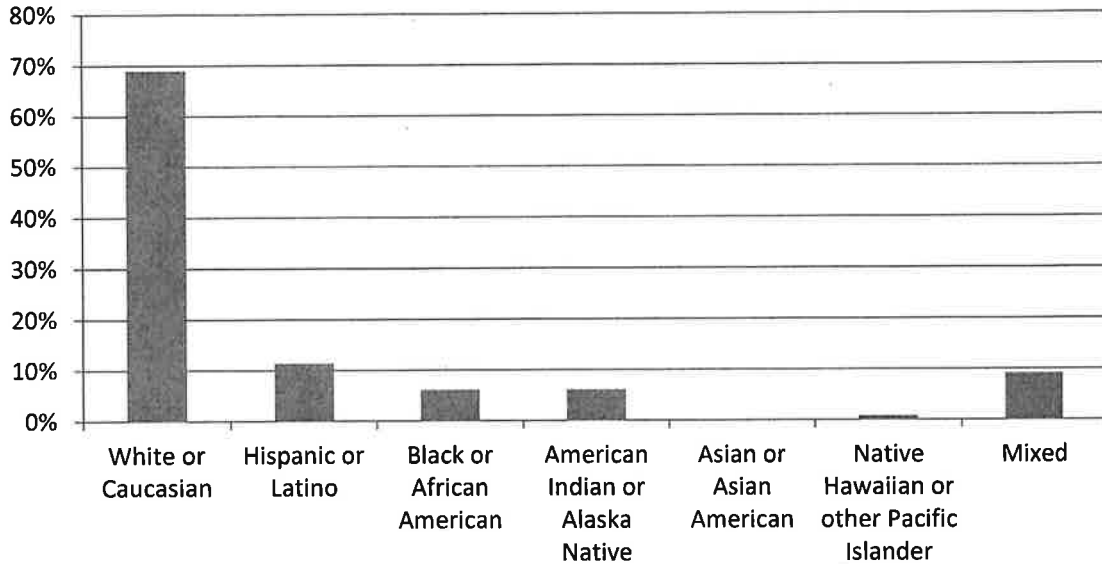
## **Appendix A: Client Survey Results**



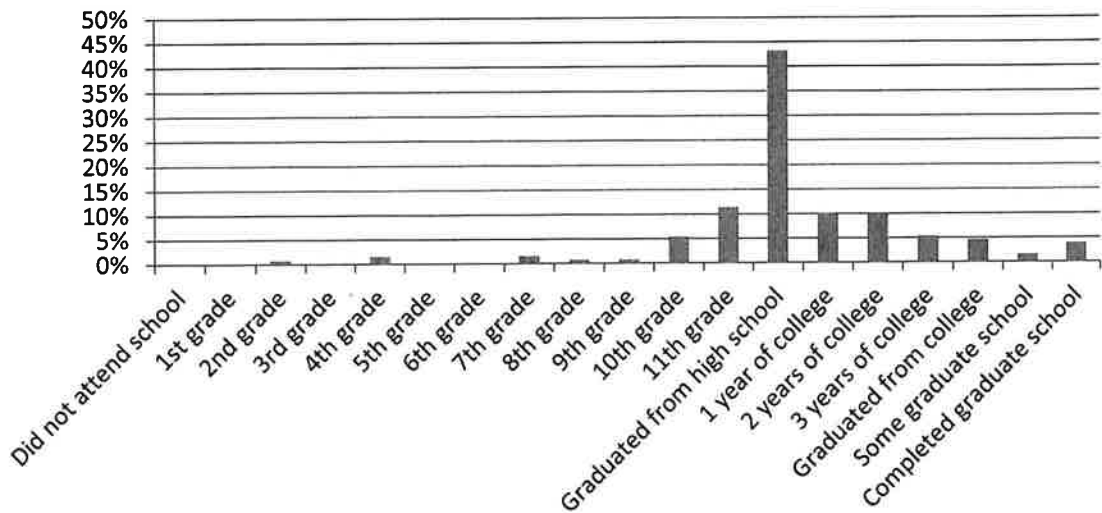
## What is your current or last known zip code?



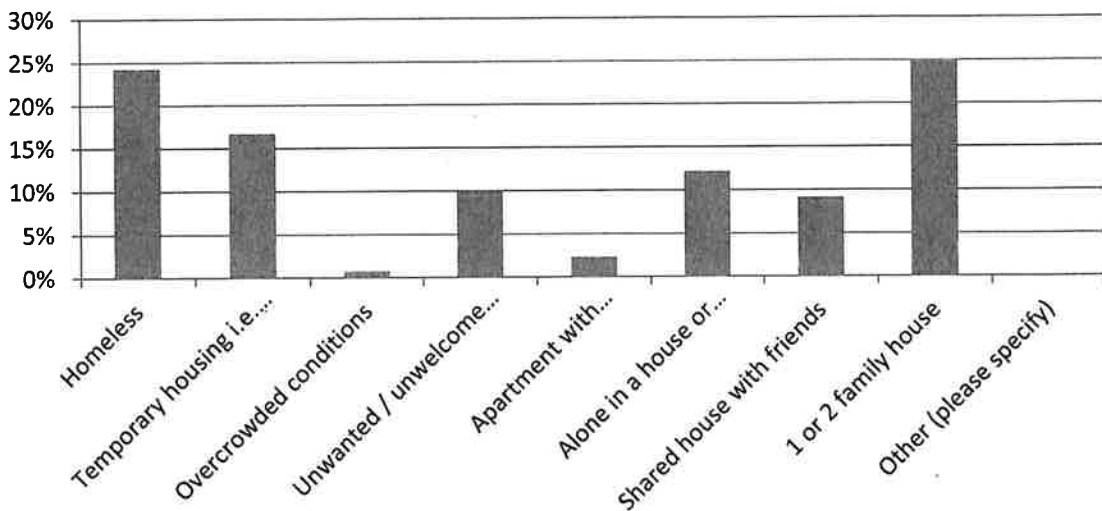
## What is your ethnic origin?



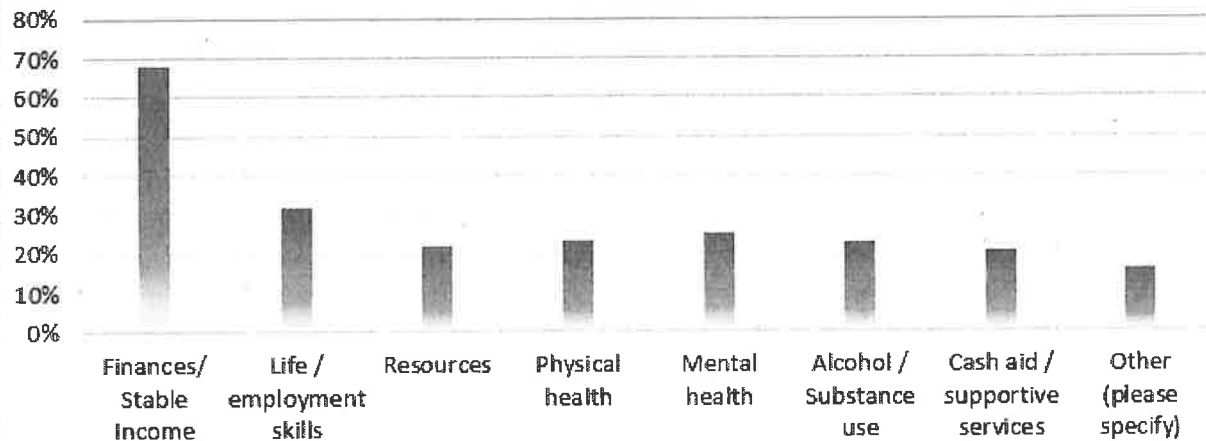
## What is the highest level of education you have completed?



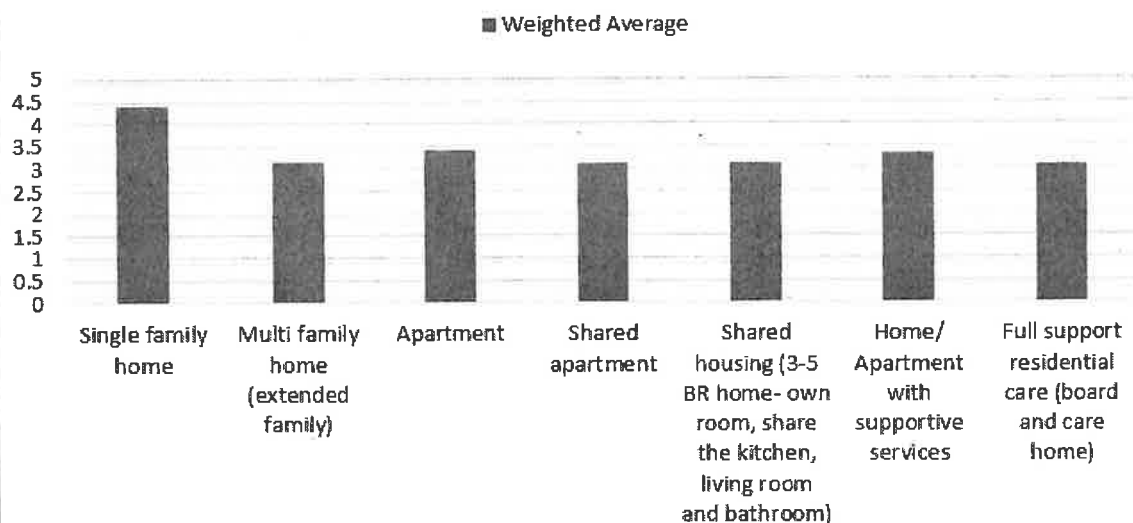
## What is your current housing situation? Check all that apply.



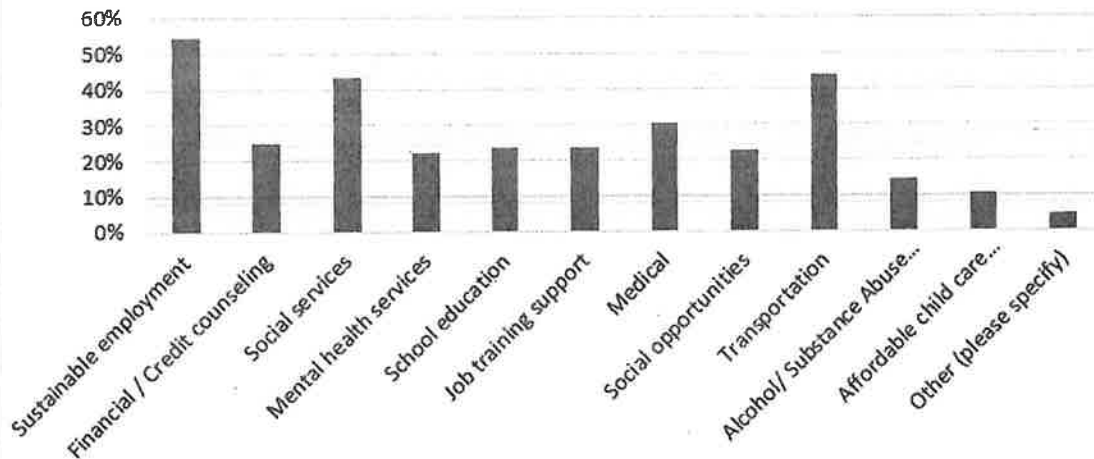
What have been the obstacles, if any, you've encountered when trying to attain a stable living environment? Check all that apply



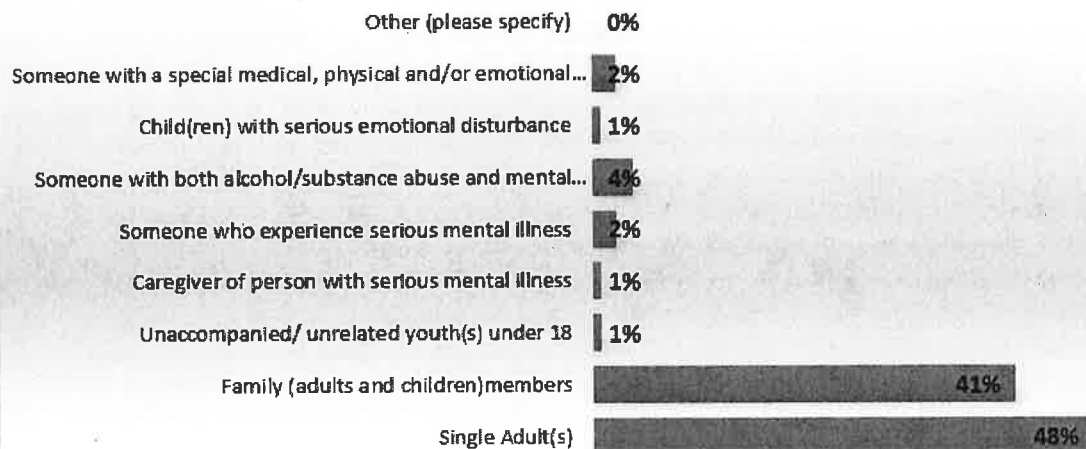
Please rate your preferred housing situation.



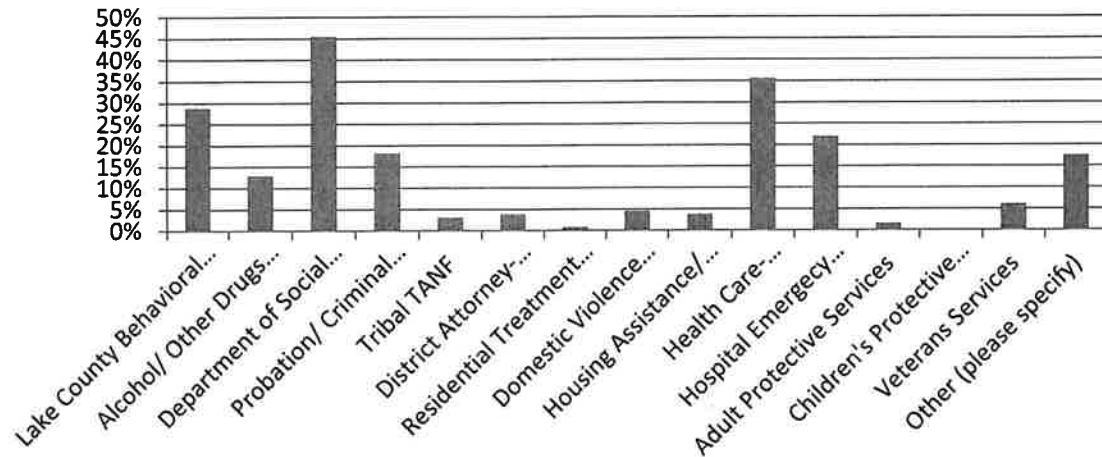
## What resources do you need to sustain an ideal living situation? Check all that apply



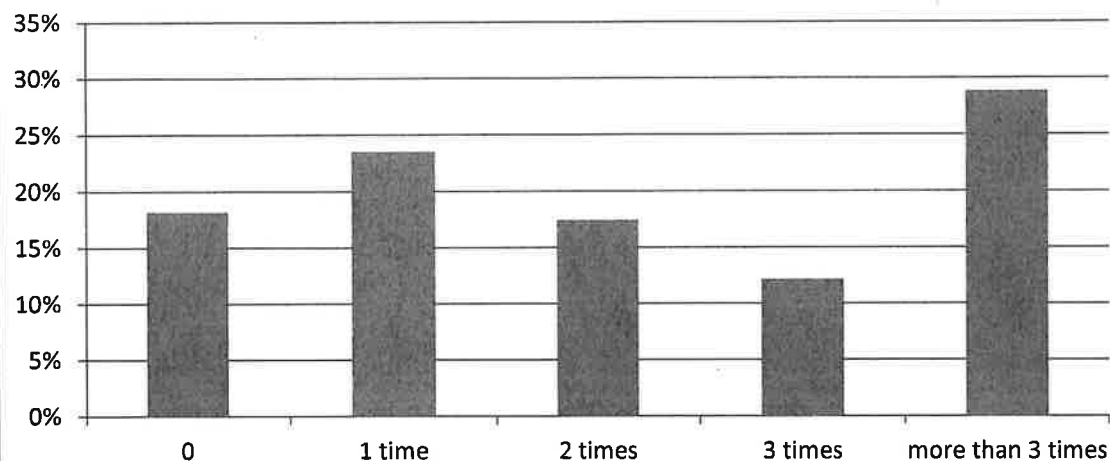
## Tell us who lives in your household. Check all that apply



In the past 3 years which of the following agencies/ services have you used? Check all that apply

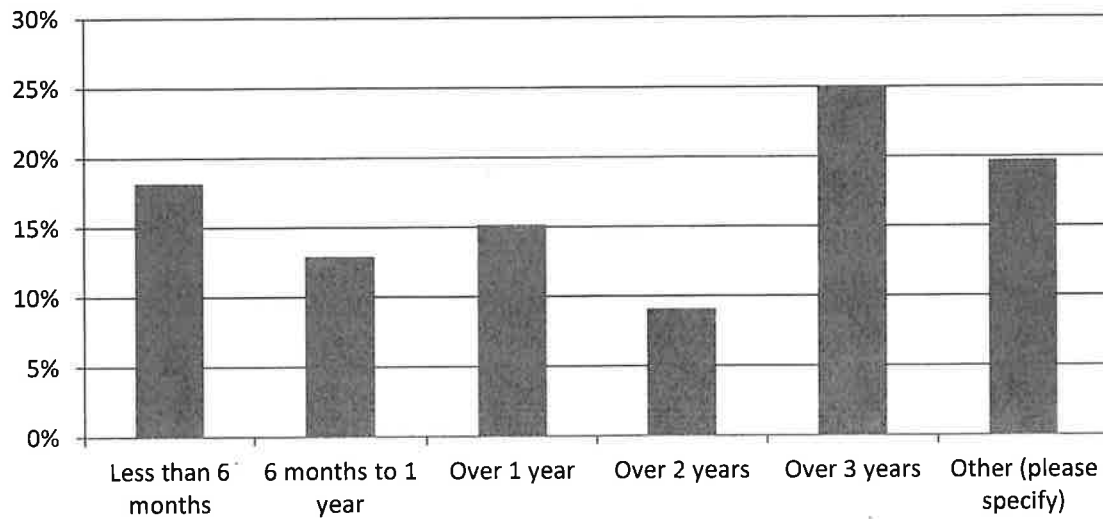


How many times in your life have you been without permanent housing? (Check one)

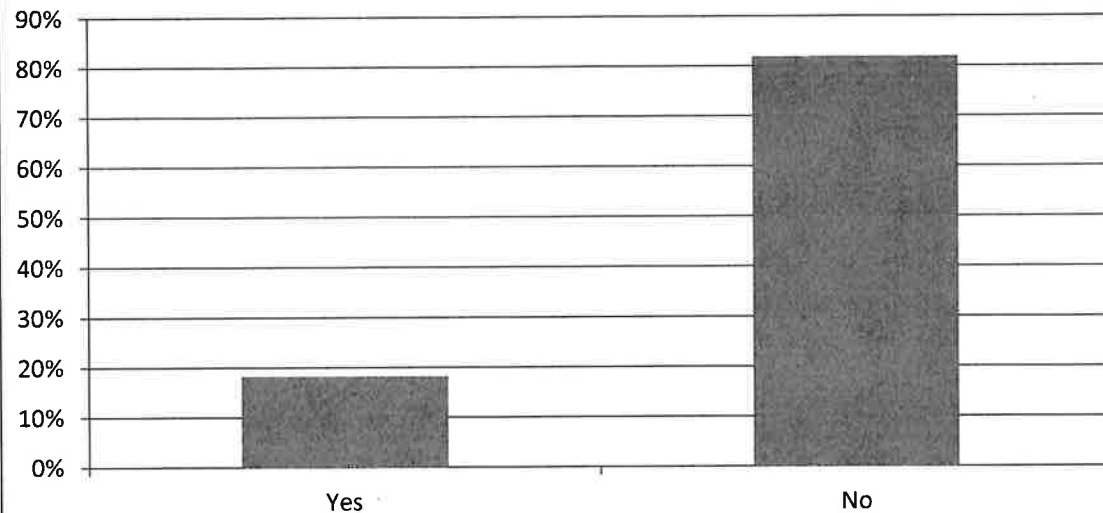




### How long are you or were you without permanent housing?



### Are you a veteran having served in the US Armed Forces?



## Appendix B: Lake County 2018 HUD Point In Time Count Report

*Separate page.*