

Good News from the Field:

# Homelessness in Florida is on the Decline

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In January 2017, communities across the United States conducted a one-day Point in Time (PIT) Count of people experiencing homelessness – staying in shelters, on the streets, and in encampments. These PIT Counts were coordinated through local homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) organizations using methods outlined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Nationally, there were 553,742 individuals identified as homeless on that cold night, with 35% of those staying outdoors without shelter. To put the numbers in perspective, for every 10,000 people in the United States, 17 were homeless.

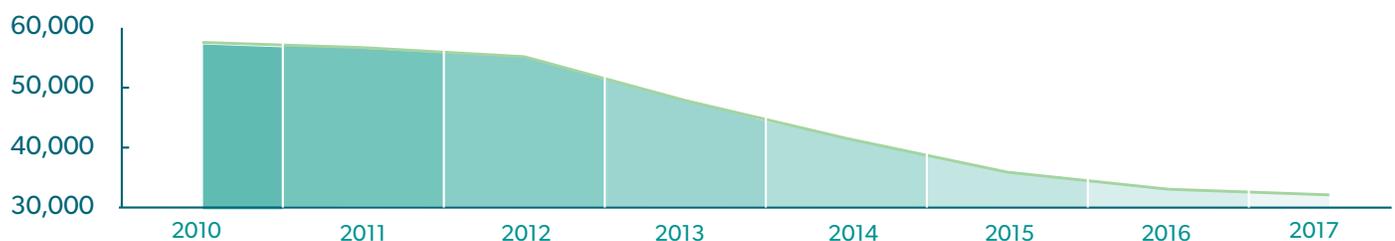
Florida's 2017 Point in Time Count identified 32,109 people who were literally homeless the January PIT Count night. While Florida continues to have the third highest homeless population in the nation behind New York and California, our decrease in homelessness continues year-to-year. In fact,

homeless PIT counts in Florida reflect a statewide decrease of 44% from 2010 to 2017.

Florida's significant reductions in homelessness is likely due to three causes.

1. First, the economy has improved since 2010. Since homelessness is primarily due to a mismatch between income and housing costs, increasing income and employment opportunities result in decreased homelessness.

## HOMELESSNESS IN FLORIDA: POINT IN TIME COUNTS 2010-2017



"The workshop equipped us to write our vision and strategic plan."

"This was outstanding and the fluid discussion held my attention throughout. The wealth of resources discussed and the practicality of the applications was exceptional. Thank you, thank you!"

"We can rethink some of our practices to better align with HUD requirements and be more efficient in our outcomes."

"The information from the workshop will help me be a more informed board member."

"I am going to incorporate some of the training's handouts into our own training for new employees."

"The course will help us re-evaluate why we have the shelter rules we have. The information will help me to be more housing-focused."

"This session was informative and specific to housing services for the homeless and I like the focus on housing outcomes!"

"I came away with an extensive to-do list of ways to improve my organization."

"The presenters were knowledgeable and clear with their message."

"Awesome! Nicely done!"

2. Second, the Florida Legislature has increased appropriations to preserve and create affordable housing, including housing for those with special needs and very low incomes. Again, because homelessness results from housing costs that are out-of-reach to those with lower incomes, increasing the stock of affordable housing reduces homelessness.
3. Third, in recent years Florida communities have embraced evidence-based best practices such as Housing First, collaborative case management, and rapid rehousing. Nationwide, these models have proven successful in decreasing homelessness.

Thanks to funding from the State of Florida and other thought leaders, the Florida Housing Coalition has actively engaged with Florida communities to implement effective housing crisis response systems and best practices. To this end, we have partnered with nearly all of the 27 Continuums of Care in Florida to assist them in their tireless efforts to reduce homelessness.

Our goal is to build stronger Continuums of Care through good governance and strategic collaborations. To accomplish this, we sit down with case managers and CEOs to discuss best practices, effective solutions, better use of funding and resources, and opportunities to improve the coordination of efforts. We also work with local governments, private philanthropic partners, and non-profits to show them how collaborating with CoC's can help them reach their common goal – to effectively reduce homelessness for families, young adults and youth, and chronically homeless individuals with disabilities.

Statewide these efforts are paying off. Nearly every community in our state has seen a significant reduction in homelessness, leading Florida to be recognized by HUD as one of the top five states to reduce homelessness in the past decade. However, our success has not been universal. Some Florida CoCs have seen an increase in homelessness along with a very high percentage of people who are unsheltered or have experienced homelessness long-term. Now is the time to redouble our efforts to assist those CoCs and communities that have not fully embraced best practices or employed effective solutions.

The State of Florida continues to invest in affordable housing, training and technical assistance, and in the work of the Florida Housing Coalition which has resulted in this good news. If we are to not only maintain these gains, but also continue to move the needle in the right direction of effectively addressing homelessness in every community in Florida, continued support by the State, private partners, local governments, and nonprofits is critical. **HNN**



SUSAN POURCIAU

**Susan Pourciau, PhD** is the Director of Homeless Training and Technical Assistance for the Florida Housing Coalition. Susan's areas of expertise include housing first, Continuum of Care (CoC) governance, homeless system design, data analysis, rapid rehousing, CoC funding, and permanent supportive housing. Prior to joining the Florida Housing Coalition, Dr. Pourciau was the Executive Director of several human services nonprofit organizations and was on the faculty of Florida State University. Susan has a doctorate in Accounting and a law degree from Duke University.



"The presenters were well spoken, organized and had timely information to give regarding current issues facing not only Florida but the entire country. It would be nice to have a full day seminar with this presenters on this topic."

"Excellent comprehensive information. Cost savings info on housing homeless was very interesting and encouraging."

"The presenters offered information we can immediately use in our agency."

"Informative and nice to hear a more client centered approach to meeting needs for homeless clients."

"The workshop gave us ideas on how to create a better system."

"I just wanted to say a big 'Thank-you' for the trainings. I have continued to have great reviews and individuals, including myself, have already begun to apply different aspects of what we learned."

"Enlightening"

"The presenters were excellent. I enjoyed the training tremendously."

"The best training I have had in a long time. Thank you."