REGIONAL STREET OUTREACH FRAMEWORK

An in-depth dive into the Homeless Services goal area of Homeward Adams: The Homelessness Reduction Strategic Framework.

Prepared by: Community Safety & Welling-Being at Adams County Government on behalf of the Adams County Street Outreach Network.

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OVERVIEW

> " People need basic necessities like food and a place to live before attending to anything less critical, such as getting a job, budgeting properly, or attending to substance use issues"
>
> *– National Alliance to End Homelessness*

BACKGROUND

Street Outreach is a tremendously important factor in the movement to end unsheltered homelessness. In many ways, street outreach workers are like first responders—often making the first contact with our neighbors in crisis. According to Adams County's Homeless Management Information System (2022), the most common causes of homelessness include violence, lack of social support, and financial instability (see below). Street outreach workers address these three causes by building relationships, helping people increase their income, and helping them apply for affordable housing.

PURPOSE OF FRAMEWORK

The Regional Street Outreach Framework was created with input from the Adams County Street Outreach Network (The Network) to provide information about the state of unsheltered homelessness and how to collaboratively end unsheltered homelessness. This framework was designed for decision-makers that intend to leverage their resources as part of a larger, regional movement.

HOMEWARD ADAMS GOAL AREAS

Homelessness Prevention

Homeless Services

Strengthen the Housing Continuum

The Regional Street Outreach Framework is in alignment with Homeward Adams 2.0. This framework dives deep into Homeless Services goal area by focusing on providing services for people who have already become homeless.

OVERVIEW
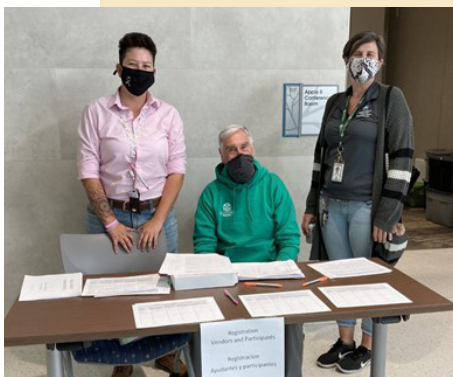
VISION & MISSION

Vision

An Adams County where unsheltered homelessness is rare, brief, and one-time.

Mission

To provide upward mobility for all people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in Adams County

THE NETWORK

Adams County has a robust and growing street outreach network. As of August 2023, all of our municipalities have staff that directly interface with people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. As of 2023, Adams County is the only suburban county in the Denver Metro Area to have full geographic street outreach coverage. This means that every person experiencing unsheltered homelessness has a dedicated point of contact to help them meet their basic needs. Although the Adams County Street Outreach Network (The Network) has been highly regarded in the region, it is an uphill battle to ensure our community members have access to food, water, shelter, medical care, and social support. This framework outlines our significant progress as well as our ongoing needs and path forward.

NUMBER OF STREET OUTREACH WORKERS
in Adams County, Colorado
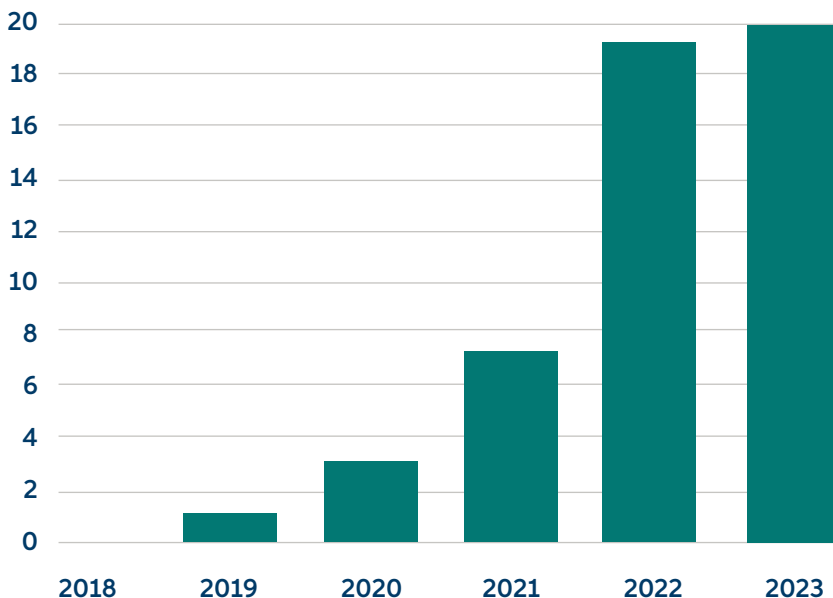
Five
Street outreach volunteers.

Nine
Municipal and nonprofit street outreach workers.

THE NEED

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THE NEED

TOP REASONS WHY PEOPLE EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS

1 RELATIONSHIP PROBLEM OR FAMILY BREAKUP

2 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

3 ASKED TO LEAVE OR EVICTED

4 LOST JOB AND COULD NOT FIND WORK

5 UNABLE TO PAY RENT OR THE MORTGAGE

* Based on 2022 Homeless Management Information System intake data of 1,157 people experiencing homelessness in Adams County.

PRIORITY UNSHELTERED SUBPOPULATIONS

Veterans

Unaccompanied Youth

Seniors and People with Disabilities

People Fleeing Domestic Violence

These priority subpopulations are in no particular order and do not detract from other prevalent populations in need of services including but not limited to unmarried couples, couples without children, and single adults (especially single men). Services must be available for these populations to end homelessness.

THE NEED

Adams County is experiencing a poverty and homelessness crisis.

Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) March 2023 data indicate that there are approximately 4,561 people experiencing homelessness in Adams County and our hotel voucher data reveals that at least 800 people experienced unsheltered homelessness at least once during the 2022-2023 cold weather season. Although our data indicate that homelessness has decreased by up to 40% overall between 2020 and 2022, unsheltered homelessness continues to increase. Roughly 20% of our unsheltered population is chronically homeless and about 33% have a disabling condition making upward mobility difficult without the support of street outreach staff.

4,561+ | people experiencing homelessness in Adams County.

800 | people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in Adams County.

THE NEED

EXISTING REGIONAL STREET OUTREACH RESOURCES

Below are existing resources that serve people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. This information is included to establish a baseline of what resources and services are currently being offered to understand what is still needed.

TRANSPORTATION | When bus passes are not sufficient, the county offers Lyft rides to emergency shelter, public benefits appointments, job interviews, food pantries, and more. Nonprofit and municipal street outreach workers are able to dispatch rides at no-cost.

NAVIGATE ADAMS: RESOURCE FAIRS | On a quarterly basis, the county coordinates resource fairs across Adams County for people experiencing homelessness and extremely low-income populations.

CENTRAL STORAGE UNIT | The county maintains and stocks a central storage unit that is accessible to The Network to take and share resources for people experiencing homelessness.

HOUSING NAVIGATION CENTER(S) | Almost Home, Inc. has a Housing Navigation Center for people experiencing housing instability and has co-located the Housing Navigation Center in the Adams County Human Services Center. People can drop in for support during standard business hours.

POINT-IN-TIME COUNT | The Point-in-Time (PIT) count in an annual census of people experiencing homelessness. The county coordinates the PIT in tandem with nonprofit and municipal providers

SEVERE WEATHER ACTIVATION PROGRAM (SWAP) | SWAP is a hotel/motel voucher program for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness during severe weather. Almost Home activates SWAP when it is below 32 degrees and wet and 20 degrees and dry. The county and Almost Home coordinate The Network to conduct intake in "the field."

MOBILE SHOWERS AND LAUNDRY | Mobile sanitation services are available weekly to clients experiencing unsheltered homelessness to keep them clean, healthy, and confident in applying for housing and employment opportunities.

POCKET DIRECTORIES | The county encourages navigators, outreach workers, police, and park rangers to distribute resource guides for people experiencing homelessness in Adams County.

SAFE PARKING | Adams County currently has two small safe parking lots in the City of Commerce City to provide a safe, regulated, overnight spaces for people living in their vehicles as well as access to sanitation services and case management.

MAIL ACQUISITION ASSISTANCE | The county has teamed up with the Crossroads Community Center in the City of Northglenn to securely store and distribute mail on behalf of people without an address.

IDENTIFICATION ACQUISITION | Colorado Legal Services' New ID Project helps people experiencing homelessness regain valid identification.

RESPITE HOUSING | Almost Home and the Brighton Housing Authority place people in multi-week hotel stays so long as they are either fleeing domestic violence or experiencing situational homelessness.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Based on feedback from people experiencing homelessness and our programmatic data, the below needs are not currently being offered by Adams County nonprofits or municipalities. Our goal is for all members of The Network to work with their respective agency to fill these gaps in services. Think of the below as a menu of options that your agency can pick from to help the region reduce unsheltered homelessness.

MOVING EXPENSE ASSISTANCE

Often, people experiencing homelessness cannot afford a moving truck, movers, or furniture for their new housing.

POTENTIAL SOLUTION | Moving expense assistance fund

AUTO REPAIR

The majority of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness live in their vehicles. When these vehicles break down, the fixes are often too expensive.

POTENTIAL SOLUTION | Work with an auto mechanic to provide low- or no-cost repairs to vehicles that could remain operational for occupants.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND DISABILITY INSURANCE APPLICATION ASSISTANCE

Many people experiencing homelessness have a disability but do not know how to apply or appeal.

POTENTIAL SOLUTION | SSI and SSDI application assistance

DAY SHELTER

Adams County and our municipalities have rules that prohibit camping, loitering, and trespassing; however, when law enforcement asks these community members to move, they have nowhere to send them.

POTENTIAL SOLUTION | A day shelter campus, or a central hub where community members can access resources and spend time.

STREET OUTREACH HOT-LINE

Establish a Street Outreach Hotline for Adams County. Currently, people experiencing unsheltered homelessness are calling one Navigator regardless of their workload and whether they are on the clock.

POTENTIAL SOLUTION | Established a timed hot-line that forwards calls to the appropriate case manager based on their unique schedule and workload.

NO-COST STORAGE

People experiencing unsheltered homelessness have nowhere to store their possessions unless they are able to afford a storage unit.

POTENTIAL SOLUTION | A regulated unit where valuable items can be stored when the community member accesses shelter.

MOBILE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Approximately 20% of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness report having a mental health concern, but few receive consistent support, therapy, or medication.

POTENTIAL SOLUTION | A mobile mental health unit, co-response team, and/or automated text message program focused on mental health support.

AUTOMATED TEXT MESSAGING SYSTEM

Most people experiencing unsheltered homelessness have cell phones. Often, we do not have time to connect with residents individually.

POTENTIAL SOLUTION | An automated system can increase knowledge and boost mental health by offering encouraging messages and educating residents about community resources.

GAP FUNDING

The main source of street outreach funding Adams County receives is through the Emergency Solutions Grant which has very distinct rules and regulations. There is a need for more flexible funding.

POTENTIAL SOLUTION | Gap funding that can be used by the network when all other options have been exhausted.

NO-COST PET CARE

Many people experiencing unsheltered homelessness have pets but cannot afford to care for them when they are unwell.

POTENTIAL SOLUTION | Work with a veterinary clinic or animal shelter to create a no-cost program to address non-surgical health needs of pets.

TIMELINE & GOALS

Phase 1 – Improve Existing & Approved Programs
Phase 2 - Reduce Caseloads and Add Programs
Phase 3 - Achieve Homelessness Reduction Benchmarks

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TIMELINE & GOALS

All members of The Network should collaborate to reach the below goals to improve our quality of service and reduce unsheltered homelessness. Although some of these efforts will be led by Adams County, all nonprofits and municipalities are encouraged to leverage their respective resources to meet the below goals.

PHASE 1 - RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Deadline	Goal	Status
2021-2022 *cold weather season*	**STOP DEATHS DUE TO EXTREME WEATHER EXPOSURE** **Note:** Ensure the SWAP does not run out of hotel/motel vouchers. No community member should fear for their life due to lack of shelter.	**COMPLETED**
JUNE 2022	**LAUNCH PROGRAMS APPROVED FOR FUNDING** **Note:** Launch Northglenn Winter Housing Program, Smart Benches, Long-Distance Travel Fund, and American Rescue Fund programs.	**COMPLETED**
JUNE 2022	**ALMOST HOME'S HOUSING NAVIGATION CENTER** **Note:** Co-locate Almost Home's Housing Navigation Center in the Human Services Center. Establish a drop-in site for housing, employment, and public benefits application assistance in the Human Services Center.	**COMPLETED**
JULY 2022	**FULL STREET OUTREACH COVERAGE** **Note:** *Full geographic coverage:* All jurisdictions have a point-of-contact for people experiencing homelessness. *Full schedule coverage:* There is a point-of-contact on weekends and weekdays.	**COMPLETED**
MAY 2023	**THREE MOBILE SERVICES SITES** **Note:** Establish at least three Mobile Showers and Laundry host sites. Adams County currently has one host site at the Crossroads Community Center in Northglenn, one at the Human Services Center in Westminster, and an occasional site at ACCESS Housing in Commerce City.	**IN PROGRESS**
JAN. 2024	**THREE SAFE PARKING LOTS** **Note:** Increase the number of safe parking lots in Adams County to at least three. As of Dec. 2021, Adams County does not have a safe, regulated space to serve people living in their vehicles.	**IN PROGRESS**

Response options may include not started, in progress, and completed. Assume all rows that are not indicated are "not started"

TIMELINE & GOALS

PHASE 2 - REDUCE CASELOADS AND ADD PROGRAMS

Deadline	Goal	Status
NOV. 2023	**INCREASE THE NUMBER OF NAVIGATORS** **Note:** Ensure that all municipalities have at least two Navigators to be able to conduct outreach in pairs.	IN PROGRESS
JUNE. 2023	**INTERMEDIARY FOR AMERICORPS VISTA MEMBERS** **Note:** Adams County to serve as an intermediary for AmeriCorps VISTA members. Manage the application and reporting process and pass the VISTAs onto other homeless-serving organizations to increase their capacity.	IN PROGRESS
DEC. 2023	**REDUCE THE CASELOADS OF NAVIGATORS** **Note:** Reduce the caseloads of Navigators to 40 or less. Reduced caseloads will provide a higher quality of service.	NOT STARTED
MAY 2023- MAY 2024	**LAUNCH NEW PROGRAMS** **Note:** Implement potential solutions to identified needs including moving expense assistance, social security application assistance, day shelter, an outreach outline, no-cost storage, mobile mental health services, an automated text messaging system, and gap funding.	NOT STARTED
MARCH 2024	**ELIMINATE THE SHELTER BED DEFICIT** **Note:** As of March 2023, Adams County has a 570 shelter bed deficit.	NOT STARTED
JULY 2024	**SHELTER AND TRANSITIONAL HOUSING RESOURCES** **Note:** Ensure there are adequate shelter and transitional housing resources for historically underserved populations. Ensure there are shelter options for people who have been justice-involved, people with pets, couples without children, and people with disabilities who cannot work.	NOT STARTED

TIMELINE & GOALS

PHASE 3 - ACHIEVE HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION BENCHMARKS

Deadline	Goal	Status
2023	**FUNCTIONALLY END UNSHELTERED VETERAN HOMELESSNESS** **Note:** Use the national Built for Zero model. As of March 2023, there are at least 60 veterans experiencing homelessness in Adams County.	**IN PROGRESS**
2025	**CUT UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS IN ADAMS COUNTY IN HALF** **Note:** As of March 2023, there are approximately 800 people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in Adams County.	**NOT STARTED**
2030	**FUNCTIONALLY END UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS** **Note:** Functional zero means making homelessness rare, brief, and one-time. **2024:** Functionally end unsheltered homelessness for unaccompanied youth **2025:** Functionally end unsheltered homelessness for senior citizens **2026:** Functionally end unsheltered homelessness for people who are fully disabled according to the SSA	**NOT STARTED**

> " A chronically homeless person costs the taxpayer an average of $35,578 per year. This study shows how costs on average are reduced by 49.5% when they are placed in supportive housing—a net savings of roughly $4,800 per year per person."
>
> *– National Alliance to End Homelessness*

APPENDIX

Regional Best Practices
Recommended Roles for The Network
Recommended Regional Street Outreach Training

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APPENDIX

REGIONAL BEST PRACTICES

HOUSING FIRST | An evidence-based strategy that focuses on housing as the first step toward stability and acknowledges that without housing, other interventions will not be as effective. Housing First programs are no- and low-barrier; allow for self-determination; have an individualized, recovery orientation; and allow for community integration.

MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING | A strategy that encourages a behavioral change by asking questions that prompt a community member to focus on positive outcomes of a behavioral change. For example, when trying to encourage a community member to get a COVID-19 vaccine, avoid asking them "Why not get the vaccine?" and instead ask, "How would getting the vaccine positively impact the other people sleeping in your encampment?"

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE | Poverty and homelessness are an experience of trauma. Trauma-informed care assumes all people experiencing unsheltered homelessness are actively undergoing trauma-responses, and thus, practitioners should avoid re-traumatizing them and focus on healing and recovery. For example, write down instructions for a community member rather than expecting them to remember them. Trauma negatively impacts short-term memory, so reference material is important.

HARM REDUCTION | A strategy to educate and regulate behaviors rather than enforcing "black and white" policies. This strategy emerged from the substance use recovery practice but can be applied more widely. For example, instead of reporting a person experiencing homelessness involved in sex work to law enforcement, provide them no-cost contraception, sexual health education, emergency phone numbers, and information on other potential employment opportunities, if they are interested.

SET BOUNDARIES | Boundaries are incredibly important in street outreach. Our work is different because navigators must ask extremely personal questions of strangers. Our interactions are almost immediately intimate, and for that reason, we need to establish clear boundaries at the beginning, middle, and end of interactions. For example, if a community member texts an outreach worker after hours and it is not an emergency, wait until the morning to respond.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS | Although people experiencing homelessness are more likely to be a victim of a crime than a perpetrator, street outreach has inherent risks. When entering a situation, be prepared for the worst but do not expect it. For example, before approaching a community member, note the location of exit points and communication devices.

DE-ESCALATION | If a community member is agitated, work to de-escalate rather than escalate the situation. For example, if a community member is angry because they were denied housing for a past criminal charge, be calm, validate their experience and feelings, actively listen, and ask them how you can support them. If they want to be left alone, leave them alone.

BALANCE POWER DYNAMICS | Street outreach workers have inherent power in interactions with people experiencing homelessness. Often, people experiencing homelessness are skeptical of street outreach workers for good reason. Avoid reinforcing the power differentials as much as possible. For example, dress down, not up.

APPENDIX

REGIONAL BEST PRACTICES

The following list of tasks and duties are recommended to clarify emphasis of each unique position within The Network. However, these roles can be adapted to best meet the needs of the municipality.

MOST HELPFUL | Best | Better | Good | Not Recommended | **LEAST HELPFUL**

✓ TASK/DUTIES	Homelessness Coordinators/ Administrators	Navigators Outreach Workers	Outreach Volunteers
DIRECT CLIENT ASSISTANCE	Good	Best	Best
COLLECT CLIENT INFORMATION	Good	Best	Best
DISTRIBUTE STREET OUTREACH GEAR	Good	Best	Best
TRACK HOURS FOR GRANT MATCHING	Best	Good	Best
ACCOMPANY OTHER STREET OUTREACH WORKERS AS NEEDED	Good	Best	Best
ATTEND RELEVANT COMMITTEES AND COALITIONS	Good	Best	Good
ANALYZE HOMELESSNESS SYSTEMS	Best	Better	Not Recommended
HMIS DATA ENTRY	Good	Best	Not Recommended
DISTRIBUTE HOTEL VOUCHERS	Good	Best	Not Recommended
LOCATE HOST SITES FOR SERVICES	Best	Better	Not Recommended
IDENTIFY GAPS IN SERVICES	Best	Best	Not Recommended
APPLY FOR FUNDING TO FILL GAPS IN SERVICES	Best	Better	Not Recommended
WORK WITH EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TO APPROVE PROJECTS	Best	Better	Not Recommended
FOCUS ON COMMUNICATIONS, MARKETING, AND PUBLIC RELATIONS	Best	Good	Not Recommended
INFORM THE OUTREACH NETWORK ABOUT CHANGES TO PROGRAMS	Best	Best	Not Recommended
FACILITATE RELEVANT COMMITTEES AND COALITIONS	Best	Better	Not Recommended
COORDINATE TIMES FOR VOLUNTEERS TO SERVE	Better	Best	Not Recommended
COORDINATE THE POINT-IN-TIME COUNT FOR JURISDICTION	Better	Best	Not Recommended
COORDINATE RESOURCE FAIRS	Best	Best	Not Recommended
MANAGE BY-NAME LIST	Best	Good	Not Recommended
COORDINATE EDUCATIONAL SERIES FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS	Best	Good	Not Recommended
CONTRACT OTHER AGENCIES TO PROVIDE SERVICES	Best	Good	Not Recommended

APPENDIX

RECOMMENDED REGIONAL STREET OUTREACH TRAINING

The following are recommendations of training for each unique role within The Network. Although all of the training below could be beneficial regardless of role, certain training makes more sense for certain positions. This is not an exhaustive list, but rather a baseline.

EXCELLENT USE OF TIME | Best | Better | Good | Not Recommended | POOR USE OF TIME

STREET OUTREACH TRAINING RECOMMENDATIONS

TRAINING NAME	COMPETENCY	HOMELESSNESS COORDINATORS/ ADMINISTRATOR	NAVIGATORS/ OUTREACH WORKERS	OUTREACH VOLUNTEERS
STREET OUTREACH ORIENTATION	▸ Situational Awareness ▸ Collaboration	Better	Best	Best
MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID	▸ Mental Health	Best	Best	Better
CPR/FIRST AID/AED	▸ Emergency Medical	Good	Best	Better
ADMINISTERING NARCAN	▸ Judgment	Good	Best	Good
HOMELESS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS (HMIS)	▸ Data Accuracy ▸ System Knowledge	Better	Best	Not Recomended
COORDINATED ENTRY (ONEHOME)	▸ Self-Knowledge ▸ Responding sensitively	Better	Best	Not Recomended
COMMUNITY RESOURCE NAVIGATION	▸ Resource & Referrals ▸ Effective Communication	Best	Best	Better