

# Answers to Community Questions about the Outcomes Report and Cost Data

## General Questions About Populations and Programs

- 1. Where are the transitional housing programs and how many are there in the county; what is the income threshold for transitional housing?** *There are several types of transitional housing programs spread throughout the county, a list of which is updated annually by Eden Information & Referral and in the Housing Inventory Chart for the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Some transitional housing programs are in particular building (as a shelter would be), some transitional housing programs are "scattered site" in multiple houses or apartments; others are subsidy-based, offering a time-limited subsidy in market housing. If transitional housing programs are getting public monies for operation, those programs should not have a minimum income requirement for program participants. For any additional information about Transitional Housing programs, please contact 211.*
- 2. What are the SO (Service Only) programs?** *The Service Only programs are very diverse in nature and include outreach, drop in centers, employment programs, and case management programs not tied to permanent housing. The individual sectors (e.g. employment programs) are small ranging from only two to four programs in each sector. It is extremely difficult to do comparisons within this Service Only grouping of programs that have widely different housing situations of its service users and widely varying array of services.*
- 3. Are registered sex offenders, individuals prohibited from applying for benefits, and other fringe populations included in this data? They need housing and to be part of the community.** *All people entered into the Countywide Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) are accounted for in the outcomes report, regardless of special needs characteristics.*

## General questions about outcomes methodology

- 4. How were issues addressed regarding data containing human error?** *Ongoing efforts regularly occur to insure clean data for all agency and system reports. On a minimum monthly basis, agencies run a defined list of data reports to identify missing data fields, incorrect data, and data that is inconsistent with other data points. HMIS staff monitor those same data quality reports on a monthly basis to ensure the reports are being run and client files corrected. In preparation for the Achieving Outcomes – 2010 Progress Report, the HMIS team invited agencies to validate the outcomes report in ART for accuracy since this was the reporting source for the vast majority of the Report. The ART report was refined based on agency validation and found to accurately portray the outcomes and client data. Some agencies implement chart auditing (matching a random sample of HMIS records with paper files) as an additional procedure to augment the data scrubbing and validation processes currently in place.*
- 5. This Report can be frustrating because it only looks at exit data and very little on current clients. Absolutely!** *Looking at exits only is a limited view of the work of the system of care and leaves some sectors like permanent supportive housing without some valuable outcome data. The work of this year for the HMIS team and EveryOne Home is to expand the report to include data from annual updates and those still active in programs.*
- 6. On the bottom of page 2 in the progress on year one priorities, the fourth bullet says there was an 18% increase of persons exiting to permanent housing. Please explain how this is an 18% increase moving from 28% in 2009 to 33% in 2010. This difference of five points between 2009 and 2010 is an**

18% improvement on the 2009 rate. It is calculated by: (2010 value -2009 value) divided by the 2009 value, multiplied by 100 to convert it to a percent. (33 - 28 = 5) divided by 28, multiplied by 100 equals 17.86% improvement over 2009, rounded to 18%.

### **Types of Permanent Housing (Page 6)**

7. **Clarify the use of the terms permanent housing, permanent supportive housing, market rate, and affordable or subsidized housing.** *In order assure highest data accuracy and understanding of these terms by community members and program staff, a training job aid is being developed to make sure all staff is accurately and consistently labeling housing situations.*

*Permanent housing refers to housing in which a person has legal rights protecting their residency there, usually signified by a lease, an agreement between the landlord and the tenant for exchange of rent payment each month, and unrestricted access into and out of the housing. “Permanent housing” used in this generic way makes no distinction between permanent housing with services or without, nor between subsidized or not.*

*Permanent supportive housing refers to housing that is both subsidized (commonly very deep subsidies where tenants only pay 30% of their income for rent) and has services available to all residents that are designed to promote housing retention and general well being. Permanent supportive housing includes entire building, units, Shelter + Care programs, and other tenant subsidies with services attached.*

*Affordable or subsidized housing offers the tenant share of rent at or below fair market rent due to the significant financial support of the development costs or the ongoing operations costs that keeps the housing unit at a rate much lower than common in the marketplace.*

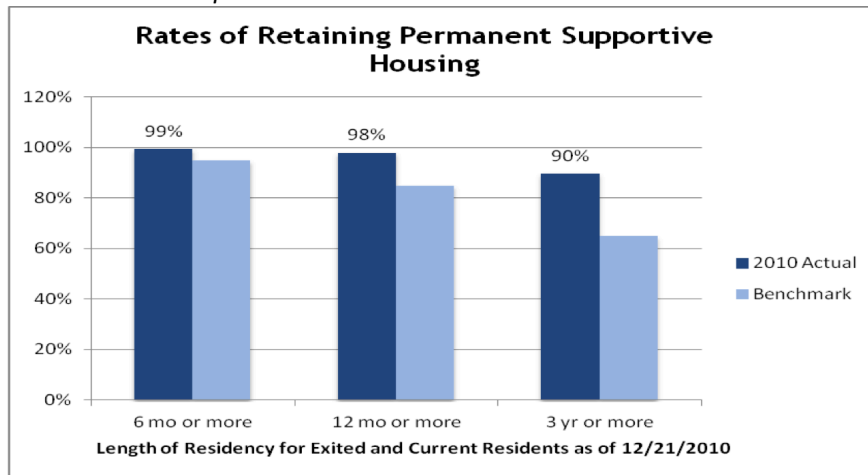
*Market rate housing is permanent housing with no significant subsidies such that the rent is generally reflective of the fair market rent or the common rents in the neighborhood.*

8. **The numbers shown in the Report usually include “Permanent Housing” even if it’s not supportive housing. Why is that?** *The system does indeed look at exits to all types of permanent housing not just permanent supportive housing. People using the programs in our system of care have a broad range of housing needs, and they use a wide range of housing options to end their homelessness. The Report captures all those options.*
9. **The pie chart on page 6 seems a little high for persons leaving to a rental subsidy.** *Of all persons leaving a non-Homeless Prevention Rapid Rehousing Program (HPRP) in 2010, 1844 people went into permanent housing. Of those who went to permanent housing, 21% (20.5%, or 378 persons) exited to a subsidized rental unit that may include senior housing, housing for persons with disabilities without services attached, Below Market Rate Housing, or local housing authority’s “housing projects”.*
10. **What number of people exited to private market rate housing?** *Private market rate housing is the category on page 6 of “rental, no subsidy”. 43% of all exits to permanent housing are to rental units with no subsidy, equating to 787 people.*
11. **How are people with no or low income moving into non subsidized housing in the category of 43% exiting to Rental, no subsidy?** *The Outcomes Report did not further analyze the income sources or amounts for people moving into specific types of permanent housing. No data points are currently available for this question, however, the outcomes development process did uncover many persons with no income in a household with another adult with some source of income. It is logical that a roommate, housemate, or partner with income is one way someone with no or low income can acquire unsubsidized housing.*

- 12. What types of employment or employment resources are those who are exiting to permanent housing participating in or directed toward?** *This data point was not specifically answered or captured in report but could be discussed in peer to peer forums in the future, including in the Brown Bag sessions, to explore strategies for enhancing income and employment and whether additional research is warranted in the community.*
- 13. What is the criteria used by programs to exit someone into unsubsidized housing?** *Please bring this question to the Brown Bag sessions to ask the panelist and other service providers!*

**Retention in Permanent Supporting Housing (Page 6 and 7)**

- 14. How do we track retention?** *The retention in permanent supportive housing is tracked solely in HMIS using the formula prescribed by HUD. This formula has been recently updated by HUD to exclude from the denominator those persons who have lived in PSH for less time than the period being measured. This new guidance has increased our retention rate substantially such that it exceeds the benchmarks at all three intervals. The new chart is pasted below:*



- 15. How long do people keep their housing who exit to places without a subsidy?** *The Outcomes Report currently does not show housing retention for any other types of housing other than permanent supportive housing. The HPRP Followup study will give some insights into this issue. Furthermore, deeper analysis of return to homelessness data by type of housing exited to could also help illuminate housing retention for persons exiting to unsubsidized housing.*
- 16. On page 7, Exit Destinations from Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), explain what is included in the “other places”.** *The purpose of this chart is to understand where people exiting permanent supportive housing go to. In general, people exited to three types of housing: some sort of permanent housing, unknown/refused (we don’t know where they went to), and “other places” which are predominantly another homeless situation or at-risk of homelessness. Other places include those who pass away while a resident of the PSH program and those who exit to shelters, transitional housing programs, and friends or family on a temporary basis.*
- 17. On page 7, what does the 52% represent?** *That number has been revised to 90% (see chart above). It represents persons who have retained PSH for three years or more.*

- 18. Do you track housing retention longer than 3 years?** *Yes, the retention of permanent supportive housing in the “3 year” category is really “3 years or more”. The old APR report can track retention up to “over 10 years”, the new APR tracks up to “over five years”.*
- 19. Why do people leave PSH?** *Leaving permanent supportive housing can be a good thing for both an individual and for the system of care. Some people leave in pursuit of more independent living, housing with more amenities, or larger units (due to marriage or having children), or because they no longer need or want services.*

### **Return to Homelessness (Page 10)**

- 20. Return to homelessness is a new data point. How is the return to homelessness rate calculated?** *Yes, the return to homelessness is a new data point that was first released in early June for the HEARTH Academy. Return to homelessness is part of the HEARTH Act’s community performance measures and was therefore included in Alameda County’s local outcomes and efficiency measures, but this is the first communitywide disbursement of the data. This systemwide outcome examines the proportion of people who exited all programs to permanent housing and subsequently reenter the HMIS system within twelve months into a shelter, transitional housing programs, or any other program with a housing status of “literally homeless”. The return to homelessness rate answers the question “of all the people who start out homeless and exit to permanent housing, what percentage become homeless again within a year?”. Individual programs or agencies can run the Return to Homelessness report in ART to show what rate of people exit your program(s) to permanent housing and reenter your program(s) within a year as homeless. The rates contained in the report are the average return to homelessness rates for persons exiting to permanent housing in the months January through March 2010. All return to homelessness data is extracted from HMIS and therefore only covers those programs that utilize HMIS.*
- 21. The Return to Homelessness Chart on Page 10 is confusing. Please explain the 7% vs. 24%.** *Under each bar is a label the notes a bit more about what data is being presented. The 7% pertains to Systemwide. Of all people that exited from any program in the system (including HPRP) to permanent housing within the months of January through March 2010, 7% of people who exited to permanent housing on average will end up homeless again within one year as noted by a program entry into a shelter, transitional housing program, or another program with a housing status of “Literally Homeless”. Twenty four percent of people who exited a shelter to permanent housing in the months of January through March 2010 on average will end up homeless again within one year as noted by a program entry into any shelter, transitional housing program, or another program with a housing status of “Literally Homeless”. HPRP programs have the lowest return to homelessness rate with only 3% of those who exit to permanent housing becoming homeless again within a year to a shelter, transitional housing program, or other programs with a housing status of “literally homeless”.*
- 22. What is the difference between exits to streets or shelter and return to homeless?** *On page 10, Exits from shelters to streets/shelter is 17% while the return to homelessness for shelters is 24%. Exits to streets or shelter simply looks at the where people exiting a program went to according to their exit destination. Ensuring people do not leave homeless serving programs for other homeless situations monitors negative outcomes and hopefully creates an incentive to reform program rules that could lead to more exits to homelessness; for example, having automatic shelter exits after three rule violations. In 2010, 17% of all exits from an emergency shelter went from the shelter program to another shelter or to*

the streets. The return to homelessness rate of 24% for shelters is explained further above and means that of all people who exit a shelter for permanent housing, 24% of them become homeless again within a year as denoted by an entry into a shelter or transitional housing program, or an entry into another program with a housing status of “literally homeless”.

- 23. What happens after HPRP funding goes away? How will that affect return to homelessness?** *EveryOne Home and the community will continue monitoring the return to homelessness rates across the system and within specific sectors of the system as a best practice, a learning tool, and an evaluative tool. Other prevention and rehousing monies will be available in the Emergency Solutions Grant following HPRP but at a drastic reduction from HPRP. EveryOne Home staff are seeking other sources of funding for systemic prevention and rehousing activities, however the sunset of HPRP funds will significantly impact this community’s tools for prevention services and rapid rehousing programs. The community will learn together what happens to return to homelessness rates during and following the sunset of HPRP.*

#### **Lengths of Stay (Page 10 and 11)**

- 24. How is Length of Stay calculated?** *Length of stay is simply a calculation of the number days between program entry and program exit, averaged for all exits within the time period. The length of stay report in ART also displays the length of stay for all clients (active and exited), active only, exits to permanent housing, exits to the streets, and other exit destinations. Length of stay is an important variable in program management as we strive to reduce the length of time from program entry to permanent housing. The next step for analysis is to begin to analyze how people flow through the housing system from shelter to transitional housing to permanent. We are also waiting for guidelines by HUD and changes or improvements in software vendor to enable us the report on the length of time homeless, which is a HEARTH performance measure.*

#### **Cost Data**

- 25. What goes into the cost data measurement?** *The factors are used in the cost data: program budget, number of people exiting annually, and the number of people exiting to permanent housing annually. The program budgets were given to EveryOne Home by agencies with instructions to include all actual costs and an appropriate allocation of indirect costs. The exit data was extracted through HMIS for HMIS-using agencies or by agency self-report for agencies that do not use HMIS. EveryOne Home staff issued standardized instructions to obtain the same standardized quantification of the program budgets and exit data to assure accuracy and consistency in the cost data.*
- 26. Are all costs included such as those for serving high end users?** *Yes. The variables in the calculation are simply the three noted above, and thus covers all persons served during 2010 regardless of one time use or multiple services.*
- 27. How do we know if we are capturing the real cost of an intervention?** *This preliminary cost analysis is one helpful construct for examining cost of an intervention relative to the cost of another intervention. This represents the real cost of the intervention in solo. Some clients receive services from multiple interventions at once (like shelter and rapid rehousing) or in sequence (shelter, transitional housing and then rapid rehousing). To calculate the cost of multiple interventions, simply add the cost of the*

*interventions together. The next step of analysis is to quantify which proportion of people have multiple interventions and in which combination of interventions.*

- 28. What is the flow of a client through the whole system-what services did Rapid Rehousing (RRH) folks get before RRH?** *This level of analysis has not been completed and is likely to vary from household to household.*
- 29. Can you evaluate the validity of all rapid rehousing program costs such as the cost of the program alone without the outreach, ongoing case management, and other costs to move from chronic homeless to permanently housed?** *With rapid rehousing programs such a promising intervention, much more analysis will be done nationally and presumably on a local level to inform program design and cost factors. Such cost analysis is not yet done in Alameda County or publicly available on a national basis.*