

Annual Report on Homelessness Conditions in Florida 2007



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Executive Summary

Each year, in accordance with 420.623, Florida Statutes, the Department of Children and Families submits a report on homelessness in Florida. Homeless coalitions across the state provided the Department with data on their local homeless populations, which was used to develop this report. The Department wishes to thank all of these coalitions for their assistance.

Based on information from 27 local homeless coalitions, there is an estimated 60,168 homeless individuals in Florida on any given day in 2007. While this is a staggering figure, at first glance it appears to be a significant reduction in the number of homeless in Florida as compared to a 2006 estimate of 85,907. However, upon closer inspection, the decrease in the homeless estimate is likely due mostly to a change in procedures for counting the homeless rather than a significant decrease in the number of homeless. One factor that may have truly impacted the homeless estimate is recovery in areas affected by the hurricanes of 2004 and 2005. Areas of the state where hurricanes destroyed much of the housing have made strides in replenishing the housing stock. Nevertheless, lack of affordable housing is a significant problem. In fact, lack of low cost housing, and poverty were identified as the primary causes of homelessness in Florida.

Despite the challenges associated with treating and eliminating homelessness, Florida continues to make positive strides addressing this issue. Since 2001, Florida has increased its ability to shelter and house the homeless by 44% while at the same time decreasing the number of unsheltered homeless. In addition, through greater planning and state partnerships, each of Florida's 27 continuums has implemented a continuum of care plan and has leveraged funds to implement them. The strength of these local partnerships is evidenced by the financial commitment of local continuums to support homeless housing with a reported leverage of \$132.7 million to support homeless housing requests of \$65.3 million. In addition, Florida continuums continue to compete successfully for federal grants to serve more homeless.

Florida's commitment to partner with local homeless service agencies is a critical factor in addressing homelessness in our state. Through the Department of Children and Families Office on Homelessness, the state's Challenge and Homeless Housing Assistance grants support enhanced homeless planning, the development of homeless housing, and delivery of comprehensive homeless and homeless prevention services. In collaboration with the local coalitions, the Department utilizes additional state funds to address unmet homeless service needs throughout the state.

The mission of the Department of Children and Families is to protect the vulnerable, promote strong and economically self-sufficient families, and advance personal and family recovery and resiliency. The Department and the Office on Homelessness remain firmly committed to carrying out this mission as we partner with local communities to fight homelessness in Florida.

Homeless in Florida: 2007

In the last seven days of January 2007, the local homeless coalitions in Florida performed a one-day, point-in-time count of the homeless. These community counts of the homeless are mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development every two years.

The state and the local homeless coalitions jointly developed a standard survey tool. In addition, the federal mandate also prescribed allowable methods to count the homeless. The use of multipliers, or university study estimating models has been eliminated as allowable methods to estimate the number of persons who are homeless. These changes are intended to produce more reliable counts of the homeless.

Examples of adjustment factors include multiplying the sheltered population by a certain factor, like 2.0 or 2.5; or applying a multiplier to account for people not seen during the point-in-time count. A common alternative to counts has been to use the Barry University model. This model estimates the total number of homeless persons by multiplying the county's total population by a factor of .00404. These adjustment methods are no longer accepted by the federal agency in the homeless count.

The result of the community counts is a total Florida homeless population of 60,168 in January 2007. The local homeless coalitions relied upon the definition of a homeless person as follows:

Homeless person is (1) sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation; (2) sleeping in an emergency shelter; or (3) in transitional housing having come into that housing from the street or from emergency shelter.

The count does not include those persons "doubled up" or sharing the housing of others due to loss of their own housing, or those in motels due to the lack of alternative, adequate housing. The count also excludes persons living in permanent housing for the homeless, or those temporarily residing in hospitals, institutions, treatment facilities, or correctional facilities. Lastly, those at-risk of becoming homeless are not included in the homeless count.

The 2007 count total is nearly 30% lower than the 2006 estimate of 85,907 persons homeless. Much of this change is due to the required count, and the allowable methods for doing the one-day count. The 2006 estimates provided by the coalitions were based on a range of sources, including street counts, provider agency records, counts done in 2005, and use of multipliers. In addition, several counties that were hard hit by the 2004 hurricanes reported fewer homeless. This is reflective of the recovery and rebuilding that has been accomplished, especially in the Panhandle and Charlotte County.

The number of homeless varies from community to community across our state. For some, the extent of homelessness is rising. In others, declines are reported. To assess the trend in your community, please see Appendix A. Here you will find the homeless numbers by county for the past three years.

Section 1 – Homeless Characteristics

The information on the characteristics of Florida’s homeless population was captured from interviews conducted as part of the January point-in-time counts. Not every person counted agreed to be interviewed. Therefore, the data reported in this section only reflects the number of actual responses received from the universe of 60,168 persons.

Sex

Men are more likely to be homeless than women. The 2007 data reflect that the homeless population consists of 65% males, and 35% females. In 2000, Florida’s general population was 51% women and 49% men.

Source	Men	Women	Total
2007 Homeless Count	29,864	15,855	45,719
	65%	35%	
2000 Census: Florida	49%	51%	

Age

Florida homeless are primarily adults under 60 years old. Unlike the state’s general population, there are fewer elderly reflected in the homeless numbers. Children under the age of 18 continue to make up over 21% of the population.

Source	Children under 18	Adults 18 to 60	Elderly, over 60	Total
2007 Count	9,735	34,159	2,503	46,397
	21.0%	74.0%	5%	
2006 Homeless Estimate	22.6%	69.1%	8.3%	
2000 Census: Florida	25.3%	52.5%	22.2%	

Race/Ethnicity

Based on the 2007 homeless counts, 12% of the homeless indicated being either Hispanic or Latino. This is lower than the general population percentage of 16.8% Hispanic or Latino. The number of homeless who are Black/African American totals 35.9% of all homeless. This is well above the general population of Florida, where Blacks/African Americans represent 14.6% of the population.

Population Category	2007 Homeless		2000 Florida
	Number	Percent	Percent
American Indian/Alaskan Native	711	1.7	0.3
Asian	212	.5	1.7
Black/African American	14,758	35.9	14.6
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	51	0.1	0.1
White	23,179	56.5	78.0
Other, including 2 or more races	2,141	5.2	5.3
Totals	41,052	99.9	100.00

Marital Status

The bulk of homeless persons are single, according to the 2007 counts. Nearly 85% reported being single. The low percentage of married persons in the homeless population is reflective of one of the causes of homelessness, namely family problems and the break-up of family units.

Veterans

Persons who have served on active duty in the U.S. military and who are now homeless in 2007 represent 17% of all homeless persons. In 2006, the estimate for homeless veterans was at 18.4%.

Homeless Veterans	Number	Percent
Homeless Vets: 2007	5,966	17.1
Non-Veterans	29,006	82.9
TOTALS	34,972	100.0

Disabling Conditions

Nearly half of the surveyed homeless population reported having a disabling condition. Of the data available on 34,346 persons homeless, 16,232 reported a disabling condition, or multiple conditions. The breakdown of disabling conditions is reflected below. Drug or alcohol addiction is the most frequent condition, followed by physical disabilities and mental health problems.

Disabling Condition	2007 Count		2006 Estimate	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Physical	6730	30	5883	25
Development	709	3	431	2
Mental Health	5930	27	7626	32
Drug/Alcohol Addiction	8094	37	8753	37
HIV/AIDS	601	3	888	4
TOTAL	22064	100%	23,581	100%

Causes of Homelessness

At the heart of the problem of homelessness are two issues: poverty and lack of low cost housing. Without the financial ability to make ends meet and afford an apartment or homes in the market place, individuals and families can face homelessness. The lack of housing options for persons at the lowest economic level is a critical issue to be addressed.

Based on the 2007 interviews with the homeless, these individuals indicated the top two causes of their plight as based in employment and family problems.

Cause of Homelessness	Total Responses
Employment/ Financial reasons	11,579
Family problems	7,032
Medical/ disability problems	5,618
Housing issues	5,387
Forced to relocate from home	2,433
Natural/ other disasters	1,320
Recent immigration	532
TOTAL Responses	33,901

Episodes of Homelessness

To match resources and services effectively, the number of times and the length of time a person or family is homeless is important to know. For many, homelessness is a new experience. In 2007, over 40 percent of homeless interviewed stated they were homeless for the first time. On the other end of the spectrum there was over 26 percent who have been on the street four or more times.

Number of Homeless Episodes	2007		2006
1	14483	40.8%	37.3%
2 or 3	11584	32.7%	29.4%
4 or more	9412	26.5%	33.3%
Total Interviews	35,479		

An equally important element is how long the person or family has been homeless. The longer one is on the street, the more difficult and costly it will be to restore to housing independence. The 2007 interviews provide insight into length of time the person has been homeless.

Length of Current Homeless Episode	2007		2006
1 week or less	2772	8%	10%
More than 1 week, less than 1 month	3485	10%	9%
1 to 3 months	6333	18%	20%
More than 3 months, less than 12 months	8561	25%	26%
1 year or more	13,303	39%	35%
TOTAL	34,454	100%	100%

The short-term periods of homeless are relatively constant [episodes of less than 3 months]. The rise in the long-term homelessness (longer than a year) reflects an underlying hard to serve population. Innovative approaches, like the Housing First model, offer promise in reaching this population. This model places the person back into permanent housing, usually with a housing subsidy. Supportive services are made available to address underlying health, disability and employment needs.

Final Notes

Two other facts were captured in the 2007 count and interviews. The first addresses the transient nature of the homeless. Contrary to many perceptions, the great majority of persons who are homeless have lived in our communities for months or years. Those who have been in the community for less than one month account for only 8% of the total. Another 9% had been living in county for over 1 month, but less than 3 months.

Length of Stay in the County	Number	Percent
1 week or less	1051	3%
Over 1 week, less than 1 month	1744	5%
1 to 3 months	2992	9%
Over 3 months, less than 1 year	4591	14%
Over 1 year	22,564	68%
TOTAL	32,942	100%

The second new item gathered in the 2007 count relates to the relationship of foster care to an episode of homelessness. Based on this year's survey interviews eleven percent (11%) of the homeless had a history of being in foster care.

Foster Care History	Number	Percentage
Yes	3,117	11%
No	26,339	89%
Total Interviewed	29,456	100%

Section 2 – Development and Implementation of Continuum of Care Plans

What is a continuum of care plan?

A continuum of care plan is intended to be a “framework for a comprehensive and seamless array of emergency, transitional and permanent housing, and services” to address the needs of the persons who are homeless, in accordance with section 420.624, Florida Statutes. This homeless assistance planning effort is used by both the state and our federal partner, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, to guide the allocation and award of homeless grants.

This locally developed service plan covers the following components of the continuum of care for the homeless.

1. Outreach, intake and assessment of the person or family to identify their needs and link them to local services
2. Emergency sheltering
3. Transitional housing
4. Support services
5. Permanent supportive housing
6. Permanent housing
7. Referrals among all components to move persons toward permanent housing and self-sufficiency
8. Services and resources to prevent homelessness

Such planning is intended to reflect the community’s vision for solutions to its homeless needs. Each continuum of care plan serves a specific geographic area of one or more counties.

Current Level of Planning.

In 2007, there are 27 recognized continuum of care planning areas. These plans cover 62 of Florida’s 67 counties. The rural counties that have yet to be part of this planning for homeless services are listed below:

Nassau
Baker
Union
Gilchrist
Dixie

The Department is continuing to encourage neighboring continuum of care planning efforts to expand and involve an adjoining county. The goal remains to have homeless service plans statewide.

The map in Appendix B depicts the 27 continuum of care planning areas, and the counties involved in each plan.

Implementation of Continuum of Care Plans

Every one of the 27 continuum of care plans is being implemented. Federal homeless housing program grants have been awarded to each continuum of care between 2001 and 2007. Likewise, the state's homeless Challenge Grant has been awarded to every continuum over the last six years to fund the services specified in the plan.

In the most recent federal grant competition for the homeless housing programs, Florida's continuums received over \$56 million. Awards went to 25 of the 27 continuums this year. The funding assists 225 existing projects to house the homeless, as well as 12 new housing developments.

Florida's Federal Continuum of Care Awards		
Year	Number of Continuums	Grant Award Total
2001	21	\$48,692,766
2002	21	\$41,239,338
2003	20	\$51,396,280
2004	24	\$59,060,266
2005	25	\$58,053,746
2006	25	\$56,269,722

While these federal grants are focused on the need for transitional and permanent housing, the state's Challenge Grant provides greater flexibility. This grant can be used to fund any service, activity or project that is consistent with the local continuum of care plan. As a result, many continuums apply these state dollars to address unmet needs for which no other source of financing is available. Challenge Grants awarded in 2006-2007 supported the wide range of services listed below.

- Emergency financial aid
- Rent and Utility assistance
- Helpline referrals
- Supportive services
 - Mental health
 - Medications
 - Case management
 - Health services
- Food and meal programs
- Emergency sheltering
- Transitional housing
- Permanent housing
- Employment readiness
- Literacy programs
- Personal identification needs
- Outreach

With a total of \$2,116,025 in awards, the Challenge Grant will support direct services to nearly 30,000 persons this year.

Effectiveness of the Continuum of Care Plans

The local homeless coalitions were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of their Continuum of Care plan components. Each coalition was asked to identify its two strongest and its two weakest plan elements. Overall, the strongest elements cited were: (1) linkages and referrals among all components, (2) supportive services and ongoing planning.

The two weakest components identified were permanent housing and permanent supportive housing, followed by emergency shelters.

The coalitions were also asked for their assessment of the service to specific homeless subpopulations. The assessment asked for the top two groups by each of the following elements:

- Greatest Need
- Least Resources to Serve
- Most Effectively Being Served

The greatest need subpopulations identified are (1) families with children and (2) chronic homeless. The top two subpopulations with the least resources to serve them were (1) families with children and (2) chronic homeless. The most effectively served subpopulations identified were (1) domestic violence and (2) adult individuals.

Conclusion

The continuum of care planning continues to provide a good framework for coordinating services across multiple provider agencies on individual needs. The plan clearly identifies the unmet needs, and sets priorities for funding strategies, including the investment of the state grants.

Section 3 – Local Plans, Programs and Resources

The homeless continuum of care plan is the framework for marshalling local resources. Just as this plan guides the award of federal and state grants, the continuum of care directs the investment of local funding. The plan process identifies the unmet needs, and should outline strategies to meet those gaps in service.

An essential component of this plan is the listing of the current inventory of services and housing available for the homeless. Every continuum has identified the local agencies who are providing the range of services, from community outreach and referral to prevention assistance, and to sheltering facilities and supportive services.

In 2006, the local continuums of care reported an investment of \$132.7 million in leveraged money to support homeless housing requests of \$65.3 million. This is a significant sign of commitment from Florida's communities. Further, the 2006 plans document the growing capacity across our state to shelter and house the homeless. Last year, over 32,000 beds existed to serve the homeless. This is an increase in capacity by nearly 44 percent over the 2001 capacity of just 22,239 beds.

Inventory of Beds to Serve the Homeless				
Year	Shelters	Transitional	Permanent	Total
2001	7,967	10,589	3,683	22,239
2002	9,281	10,910	5,510	25,701
2003	9,927	12,294	7,159	29,380
2004	9,868	12,758	8,438	31,064
2005	9,230	13,425	9,185	31,840
2006	9,594	13,297	9,113	32,004

As the resource base has grown, the number of homeless persons without access to shelter has decreased. In 2006, the unsheltered homeless population estimate declined to 31,606 persons. This is a decline of 7.1% from the 2005 estimate of 33,443 unsheltered individuals.

In addition to the continuum of care plan, each district office of the Department sets a spending plan for their share of the \$1.1 million homeless Grant in Aid program. The grant is used for direct services to the homeless. The local homeless coalitions provide their recommendations to the District Administrator, who sets the annual spending plan priorities. Nearly every coalition submitted spending recommendations, and received money for local services. Common types of service needs addressed included case management, emergency aid, sheltering, outreach and education, transportation, health care, photo identification cards, and homeless prevention help.

Another state grant helping to build local capacity to serve those on the street is the Homeless Housing Assistance Grant. With \$7.0 million in 2006-2007, this state program funded the development of 455 units of transitional and permanent housing this past year. Since 2001, this program has invested \$32 million in local solutions to house the homeless. Since that time, 2,062 units of housing have been assisted.

Assessment of Unmet Needs

The local homeless coalitions identified their top two unmet needs. Affordable housing is clearly the critical need. Of the 27 coalitions, 21 identified housing as the number 1 need, with 14 indicating the issue as the number two need. Within this issue of housing, the needs are further defined as:

- permanent supportive housing
- emergency shelter
- permanent housing
- transitional housing

Other needs identified in the top two listings included:

- Coordinated case management
- Medical services
- Services for the chronic homeless subpopulation
- One-Stop centers to access services
- Supportive services
- Employment at wages that cover housing costs
- Job training and placement
- Prevention resources
- Discharge planning from healthcare, foster care and correctional facilities
- Money to cover facility operating costs

Section 4 – Recommendations

The local homeless coalitions were asked to provide their ideas for state government action to reduce homelessness. These suggestions address financial and policy considerations. Greater funding from state government is sought by our local partners. The most frequent proposal was for the state to remove the cap on the documentary tax proceeds allowed to go to the affordable housing trust funds. Ten coalitions cited this issue. Other areas for increased state financing were:

- Prevention assistance
- Affordable housing, including “Housing First” models
- Emergency shelter services and operating costs
- Administrative costs for the continuum of care planning
- General homeless programs, as well as these specific programs
 - Homeless Housing Assistance
 - Homeless Grant in Aid
 - Emergency Financial Assistance for Housing
 - Challenge Grant
- Mental health and substance abuse services
- Community awareness
- Outreach and referral
- Supplemental living expenses for families enrolled in life improvement programs.

For policy and program areas, the most frequent issue cited was the need for the state to adopt a broader definition of homelessness. The coalitions seek to include those persons living in the housing of others, or staying temporarily in motels due to the lack of their own alternative housing arrangement. Other homeless program specific suggestions included block granting the state Challenge and Housing Assistance funds to the continuums, and changing the distribution of coalition staffing grants to stabilize the smaller coalitions.

To address the central issue of affordable housing, the following suggestions were offered:

- More incentives are needed to promote affordable housing stock.
- Maximize the use of current housing resources to serve extremely low-income persons, and special need populations.
- Lower property taxes to make housing less costly.

To address the issue of poverty and low incomes, the coalitions suggest:

- creating and bringing more jobs to the community
- increasing the minimum wage

Other ideas for state policies suggested by our local partners included:

- Creation of mobile medical services units
- Streamlining of existing aid programs, including Food Stamps and Medicaid
- Sanctioning of local governments that criminalize the condition of being homeless.
- Mandating that jails implement discharge planning.

The Department expresses its appreciation to all of the local homeless coalitions for their input into this report.

Appendix I – Homeless by County – 2005 to 2007

DCF District	County	2005 Estimate	2006 Estimate	2007 Count	
1	Escambia	9,100	2,911	1,247	
	Santa Rosa	7,363	2,527	1,192	
	Okaloosa	1,755	2,026	2,110	
	Walton	140	155	69	
	District Totals	18,358	7,619	4,618	
2	Franklin	30	0	39	
	Gadsden	135	139	177	
	Jefferson	42	0	56	
	Leon	739	739	430	
	Liberty	22	0	30	
	Madison	56	0	73	
	Taylor	58	0	75	
	Wakulla	78	0	112	
	Bay	1,051	1,051	312	
	Calhoun	0	0	0	
	Gulf	0	0	0	
	Holmes	0	0	0	
	Jackson	0	0	3	
	Washington	6	0	6	
	District Totals	2,217	1,929	1,313	
	3	Alachua	733	1217	952
		Bradford	133	149	67
Dixie		70	77	0	
Gilchrist		75	86	0	
Levy		380	201	99	
Putnam		170	797	789	
Union		64	79	0	
Columbia		77	208	364	
Hamilton		18	50	83	
Lafayette		10	26	46	
Suwannee		47	134	222	
District Totals		1,777	3,024	2,622	
4	Duval	2,911	2,877	2,613	
	Baker	0	0	0	
	Clay	78	0	103	
	Nassau	0	0	71	
	St. Johns	1,000	997	1,238	
	District Totals	3,989	3,874	4,025	

DCF District	County	2005 Estimate	2006 Estimate	2007 Count
7	Orange	6,500	6,500	1,473
	Osceola	1,000	1,300	514
	Seminole	1,300	1,500	568
	Brevard	2,300	1,600	1,287
	District Totals	11,100	10,900	3,842
8	DeSoto	136	644	659
	Glades	7	50	61
	Hendry	218	448	426
	Lee	2,056	2,078	2,382
	Charlotte	4,793	3,314	730
	Collier	418	513	414
	District Totals	7,628	7,067	4,672
9	Palm Beach	2,697	1,002	1,766
10	Broward	2,286	3,314	5,218
11	Miami-Dade	5,160	4,709	4,392
	Monroe	981	981	1,121
	District Totals	6,141	5,690	5,513
12	Volusia	2,486	2,505	2,483
	Flagler	181	191	207
	District Totals	2,667	2,696	2,690
13	Citrus	461	498	856
	Hernando	409	452	241
	Lake	331	395	878
	Sumter	66	68	44
	Marion	1,954	2,149	458
	District Totals	3,221	3,562	2,477
14	Hardee	24	749	679
	Highlands	508	436	519
	Polk	749	801	817
	District Totals	1,281	1,986	2,015
15	Indian River	402	741	572
	Martin	495	759	521
	Okeechobee	28	296	316
	St. Lucie	676	813	641
	District Totals	1,601	2,609	2,050

DCF District	County	2005 Estimate	2006 Estimate	2007 Count
Suncoast	Hillsborough	8,598	8,598	9,532
	Manatee	1,419	6,722	487
	Pinellas	3,786	4,385	4,680
	Pasco	4,194	3,677	2,260
	Sarasota	431	7,253	388
	Region Totals	18,428	30,635	17,347
STATEWIDE TOTALS		83,391	85,907	60,168

The following coalitions provided this data:

EscaRosa Coalition on the Homeless
Homeless and Hunger Coalition of Northwest Florida
Highlands County Coalition for the Homeless
Okaloosa Walton Homeless Continuum of Care
Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness
Charlotte County Homeless Coalition
Collier County Hunger and Homeless Coalition
Emergency Services and Homeless Coalition of St. Johns
Marion County Homeless Coalition
Coalition to End Homelessness (Broward)
Volusia/Flagler County Coalition for the Homeless
Treasure Coast Homeless Service Council, Inc.
United Way of Suwannee Valley
Southernmost Homeless Assistance League
Homeless Coalition of Polk County
Pinellas County Coalition for the Homeless
Coalition for the Homeless of Pasco County
Mid Florida Homeless Coalition, Inc.
Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust
Lee County
Big Bend Homeless Coalition, Inc.
Emergency Services & Homeless Coalition of Jacksonville
Homeless Services Network of Central Florida, Inc.
Alachua County Hunger and Homeless Coalition
Homeless Coalition of Palm Beach County
Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County
Brevard County, Housing and Human Services

