

Prior Year Performance Report

Fiscal Year 2018-19



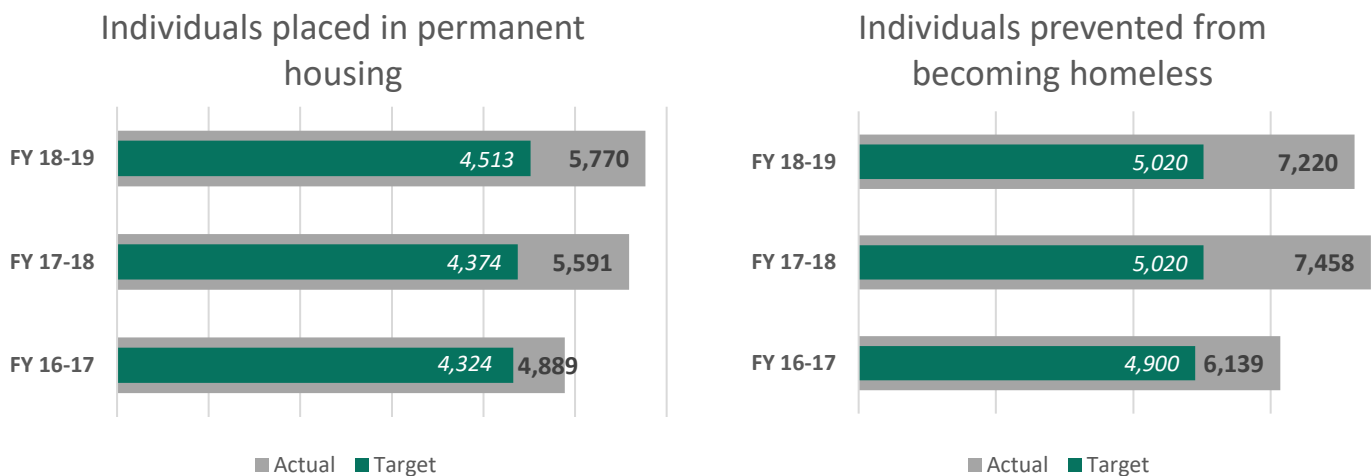
City
Budget
Office

Responding to Homelessness

In recent years, the City of Portland has made significant investments in services to prevent and end homelessness as well as in programs that address livability concerns related to people experiencing homelessness in public spaces. This section examines what available data can tell us about the outcomes of these investments in FY 2018-19.

Connecting Investments to Outcomes

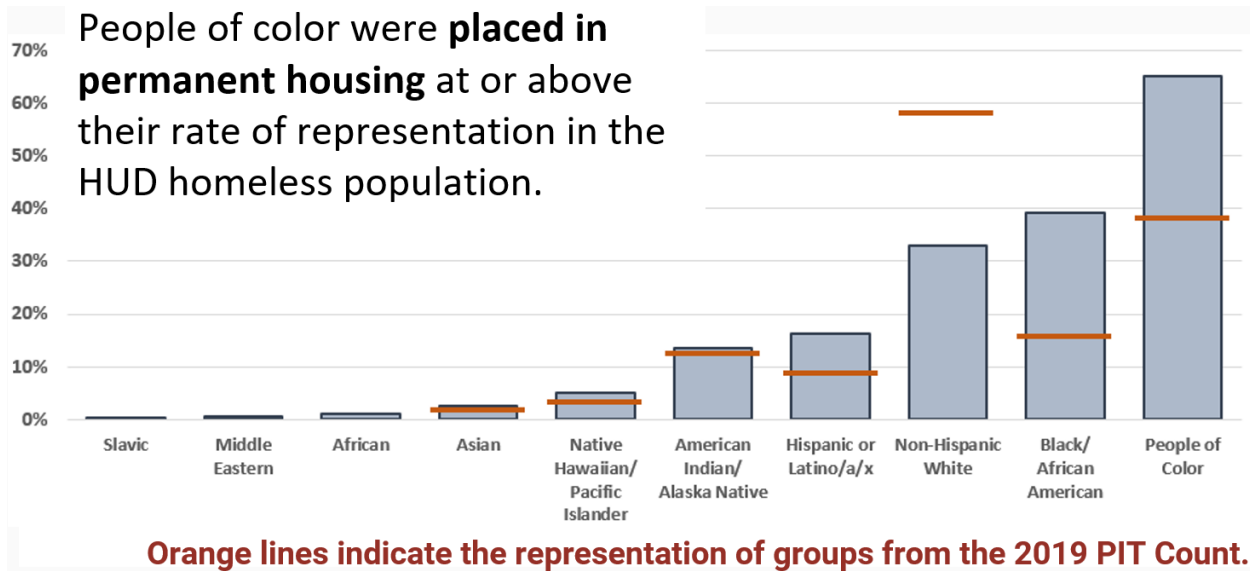
In FY 2018-19, the Joint Office of Homeless Services (Joint Office or JOHS) and its contracted providers served 37,000 people with prevention, housing, placement, and shelter services with a budget of \$71.5 million, including a record \$32.5 million in City General Fund resources. This was an overall increase in the number of people served from the prior year, and housing placement and prevention numbers exceeded FY 2018-19 targets by 28% and 44% respectively.



When reviewing service levels by race and ethnicity, placement and shelter rates were generally higher for communities of color compared to their rate of homelessness as defined in the Point-in-Time Count.¹ This is consistent with the Joint Office’s efforts to reduce racial disparities in homelessness. However, additional focus must be devoted to two groups that were identified as the most overrepresented in the Point-in-Time Count: those who identified as American Indian/Alaska Native and/or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (see chart below).²

¹ Source: Joint Office of Homeless Services Joint Session presentation, 11/12/2019.

² 2019 Point-in-Time Count of Homelessness in Portland/Gresham/Multnomah County, Oregon. Available online at <https://multco.us/file/82568/download>. See page 17, Figure 3.



Source: Joint Office of Homeless Services

The most recent Point-in-Time Count (PIT) took place in January 2019.³ The PIT is a federally-required count of the people in a community who are experiencing homelessness and are located outside, in emergency shelters, or in transitional housing. This biannual snapshot is an imperfect measure of homelessness, and its limitations are well-documented.⁴ It is, however, the proxy that was used to define unmet housing need in the original modeling done to support [A Home for Everyone: United Community Plan to End Homelessness](#).⁵ By increasing housing placements, prevention efforts, and improving retention rates, the model predicted—if external factors remained consistent—that expanded service levels would significantly decrease the number of people experiencing homelessness at a point in time (dropping from 3,801 in 2015 to approximately 2,000 by 2019). However, the 2019 PIT was 4,015, which is a slight decline from the last count two years prior. The 2019 count also includes a 37.1% increase in chronic homelessness and a 22% increase in unsheltered homelessness.

And yet, original system expansion goals have been met, and in many cases exceeded. Officials note that this significant expansion of service levels has helped to prevent a further rise in homelessness alongside year-over-year rent increases that ramped up shortly after the baseline year in the model. Lack of affordable housing options, coupled with insufficient appropriate support services for people with disabilities, continues to push thousands of highly vulnerable people into homelessness each year. This sustained inflow and unmet

³ 2019 Point-in-Time Count of Homelessness in Portland/Gresham/Multnomah County, Oregon. Available online at <https://multco.us/file/82568/download>.

⁴ Each Point-in-Time Count report outlines these limitations, including changes in methodology and other factors that may skew the snapshot of homelessness versus a longitudinal perspective. For 2019, it is important to note that the count used more volunteers and more intentional outreach than prior years, which could have contributed to higher count numbers and higher representation from specific communities.

⁵ See the report at <http://ahomeforeveryone.net/the-plan>

need, demonstrated not only by the PIT but also by waitlists for permanent housing and the 5,410 people who accessed services for the first time in FY 2018-19,⁶ suggests a need to continue to reassess some underlying assumptions in the local approach to and scale of homeless services—specifically in relation to the following areas:

Defining unmet housing need

There is no single, reliable, comprehensive measure for determining the number of people in need of services and/or housing. The original expanded service goals and funding plan was based on the PIT, which highlights those who are unsheltered or living in a shelter or transitional housing. It does not include thousands more who are doubled-up with family or friends for economic reasons, who are in jails, prisons, or hospitals during the Count, or are otherwise at risk of experiencing homelessness.⁷ Based on system-wide performance measures, far more individuals are accessing services than meet the strict HUD definition of homelessness. However, the annual budget process has focused on preserving current budget and service levels rather than identifying a new long-term plan and accompanying funding requirements. The Mayor’s budget guidance for FY 2020-21 includes two directives aimed at increasing the stability of homeless services in Portland and the region by decreasing dependence on General Fund resources (particularly one-time funding) while also defining and supporting desired system outcomes.

Duration of service

Most of the additional new housing placements included in the original targets were limited-term rent assistance “rapid rehousing” and one-time, short-term assistance targeting households experiencing homelessness primarily because of lack of income. However, data and stories from providers suggest that many households are requiring more assistance for longer periods of time with accompanying wraparound services such as: legal aid, behavioral health, workforce development, and other flexible support in order to stay safely and stably housed.

Improving retention

The original modeling for A Home for Everyone assumed a 15% rate of people returning to homelessness; reports indicate that between 26% and 29% of people who exited homeless services as recently as 2017 returned to the system within two years. Reducing this rate requires improving our understanding of the complex factors that lead households to lose or stay in stable housing. Assessing the impacts

⁶ This measure is the number of people who accessed homeless services but who had not accessed homeless services in the previous two years. This includes those who accessed shelter, transitional housing, or permanent housing, but not prevention services.

⁷ More information, including a 2019 Point-in-Time Doubled Up Report, is available at <https://multco.us/file/82568/download>.

of service length, amount, composition, provider, and/or client demographics on a household's likelihood to return to homelessness is needed.

Coordinating services across sectors

Over the last few years, significant progress has been made to align efforts of traditional service providers with public health and safety entities. This was not a central focus of the original A Home for Everyone plan but is critical to address the needs of the growing population of people who are living outside and/or experiencing chronic homelessness. The City and County are implementing new approaches to help better serve individuals experiencing chronic homelessness and behavioral health crises by providing alternatives that connect people to services rather than the criminal justice system.

Connecting People to Services & Housing

In addition to significantly expanding homelessness prevention and housing placement and retention services, the joint City and County commitments have doubled year-round public shelter capacity, reaching a total of 1,702 shelter beds in 2019.⁸ As part of this expansion, JOHS has also transformed shelter offerings so that they work for more people, including providing 24-hour access, beds for couples, and places for pets, hygiene, and storage. The new Navigation Center opened in August 2019, a public-private partnership offering an on-site medical clinic, showers and laundry machines, as well as case management focused on employment, housing, and treatment services. People with disabilities, people leaving hospitals, and people who are 55 and older have top priority for referrals.

The new Navigation Team launched in early 2019 also has priority access to the center. The Navigation Team takes a services-first approach to high-impact campsites, working over an extended period of time to connect campers to shelter, services, housing, and health supports before a camp is posted for cleaning and removal. The team works with the City of Portland's Homelessness and Urban Camping Impact Reduction Program (HUCIRP) and other public agencies to address areas where high-impact camping is frequent. Early program data highlights the many ways in which the team helps to address people's needs, including screening for supportive housing, connecting to shelter, assisting with receiving IDs or birth certificates, signing up for the Oregon Health Plan, and referrals for housing.⁹

Programs Addressing Livability Concerns

In addition to services to prevent and address homelessness, the City funds programs aimed at managing the impacts of unhoused people living in public spaces, which may include

⁸ Source: 2019 Housing Inventory Count.

⁹ City of Portland "Response to Homelessness." Issue 6, Summer 2019. Available at <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/toolkit/article/739594>.

camping or living in vehicles. In addition to addressing public health and safety concerns across the city, these programs create important openings for City staff or contractors to meet people and connect them to services.

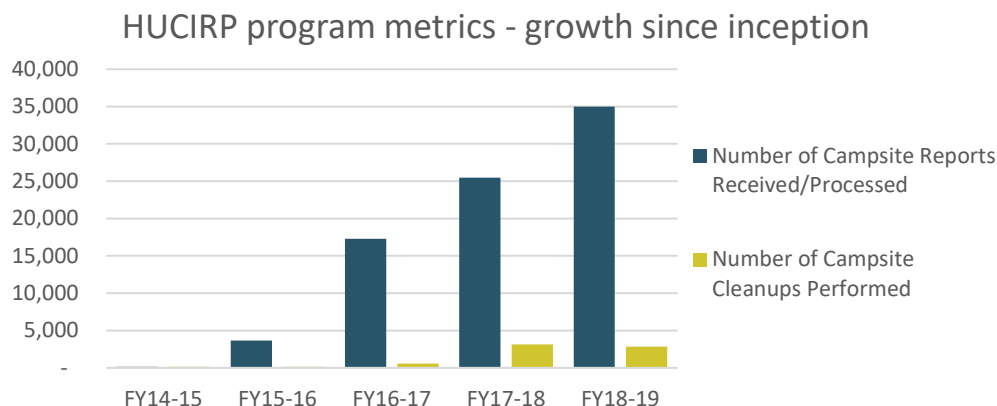
The Homelessness and Urban Camping Impact Reduction Program

HUCIRP is responsible for coordinating the City’s response to unsanctioned urban camping. The program began in 2015 in response to concerns about the impact of people living in tents and other makeshift shelters on City property. Since 2015, HUCIRP has expanded significantly in terms of scope of responsibility and volume of services required. The program began as contracted support for clean-ups initiated by property-owning bureaus and has evolved into a more coordinated and public-facing response to concerns about trash and livability issues. HUCIRP manages three teams of contractors responsible for:

- Performing regular light-duty trash pickup across low-impact campsites
- Evaluating campsite conditions
- Performing extensive clean-ups in locations where conditions have substantially deteriorated. In the event of extensive clean-ups, HUCIRP must store and manage the personal property of campers in accordance with the Anderson agreement.¹⁰

Requests for these primary services are received in response to complaints generated through the One-Point-of-Contact system. In addition to campsite clean-up management, the HUCIRP team regularly coordinates with the Joint Office of Homeless Services and non-profit service providers, develops harm reduction strategies, and engages in community education efforts. HUCIRP recently took over management of campsite clean-ups on Oregon Department of Transportation property.

HUCIRP has experienced explosive growth over the past five years, with corresponding increases in the program budget, which increased from \$1.2 million in FY 2015-16 to \$6.7 million in FY 2019-20. The number of reports hit 35,000 last year, with over 2,800 campsite clean-ups performed (see graph below). Often reports generated in the One-Point-of-Contact system are duplicates, and not all reported campsites meet the risk assessment threshold that would warrant an extensive clean-up that would displace campers.

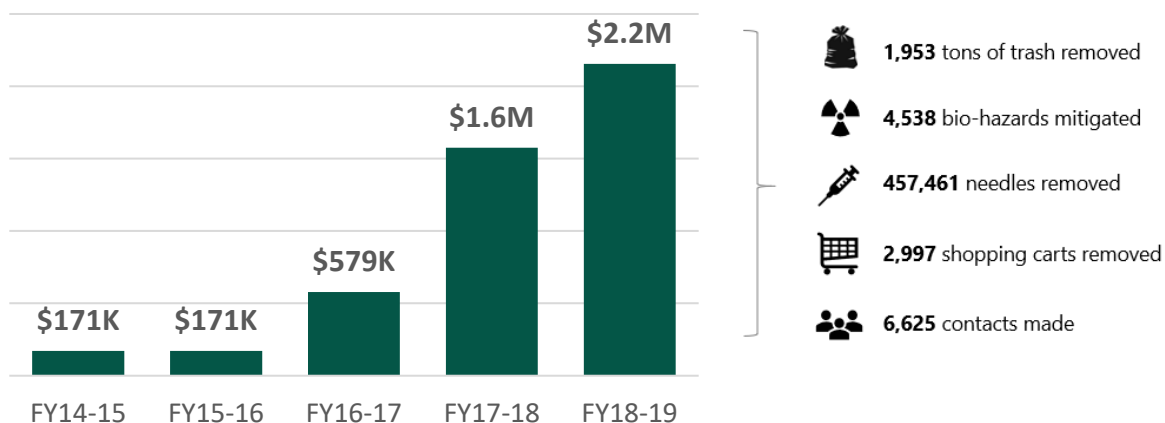


¹⁰ <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/toolkit/article/563496>

As noted in a [March 2019 audit of the program](#), HUCIRP has experienced growing pains. The program has evolved over time, but without robust technology or systems in place to support programmatic growth or to provide data analytics for workload management. HUCIRP has been working with the Bureau of Technology Services to implement upgrades to its system that will automate many previously manual activities and improve data tracking and reliability. The first phase of this effort is already live—the contracted workers who perform regular light-duty trash pick-up and campsite condition assessments have a mobile app that provides geographic incident information in the field. As part of this initial effort, HUCIRP is beta-testing the use of an electronic quality control protocol to ensure field assessments align. Phase two of this technology effort is under development, and will establish an integrated data system for major clean-up work orders.

Improved communication, both with campers and with the public, was also a focus of the audit. At present there is no direct feedback loop to members of the public who submit campsite reports to the Single-Point-of-Contact system. HUCIRP has plans to develop a public-facing version of the mobile map that contracted workers use. Once live, this tool will give the public access to more regularly updated information; however, it does not resolve the fact that many reports will not trigger clean-ups based on the City’s risk assessment matrix. Regarding communication with campers, HUCIRP has made marginal improvements (i.e. leaving business cards, ensuring that posting signs are waterproof). The audit also noted issues with HUCIRP’s facility for property storage after clean-ups. A new warehouse was obtained that is larger, better organized, and in a more centralized location, and property pick-ups by campers have increased as a result. However, improved storage and communication about campsite clean-ups is not likely to change the fact that they are disruptive to campers. While HUCIRP staff and contractors engage with the homeless community with respect and dignity, extensive campsite clean-ups are intrusive by nature.

Total Direct Campsite Cleanup Costs*



*Does not include all program staff or administrative/overhead costs of the program

The total number of campsite clean-ups appeared to stabilize in FY 2018-19, around 2,800 total compared to 3,100 in FY 2017-18. The program underspent its General Fund allocation

by \$375,000 in FY 2018-19; challenges related to scaling and coordinating contracted services likely contributed to this underspending, rather than a decline in demand for services. It seems unlikely that demand for HUCIRP services will decline in the near future, absent some wholesale change in the region’s service provision to homeless residents.

Derelict RV Program




As discussed in the [FY 2017-18 Prior Year Performance Report](#), the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) expanded the Abandoned Autos program to include addressing an increasing number of derelict recreational vehicles (RVs). CBO recommended the bureau work with Council to formalize the program, identify an ongoing funding source, and to set performance measures to track whether or not the program helps to reduce right-of-way obstructions and improve community livability.

In FY 2018-19 the bureau continued the program and identified a plan to formalize it as part of FY 2019-20 budget development. In the current fiscal year, PBOT received approval to add six new Vehicle Inspection Team Officers and one Coordinator to officially staff this program and allocated \$1.5 million in General Transportation

	RV Complaints Received	RVs Dismantled	RVs Returned to Owner
FY 16/17	2,691	41	<i>unknown</i>
FY 17/18	4,144	373	52
FY 18/19	2,900	265	29
YTD FY 19/20*	125	45	3

* Accounts for only three months in FY 2019-20

Revenue and \$180,000 in tow fees to this program. The bureau also created new performance measures around *the number of derelict RVs reported, towed, and dismantled* to track the success and workload impact of the program. For two of these measures the bureau has been internally tracking outcomes for the past three years (see table above).

	150 tons of garbage per month, including weight of RV
	500 gallons of human waste per month, 6,000 gallons per year
	15,000-20,000 sharps per year

The bureau has changed its contract structure for RV processing. Previously the bureau held multiple contracts to process garbage, human waste, and sharps/needles before dismantling an RV. In FY 2018-19 PBOT contracted with a single vendor to provide all of these services. This likely has saved the bureau time and resources.¹¹

PBOT highlights that the program has reduced the number of derelict RVs occupying the right of way. From FY 2017-18 to FY 2018-19 complaints for RVs have decreased by 30%. Vehicle Inspection Team officers provide education and information to

RV users including their legal rights related to RV use, where to properly keep RVs, and various support services to help individuals return to healthier housing.

¹¹ At this time savings is not calculated, and may be difficult to tease out as savings would need to be tracked on a per-vehicle basis.