

# Regional Homelessness Assessment Report



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*This report uses information from the Homeless Missourians Information System (HMIS) to provide a snapshot of the extent and nature of homelessness. Data was compiled from agencies in region 9 for the time period of January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2012. This report also outlines performance measures used to evaluate the effectiveness of homeless service delivery systems.*

## Regional Overview

Region 9 of the Balance of State Continuum of Care covers 12 counties: Barry, Barton, Cedar, Dade, Dallas, Hickory, Lawrence, McDonald, Polk, Stone, Taney and Vernon. According to the 2012 Winter Point-in-Time Sheltered and Unsheltered Homeless Count, 410 people were reported as being homeless with 76 of them not having shelter.

In 2012 there were nine housing programs, not including domestic violence providers, as well as agencies providing prevention-only services. Of these nine programs, five are enrolled in HMIS and contributed data to this report. These programs include:

- Two Shelter Plus Care programs (through the Department of Mental Health with processing centers at Pathways and Ozark Area Community Action Corporation).
- One Housing First permanent housing program (Christian Associates of Table Rock Lake).
- Two transitional housing programs (Christian Associates of Table Rock Lake and Church Army Branson).

Programs currently not enrolled in HMIS include Branson Housing Authority permanent housing, Church Army Branson Peer House transitional housing, Exodus Ministries of Missouri transitional housing and Jacob’s House emergency shelter. Total, these programs account for 222 beds out of 341 available in the region. As a result, HMIS data and this report only accounts for 35 percent of the homeless population in the region.

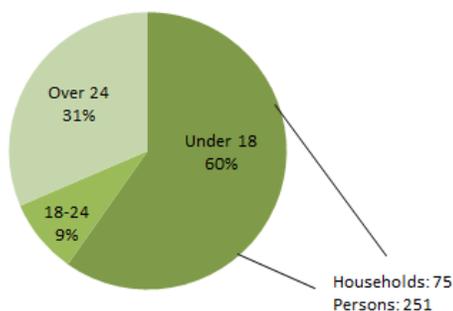
With 65 percent of the available beds *not* tracked in HMIS, funders and the community do not have thorough data to understand the extent of homelessness in the region and evaluate the system of care. More than half of the beds not being tracked in the system are attributed to Church Army Branson’s Peer House transitional housing program.

## Demographics

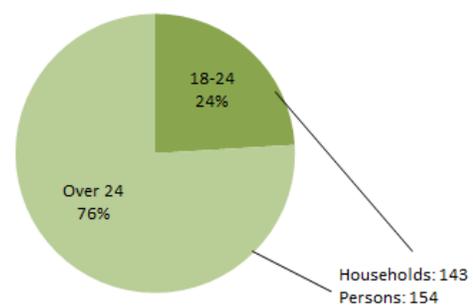
A total of 218 households were housed in region 9 in 2012, accounting for 405 people. This represents roughly 12 percent of all persons served by housing programs and

**Figure 1: HMIS Sheltered Homeless by Household Type and Age, 2012**

### Households with Dependent Children



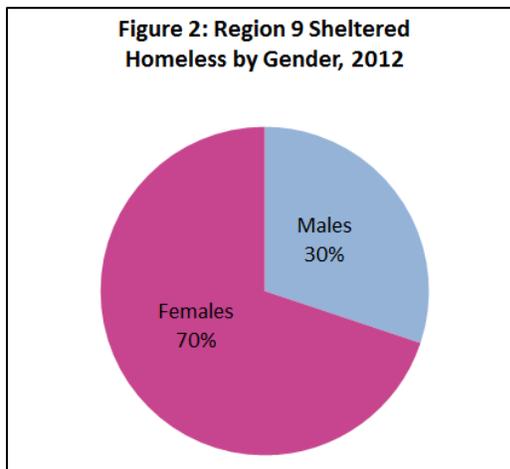
### Households without Dependent Children



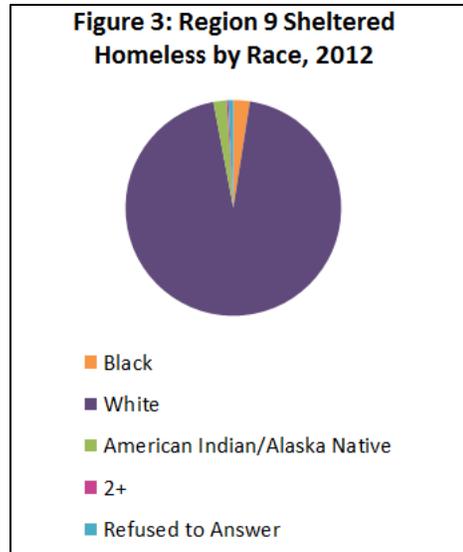
shelters enrolled in HMIS in the continuum. In future reports, demographic information will include data from agencies providing prevention services to show a more complete picture of what homelessness and at-risk homelessness looks like in the region.

Of the 218 households, 75 were households with dependent children and 143 were households without dependent children (see Figure 1). More than half (64%) of those households were part of Church Army Branson’s transitional housing program, which only serves single females. In households with children, children under 18 represented 60 percent of all persons served.

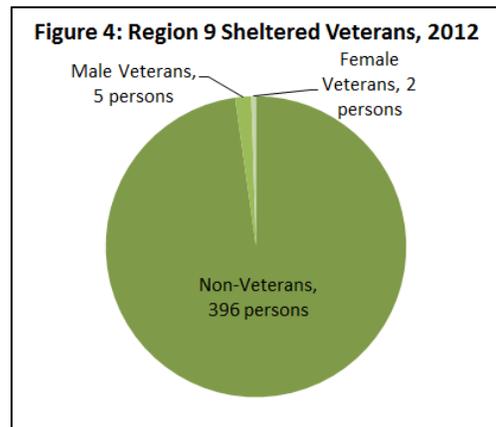
Of the 405 people housed, 70 percent of them were female (see Figure 2). The higher percentage is likely because the transitional housing program tracked by Church Army Branson is targeted to single females. Within the four other programs, females account for about 61 percent of the total population.



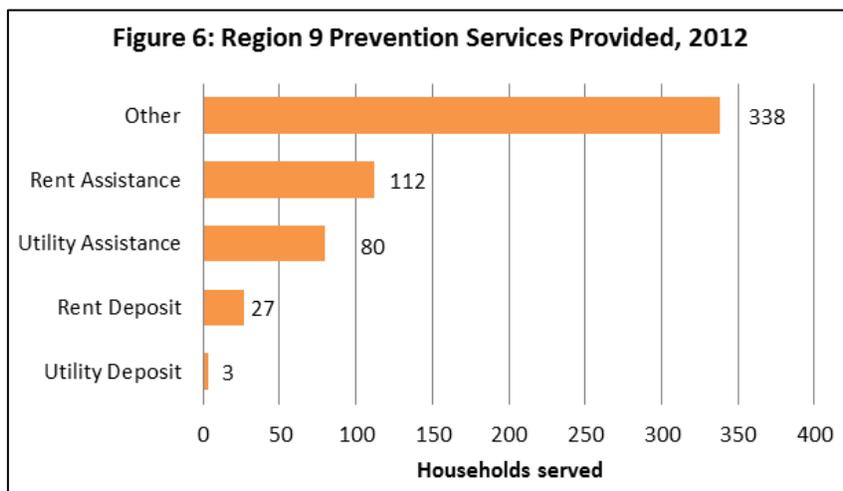
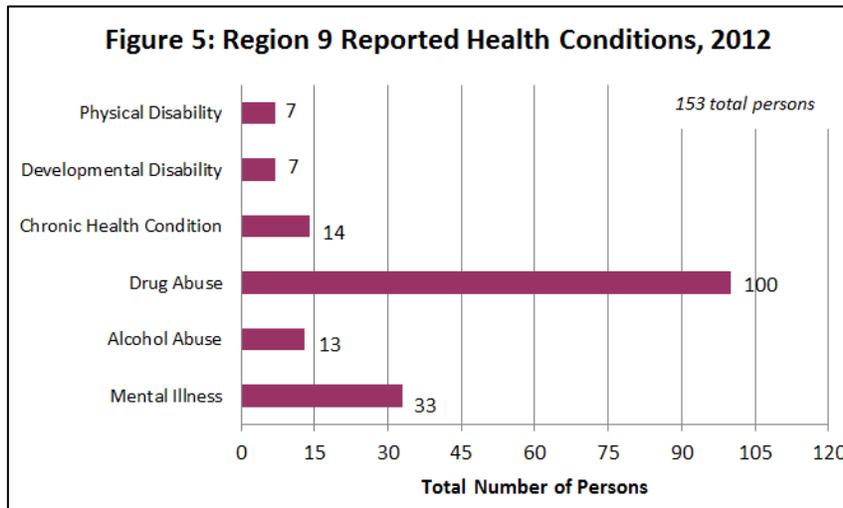
A majority (95%) of all persons served in 2012 reported their race as white (see Figure 3). The remaining 5 percent consisted of black or African American (2.5%), American Indian/Alaska Native (2%) and two or more races (.25%). There were also three clients who refused to answer.



Only a small percentage (1.7%) reported being a veteran (see Figure 4). Of those, 2 were female and 5 were male. The distinction in gender among veterans is a particular area of interest for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) due to the nature of their collaboration with the Department of Veteran Affairs and the efforts to understand the needs of specific subpopulations.



Additional subpopulation data for clients served by housing programs and shelters focuses on health conditions. Of the 405 people served in region 9, 153 reported having some type of health condition (see Figure 5). This reflects 38 percent of the total persons served in 2012.



The most common health condition reported in HMIS was drug abuse, which accounts for one in four persons served by housing programs during the year. This percentage is slightly higher than the continuum’s percentage. At the continuum level, roughly 18 percent of those served by housing programs and shelters reported a drug abuse issue as compared to the 25 percent reported in region 9.

The next most commonly reported health condition was mental illness, reflecting 8 percent of all clients served in region 9. This is nearly double the percentage seen at the continuum level, where 4.5 percent of all clients served reported a mental health condition.

### Prevention Services

Currently there are two agencies in region 9 that offer prevention services and track information in HMIS: Christian Associates of Table Rock Lake and Salvation Army – Branson. Prevention services include rent assistance and deposits, utility assistance and deposits and other services. Other services take into account food pantry items, transportation costs and hotel/motel vouchers.

A total of 560 households, which may include households who have received services multiple times, were assisted in region 9 for a total of \$104,324.38. This accounts for 13.7 percent of the total amount expended for prevention in

the continuum, which is fairly substantial given services are being offered by only two agencies.

The majority of prevention services provided fall under the “Other” category, with most receiving food/grocery assistance from Christian Associates of Table Rock Lake (see Figure 6). The remaining services encompass transportation and medical assistance. This totals \$29,343.64 in the year 2012.

Moving forward, the HMIS Project will be identifying other agencies in the region that also provide prevention services to get a more complete picture of those efforts.

### Reasons for Emergency

Currently there are 31 options in HMIS to indicate a household’s primary reason for emergency. There are also a handful of subsequent reasons that a household can select as secondary and tertiary reasons for experiencing emergency. In HMIS, the “Reasons for Emergency” report pulls on all three of those reasons. As a result, this particular data is not unduplicated. Data is also unduplicated in that a household may have sought services multiple times.

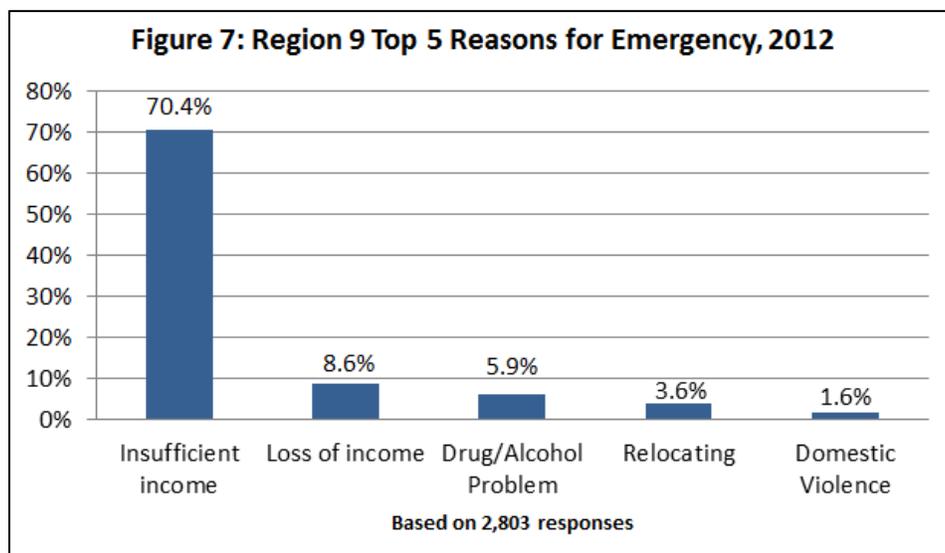
Examining why people seek services – both housing and prevention – allow agencies,

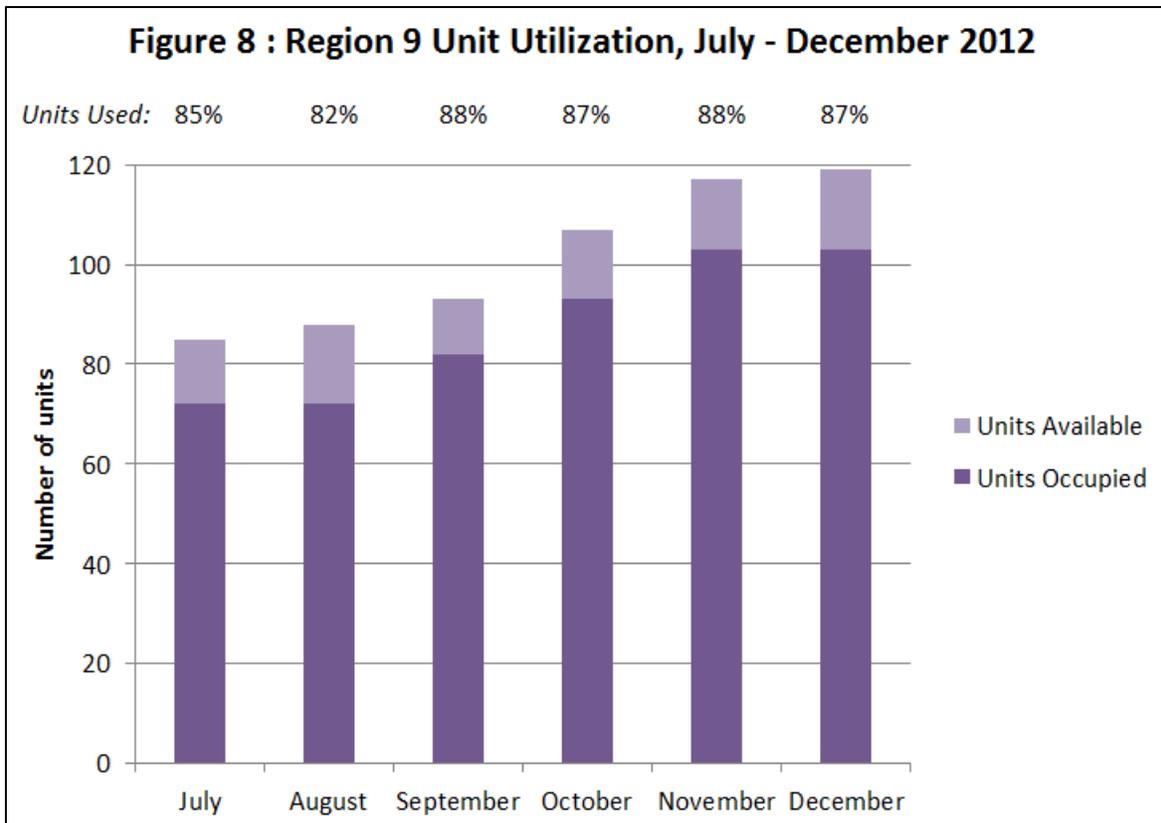
communities and the continuum to look at the needs of the clients. It is also helpful in understanding the causes for emergency and homelessness – whether it is due to financial reasons, health issues or other factors. This may provide some insight to unmet needs as well, pointing to potential gaps in services, such as health care or rent/utility assistance.

In 2012, the most common reason for emergency in was insufficient income, accounting for roughly 53 percent of the respondents. That is also the case for region 9, where more than 70 percent of the responses fell under the category of insufficient income (see Figure 7). The next most common reason for experiencing emergency is loss of income, which is also consistent with data at the continuum level. It is also comparable to data from previous years, which are available through reports on the HMIS Project website.

### Program Utilization

Utilization rates represent the number of units occupied on a given night. In addition to providing useful information to the region and continuum about bed availability or unavailability, utilization rates are the single strongest indicator of HMIS data quality. The rates are calculated on the last Wednesday of each month from July 2012 to December 2012





for the programs enrolled in HMIS. Data from January through June 2012 was presented during September Regional Housing Team Meetings and the report is available on the HMIS Project website.

The capacity for each month fluctuates in region 9 due to Christian Associates of Table Rock Lake phasing out their transitional housing program and replacing it with their Housing First program. While the capacity for the Shelter Plus Care programs may fluctuate as well, the capacity for each month remains the number of units indicated by the grant. Using that number allows the program to show how they are able to utilize their funds to best serve the region.

Overall, the utilization rates fall between 80 and 88 percent (see Figure 8). It is important to note, however, that only 35 percent of the available beds in the region are being tracked in HMIS. Consequently, the utilization rates are not overly telling of the extent of homelessness and need for services in the region.

The unit availability in the region primarily occurs at Church Army Branson’s transitional housing program, which is geared toward single women. The three other permanent housing programs are consistently full.

### **Average Length of Stay for Individuals & Families at Emergency Shelters**

While the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act will provide guidance on how to measure for overall length of homelessness, currently the Balance of State CoC began looking at the average length of stay at emergency shelters as a baseline measure.

Currently HUD identifies high performing communities as ones where the average length of stay at an emergency shelter is 20 days. Communities are also considered high performing if they decrease the average length of stay by 10 percent each year, which is the goal for the Balance of State Continuum.

Baseline measures indicate that individuals generally have a higher average length of stay at shelters, though they are seeing the largest decreases (see Table 1).

	2011	2012 Goal	2012 Actual
Individuals	51.3	46.2 days	38.9 days
Families	36.5	32.9 days	35.9 days

At the continuum level, the goal for individuals' length of stay in 2012 was met. However, for families, the average length of stay only decreased by half a day. This could be because there are fewer emergency shelters serving families in the continuum to help lower the average length of stay.

Moving forward with the goal of reducing the average length of stay by 10 percent each year, the goal for 2013 is 37 days for individuals and 34.1 days for families.

### Reasons for Leaving

Currently there are 11 options in HMIS listed as reasons for leaving a housing program or shelter. Those reasons are divided into positive, negative and other/unknown reasons for leaving. Positive reasons for leaving include left for housing opportunity or completed program.

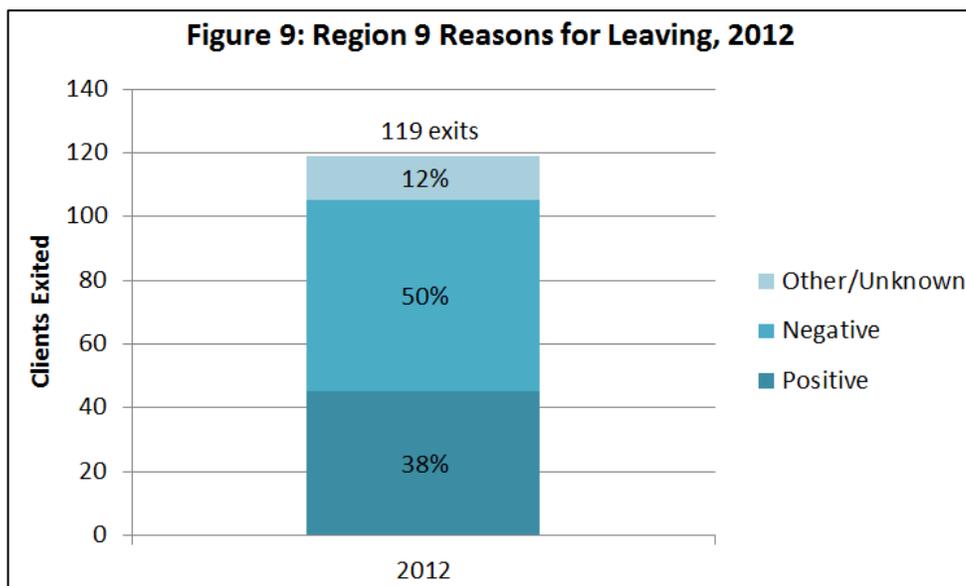
Negative reasons for leaving include such things as non-compliance with project, needs could not be met and disagreement with the rules. Both positive and negative reasons are classified based on what other continuums have previously done, which aided in categorizing the reasons for leaving. Unknown/other reasons for leaving are tracked primarily for data quality purposes.

In region 9, half of the households who exited from the program left for negative reasons (see Figure 9). An additional 12 percent left for other or unknown reasons, which could indicate potential data quality issues.

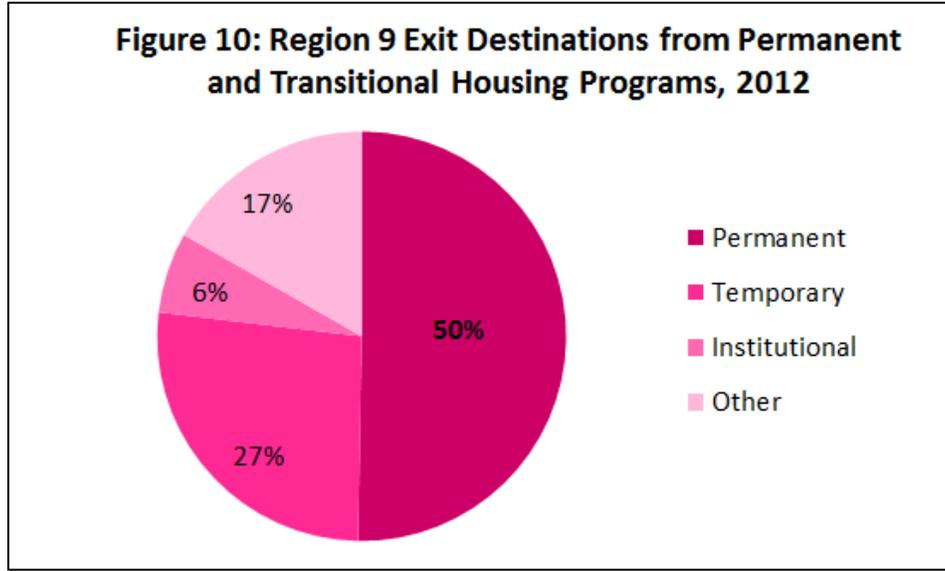
The positive reasons are almost evenly divided between those who left for another housing opportunity and those who completed the program.

### Exit Destinations

Currently in HMIS there are 18 exit destination options for clients leaving a housing program or emergency shelter. Those exit destinations are categorized as being permanent, temporary, institutional or other and are categorized as such based on the new Annual Performance Report (APR).



**Figure 10: Region 9 Exit Destinations from Permanent and Transitional Housing Programs, 2012**



Exit destinations are examined for two reasons. The first is that it provides an opportunity to look at how many clients leave for stable housing situations, which is one of the three main performance measure for permanent housing programs. The second is for data quality purposes, particularly in looking at unknown exit destinations.

In region 9, half the clients who exited went to a permanent housing situation, with a majority of clients moving into a rental with no subsidy or with family members permanently. About one in four clients who exit go to a temporary location, either to a hotel/motel paid by client or temporarily living with family.

### **Moving Forward**

Although this report provides a snapshot of the extent and nature of homelessness in region 9, there are some limitations of the report.

First and foremost, not all programs within the region track their services in HMIS. This report only includes data for agencies enrolled in HMIS and may have data quality issues. This primarily pertains to unknown exit destinations and exiting clients in a timely manner. The HMIS

Project will continue to work with agencies on an individual basis to address any data quality concerns. While the data in this report shows aggregate level information for the region, agencies can request their specific data at any point for further review and analysis.

Additionally, there are system limitations in what data can be pulled from HMIS. The HMIS Project will continue working with MISI to enhance the system to allow more detailed data reporting. In the future, the following changes will be addressed:

- Demographic information will include data from programs providing prevention services.
- Reasons for emergency currently pull for primary, secondary and tertiary reasons, which will be reduced to just the primary reasons.
- Reasons for leaving will be pulled at program-level to account for agencies who serve multiple regions.

As regulations are released with guidance on how to measure performance at the agency and continuum level, such as recidivism and average length of homelessness, this report will be changed to address those measurements.