

Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness

Summary of Gap Analysis & 2021 Community Priorities

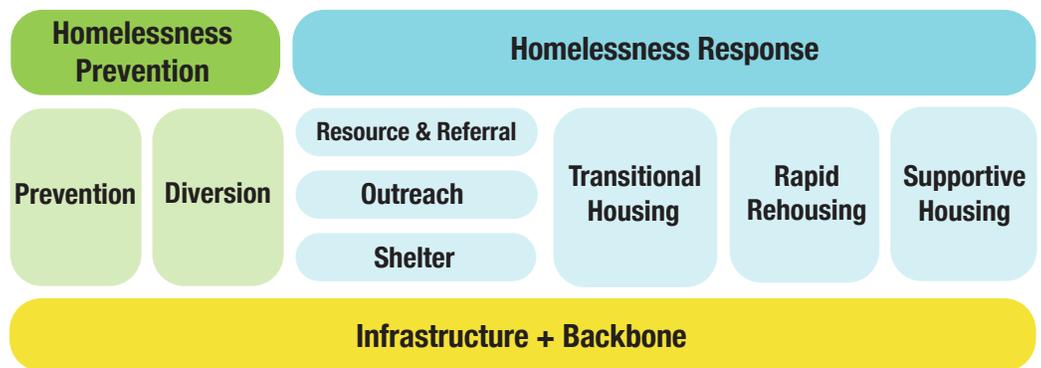


The following is a summary of the full Gap Analysis and 2021 Community Priorities, which can be found [here](#).

SUMMARY

The Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness (ACEH) Advisory Council formed in December of 2019 and consists of 20 subject matter experts. In March 2020, the Council kicked off the work of three committees. Recognizing the pressing needs brought about by COVID-19, the Community Prioritization Committee began the completion of a gap analysis of the current Homeless Prevention and Response System, and then conducted a prioritization process. This document summarizes for community members, funders, policymakers, and advocates recommendations around collective action to meet identified gaps in the Homeless Prevention and Response System. The priorities recommended here are meant to move our community toward a robust system to make homelessness rare, brief, and one-time, and should be used to direct programmatic, policy, and funding decisions toward this goal.

The Homeless Prevention and Response System is a continuum of services that A) help to prevent people from experiencing homelessness and B) help people who are experiencing homelessness access the resources and housing interventions they need to ultimately exit homelessness. This system



also includes infrastructure, such as coordinated data and staff capacity through the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness, that support work across the system. This project examined the interventions above.

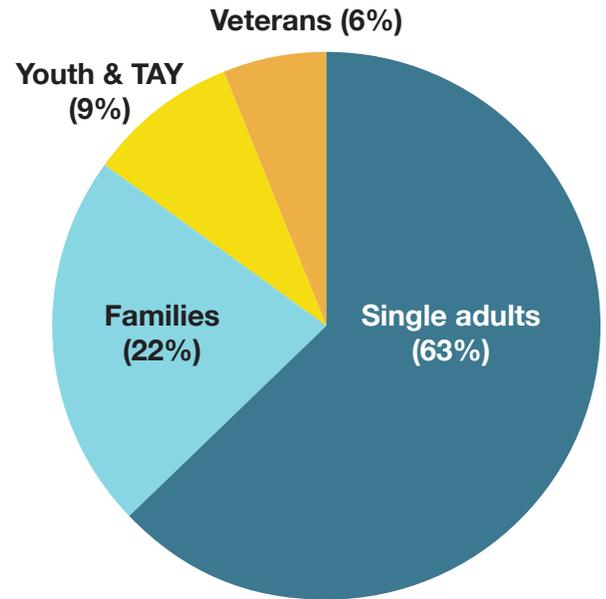
GAP ANALYSIS: KEY FINDINGS

- **Homelessness is a community problem**, symptomatic of deficiencies in parallel and related systems.
- **Single adults account for the largest portion (63%) of need across the homeless prevention and response system.** Families account for 22% of measured demand, youth & transition age youth (TAY) for 9%, and veterans for 6%. COVID is anticipated to further drive up this demand.
- **There is a significant lack of rapid rehousing for medium (and some high) vulnerability adults** who need short-term supports to avoid long-term homelessness and the cycle of poverty. This was the largest measured intervention gap by subpopulation in the gap analysis (Gap of 1,510 households).
- **One of the greatest identified needs is the significant lack of permanent supportive housing available for highly vulnerable adults** (experiencing chronic homelessness, behavioral health concerns, overuse of shelters, camping, unsheltered, etc.) (Gap of 557 units).
- **Ensuring sufficient shelter capacity, especially during winter, is critical for public health and safety.** Shelter will be most effective by complying with CDC COVID-19 recommendations and by providing day and night services.
- **Data shows that demand is exceeding capacity, i.e., inflow into the system is exceeding outflow. If we do not increase capacity, the gaps we see across the system are likely to grow.** Experts also predict an increase in homelessness nationwide due to the economic impacts of COVID-19.
- **Preventing experiences of homelessness is cost-effective and creates better outcomes for individuals and the community.** Anchorage has an opportunity to better align prevention data and systems.

MEASURING NEED ACROSS THE SYSTEM

The Gap Analysis used a rigorous data model to quantify the scale of estimated need (demand) for housing and services, understand the current capacity of the system to meet those needs, and then identify areas for improvement (gaps) in the Homeless Prevention and Response System. The Advisory Council’s goal is to establish a complete and comprehensive system of care; addressing and resolving programmatic and systemic gaps in service will help achieve this goal.

The Gap Analysis began with an analysis of demand, or need, across the system. To the right is a summary of total annual demand, or need, for the housing interventions identified in the Gap Analysis. As shown here, single adults account for 63% of measured demand viewed by subpopulation, families account for 22%, youth and transition aged youth (TAY) account for 9%, and veterans account for 6%.



GAP ANALYSIS: GAPS BY SUBPOPULATION

The Gap Analysis used measures of demand and capacity to ultimately calculate gaps across the system. For some interventions, including prevention, diversion, and resource & referral, there is not yet system-wide data to quantify gaps, and so gaps were described qualitatively. The below table shows the estimated annual gaps for those interventions for which we have data by subpopulation. The numbers here represent the difference between the number of units that needed to meet demand and our current capacity to meet demand. The table includes newly funded projects expected to be operating in 2021.

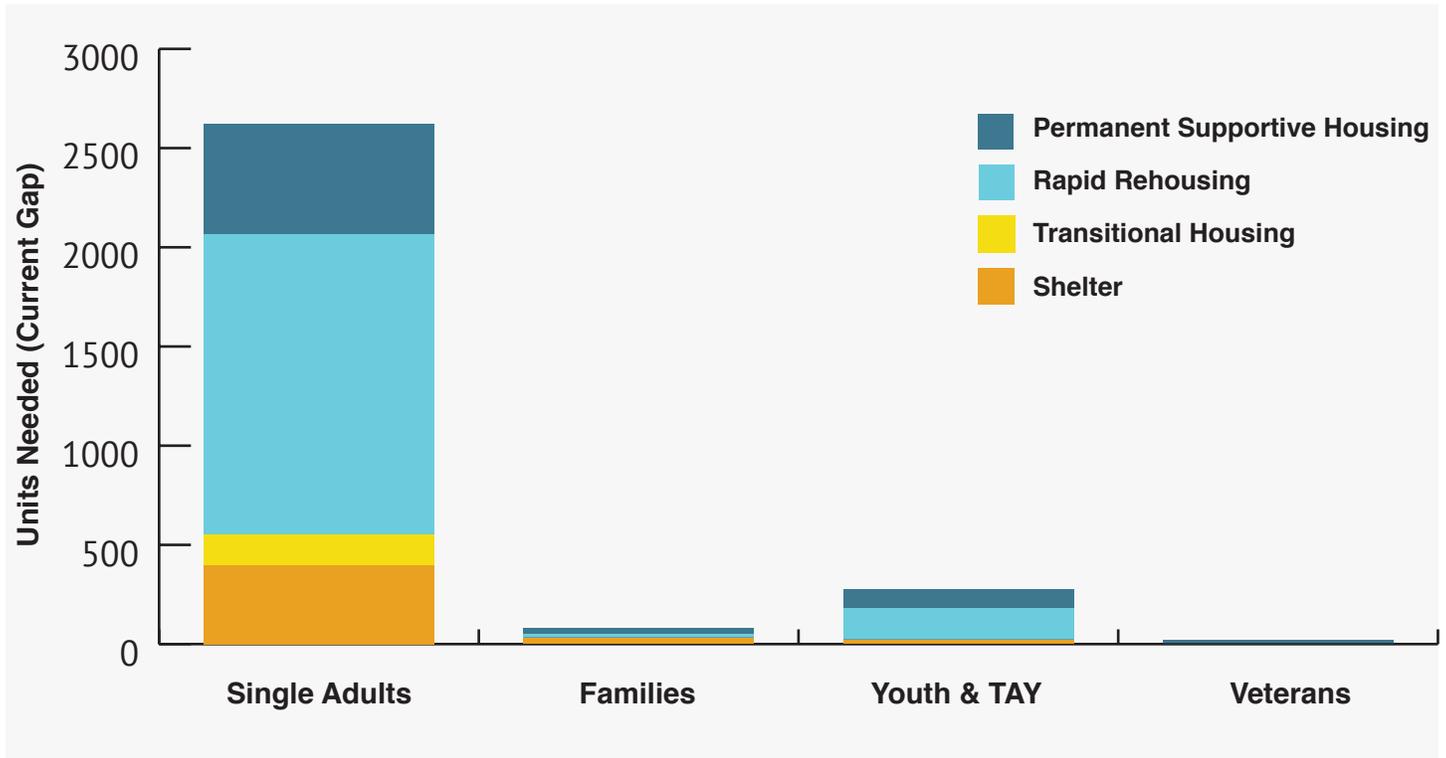
Gaps = Demand - Capacity
 (X) = Sufficient capacity, system meeting demand
 X= Not enough capacity, demand exceeding capacity

	Single Adults	Families	Youth & TAY	Veterans	Gap (units needed - current capacity)
Shelter	400	30	20	0	450
Transitional Housing	154	(40)	(30)	1	155
Rapid Rehousing	1,510	23	162	(17)	1,695
Supportive Housing	557	28	95	20	700
Total	2,621	81	277	21	3,000

The table above reflects pre-COVID data and does not include projected impacts on need as a result of COVID-19, except for shelter. Based on national reports and local context, we expect demand to increase, especially for interventions that prevent experiences of homelessness (prevention, diversion); interventions that connect people experiencing homelessness to resources (outreach, resource & referral, shelter) and housing interventions that provide short-term rental subsidy and case management to help individuals and families stabilize (rapid rehousing).

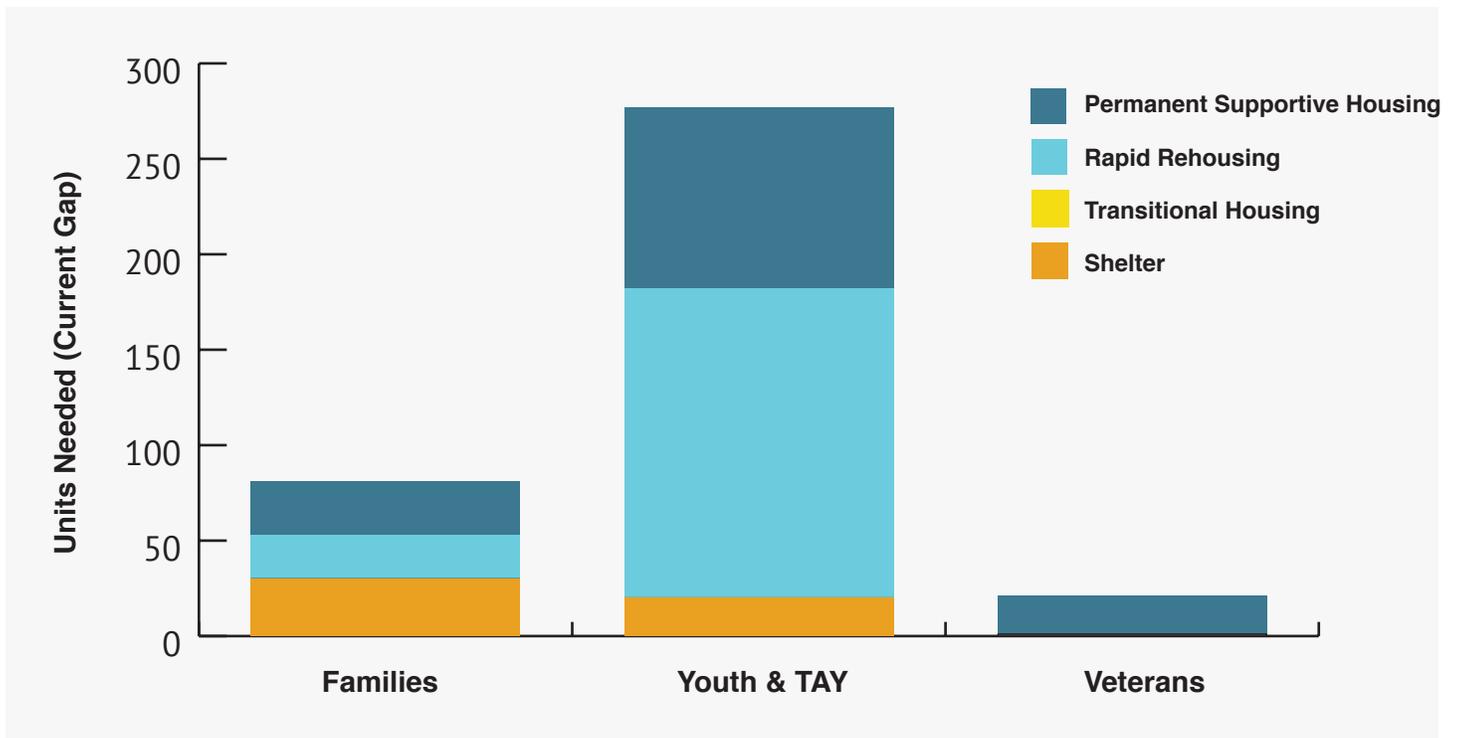
GAPS BY SUBPOPULATION AND INTERVENTION

The below chart shows gaps by subpopulation for the interventions for which we have subpopulation-specific data: Shelter, Transitional Housing, Rapid Rehousing, and Permanent Supportive Housing. Gaps refer to the difference between demand for that intervention and our current capacity to meet demand.



ZOOMING IN: FAMILIES, YOUTH & TAY, AND VETERANS

Families, Youth & Transition Age Youth (TAY), and Veterans show smaller gaps than single adults across all interventions. The following chart focuses in on the gaps for these subpopulations.



COMMUNITY PRIORITIES: KEY FINDINGS

Recognizing that we cannot address all of these gaps in one year, the committee underwent a prioritization process. Committee members reviewed each gap and associated intervention, and scored it based on the magnitude and severity of the challenge it addressed, national and local evidenced-based solutions, community support for addressing the challenge, and return on investment. These priorities assume that existing interventions will continue to be funded at their current scale; there are no currently existing interventions that provide excess capacity in the community.

Priority Group 1: Supportive Housing, Shelter, and Rapid Rehousing for Single Adults

Single adult homelessness continues to be the largest area of need, and this gap between demand and capacity is projected to grow. This need can be addressed by a combination of shelter, rapid rehousing, and supportive housing for adults across different levels of vulnerability and need.

Priority Group 2: Prevention, Resource and Referral, and Outreach; Shelter and Rapid Rehousing for Families and Youth & Transition Aged Youth (TAY)

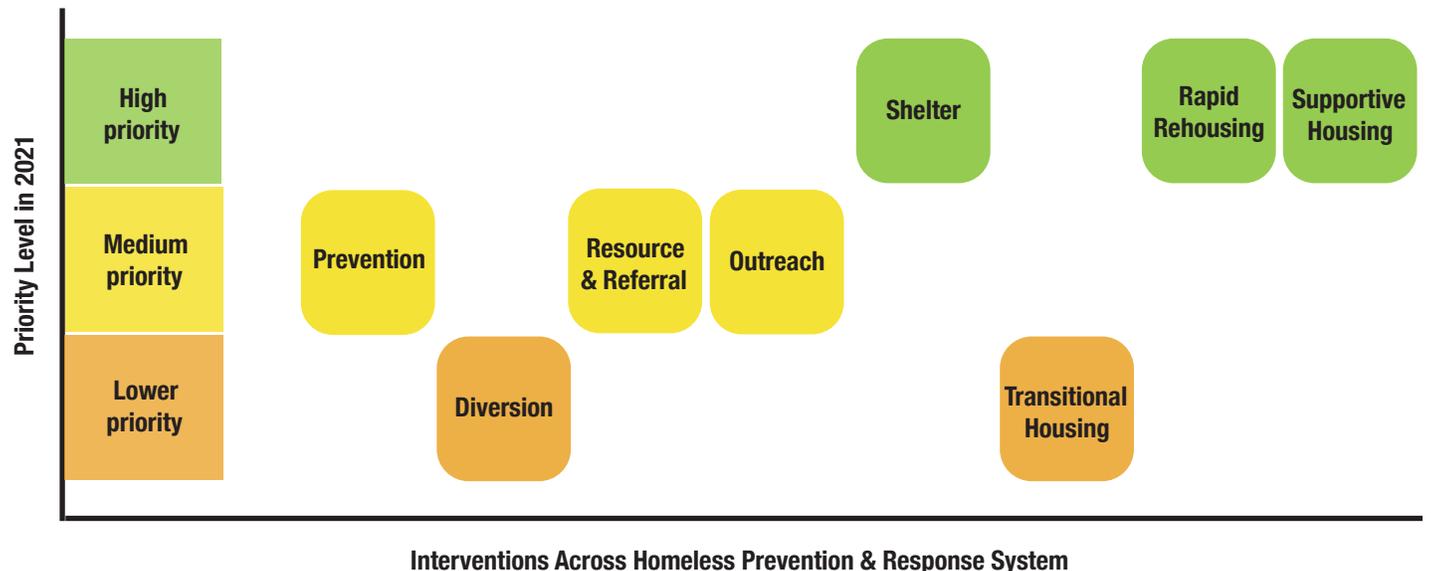
Preventing or immediately addressing new inflow into homelessness, particularly during COVID-19, is cost-effective and creates better long-term outcomes for individuals experiencing homelessness and the larger community. To address current and projected inflow, Anchorage needs to invest in Prevention, Diversion, Resource & Referral, and Outreach services for all populations. Additionally, building up capacity for shelter and rapid rehousing for families and youth & TAY is needed to adjust to the economic impacts of COVID-19.

Priority Group 3: Diversion; Transitional Housing for all populations; Permanent Supportive Housing for Families & Youth; Interventions for Veterans

Other interventions have proven effective for specific subpopulations and should be scaled up to meet demand. These include Transitional Housing for all subpopulations; Supportive Housing for Families and Youth; and interventions (Shelter, Rapid Rehousing, and Permanent Supportive Housing) for Veterans.

PRIORITIZATION ACROSS THE CONTINUUM

The following visual shows how the committee ranked interventions across the Homeless Prevention and Response System by their priority for 2021. Data from the gap analysis and a prioritization process determined these results.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2021

The committee also made recommendations for implementation for each prioritized intervention. The following reflects recommended priorities for 2021 across the Homeless Prevention and Response System.

Supportive Housing *(high priority)*

Current Gaps: Enhance the success of local supportive housing programs and increase capacity to meet current demand. We currently have a gap of at least 700 units of permanent supportive housing, including 557 for single adults, 95 for youth & TAY, 28 for families, and 20 for veterans.

2021 Recommendations

- Implement ongoing and predictable funding for capital and operational funding (for single-site)
- Facilitate sustainable payment structure for services that enables stable workforce (requires changes to Medicaid state plan)
- Direct allocation of housing voucher subsidies within mainstream resources to PSH

Shelter *(high priority)*

Current Gaps: Ensuring shelter capacity, especially during winter, is critical for public health and safety. Current gaps include the need for 400 shelter beds for single adults, at least 30 for families, and at least 20 beds for youth (under age 18) and TAY. Shelter will be most effective by complying with CDC COVID-19 recommendations and by providing robust day and night services.

2021 Recommendations

- Ensure that shelter capacity meets the need in smaller/low-barrier settings with day and night services in the same location
- Ensure shelter includes resource & referral services
- Ensure commitment for sustained funding from local and state government to address the public health challenge of emergency shelter for all populations
- Create separate shelter for youth (under age 18)

Rapid Rehousing *(high priority)*

Current Gaps: Based on today's measured demand, Anchorage needs 1,695 additional units of rapid rehousing: 1,510 units for single adults, 23 for families, and 162 for Youth & Tay. Our recommendation is to scale up over time to allow for changes in demand as we better understand the impact of COVID-19.

2021 Recommendations

- Coordinate engagement across the community with landlords to increase access to existing housing
- Coordinate funding/capacity for rapid rehousing, especially to meet a large gap for single adults
- Expand rapid rehousing in pilots to demonstrate success in serving higher vulnerability populations, given the lower cost than supportive housing

Prevention *(medium priority)*

Current Gaps: Prevention work is taking place in Anchorage and new prevention resources are coming in to address COVID-19, but there is no formal, coordinated prevention system. A formal structure needs to be resourced and organized for Prevention services, including HMIS data collection to determine demand and efficacy of the intervention. There is also an opportunity to align new prevention efforts related to COVID-19 with existing work.

2021 Recommendations

- Build and resource a formal system from existing pillared prevention interventions
- Ensure coordinated HMIS data collection to determine demand and efficacy of the intervention
- Ensure resources for follow-up with clients who receive prevention resources
- Work with community partners to align COVID-19 prevention with coordinated prevention system

Resource & Referral *(medium priority)*

Current Gaps: Shelter provision during COVID-19 has shown the value of building in robust resource & referral (sometimes called navigation) services into shelter settings. Shelter will be most effective as a robust service that is connecting individuals to other resources and interventions.

2021 Recommendations

- Develop a formal network for resource & referral across shelters in the community, including data collection
- Support/invest in staff capacity to provide resource & referral services at all shelter locations using existing models that work; advocate for this service to be funded and included in all shelter settings

Outreach *(medium priority)*

Current Gaps: Outreach is an important part of a robust homeless response system, especially for connecting unsheltered groups to necessary resources. Anchorage today lacks adequate capacity to conduct this outreach to known unsheltered hotspots.

2021 Recommendations

- Increase outreach capacity across to ensure all unsheltered hotspots (reported camps, libraries, and other public locations) have regular outreach year-round, including both initial engagement and data collection and also capacity for intensive outreach to those with higher acuity needs

Diversion *(lower priority)*

Current Gaps: Diversion is working well in serving veterans, but there is no coordinated diversion system to serve other groups. The family system is most prepared to use lessons learned from veteran diversion programs to pilot diversion. Future prioritizations should consider Anchorage's ability to scale up a coordinated diversion system.

2021 Recommendations

- Pilot diversion program for families and report back to community
- Allocate resources to develop a family pilot, including capacity for data collection and entry into HMIS; and sufficient services to ensure follow-up with clients who receive diversion funding to determine efficacy of services and outcomes

Transitional Housing *(lower priority)*

Current Gaps: Funding for transitional housing has been reduced over time, but it is a necessary piece of the continuum and has proven effective, especially for specific populations including TAY. The current gap for transitional housing includes a gap of 154 units for single adults.

2021 Recommendations

- Explore investing in additional transitional housing to meet demand across subpopulations, including 154 units needed for single adults

Next Steps: Actions to Take from this Document

This document is to be used by community members, funders, policymakers, businesses, partners, and advocates as an educational and decision-making tool to understand and collectively support data and practice-informed solutions in the coming year. In spite of the many challenges facing Alaska and the country right now due to COVID-19, we believe that we have a significant opportunity to align resources toward collective action. Together, using the enclosed data and recommendations from experts, we can achieve success in the shared goal of making homelessness rare, brief, and one-time for our Anchorage community members.

The full Homeless Prevention and Response System Gap Analysis and 2021 Community Priorities can be found on ACEH's website [here](#).