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Tulsa’s Veteran Homelessness Rate Lowest in Five Years Despite Tulsa’s Housing Improvements, Overall Homelessness Count Follows National Increase

TULSA, OKLA. – Tulsa’s veteran homeless population decreased by more than 13 percent based on a Thursday, Jan. 28, 2016 Point-in-Time (PIT) survey of those staying in emergency shelters, in public facilities, or living on the street. Homelessness overall increased by almost 13 percent despite housing efficiencies and improvements developed since May 2015. The annual PIT survey is conducted by the Tulsa City & County Continuum of Care (CoC) which is also known as A Way Home for Tulsa (AWH4T). The 2016 survey was conducted by more volunteers and involved more organizations than before, ensuring a more accurate count than in the past.

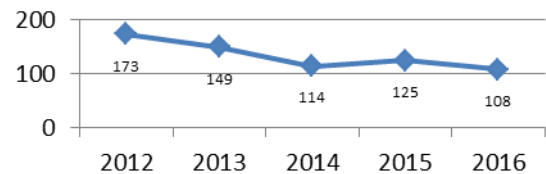
“We have seen so many improvements over the past 12 months,” said Jeff Jaynes, chair of AWH4T and executive director for Restore Hope. “Because of initiatives like Zero: 2016 Tulsa, our agencies are collaborating more efficiently than ever before. We’re housing 150 percent more people each month now than we were in February of last year. Unfortunately, our shelters are serving more people and families in need than ever before. It’s difficult to see the overall numbers go up, but we have multiple measurement tools showing how many more people we are helping. Together, we’re going to keep working toward making homelessness in Tulsa rare, brief and nonrecurring.”

Point In Time: All Homeless, including Situational

Of the overall homeless population surveyed, 811 people, including 114 children, were staying in emergency shelters, public facilities or on the street during the count.

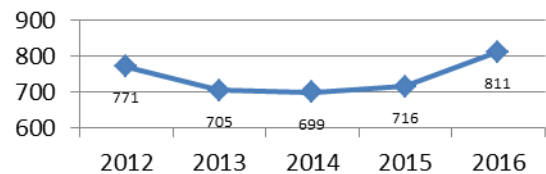
“This year’s increase has similarities to the spike we saw in 2008 during the last recession,” said Keith Anderson, a business consultant who has managed Tulsa’s PIT survey for the past decade.

Veteran Homelessness

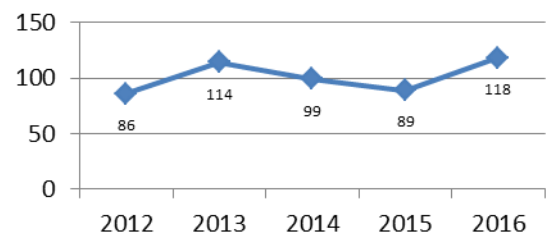


Overall Homelessness

Sheltered and unsheltered only; does not include Safe Haven or Transitional Housing



Chronic Homelessness



Situational homelessness is the status of being forced to live without housing or in a shelter due to a specific emergency, such as a natural disaster, job loss or death of a primary income earner.

Point In Time: Veteran and Chronic Homeless (Zero: 2016)

Tulsa is one of 75 communities participating in Zero: 2016, a national initiative with a goal to find homes for all people who are veterans or chronically homeless. In the first 12 months of the two-year initiative, AWH4T found homes for 298 veterans and 78 individuals who are chronically homeless.

Chronic homelessness is defined as an individual or family with a disabling condition who has been continuously homeless for a year or more or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years that total one year. Veteran homelessness is an individual experiencing homelessness who has served on active duty in the United States Military, regardless of discharge status.

Of those surveyed in January, 118 people were chronically homeless, compared to 89 in 2015, and 99 in 2014. This segment of our population often deals with mental health and/or substance abuse issues and therefore represents the hardest group to place in stable housing. Accordingly, it also costs the most for society to support this segment with services in the interim, which is why the members of AWH4T have focused so intently on eliminating long-term homelessness. While the figures for those considered "chronic" have increased, there are 78 fewer individuals on the streets due to this intense effort.

Likewise, the veteran population, at 108, is the lowest it has been in five years, but AWH4T has found homes for more than three times that number since the Zero:2016 campaign began.

“It’s hard to imagine the state of homelessness in Tulsa without the intense efforts of the AWH4T agencies over the past 12 months,” said Mack Haltom, associate director at the Tulsa Day Center for the Homeless.

2015 Improvements

AWH4T made strides in 2015 including adding 24 more housing units, hiring a Housing Resource Coordinator, and using a By-Name List. All of these changes have resulted in more Tulsans experiencing homelessness moving into housing each month. For example, in January 2015 the agencies found homes for 10 veterans and three people dealing with long-term homelessness. Improvements throughout the year increased that monthly number so that the overall average for the year was more than 31 individuals housed each month, with the most successful month being July with 44 individuals moving into homes.

2016 Opportunities and Outlook

Tulsa needs additional low-cost housing which will support these initiatives twofold: first in preventing a number of people from falling into homelessness and secondly in housing those who do. Increasing AWH4T agencies’ housing portfolio is also necessary to serve all of the individuals currently in need. Lastly, all supporting agencies need more human collateral to improve success rates. The rapid housing improvements of the past year occurred due to increased collaboration, more homes and one extra employee. We are grateful for the additional support from within our community to financially support these necessary advances; however, the need is still great.

“Imagine if every agency could afford one more case manager,” said Haltom.

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Additional Resources (links):

- [How accurate is the Point In Time Count?](#)
 - It is not perfect – especially on newer requirements like the collection of data on unaccompanied youth – but it is the most ambitious and comprehensive count for sheltered and unsheltered homelessness.
- [What is the definition of “ending” homelessness?](#)
 - An end to homelessness means that every community will have a systematic response in place that ensures homelessness is prevented whenever possible or is otherwise a rare, brief, and non-recurring experience.

About A Way Home for Tulsa

A Way Home for Tulsa is a coordinated and integrated cross-sector system of 21 Tulsa-area agencies working to prevent and end homelessness in the Tulsa County metropolitan area. Community Service Council serves as the lead agency of A Way Home for Tulsa, and oversight is provided by a governance council made up of representatives from participating organizations.

About Zero: 2016 Tulsa

Zero: 2016 is a nationwide initiative to end veteran and chronic homelessness; 75 communities are participating including Tulsa. In 2015, AWH4T housed more than 376 vulnerable Tulsans and increased efficiencies to ensure Tulsa becomes a community where homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring. Learn more at www.Zero2016.com.