



Strategic Partnerships Toward Ending Homelessness

Homeward: Collaborating to End Homelessness

Des Moines City Council Work Session
November 7, 2022





Homeward: Who We Are

Homeward serves as **Polk County's homelessness planning organization**, forging strategic partnerships between:

- Homelessness organizations
- Community partners
- Government officials
- People experiencing homelessness

Through these partnerships, we're creating an **efficient, effective homeless response system** that evolves to meet the needs of our neighbors experiencing homelessness.

Our vision is that one day, everyone in Polk County will have a safe place to call home.

Homeward: What We Do

Homeward takes a **system-wide approach to homelessness** in Polk County by looking at all **pieces of the puzzle**, identifying community gaps, and leading innovative solutions.

We **disseminate homelessness resources, funding, and data**, enabling the Polk County community to engage in partnerships toward ending homelessness.



Why Homeward Exists

- The **Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)** mandates (24 CFR 578) that Homeward exists to promote the community-wide goal of ending homelessness and provide funding for nonprofit homeless service providers.
- Because Homeward doesn't provide direct services, we can focus on strategic, system-wide support and innovation
- A safe place to call home is the foundation for thriving individuals, families, and communities. When residents have a stable place to live, they can focus on their wellbeing, attend school or work, and engage with their community. But our **neighbors experiencing homelessness** suffer consequences of poor mental and physical health, stress, and trauma without their basic needs met.

Homeward's Foundational Beliefs

- **Community Collaboration**
- **Racial Equity**
- **Housing First-** People in crisis need safe, stable housing before working on other goals.

Elements of Housing First:

- **1.** Immediate access to permanent housing with no housing readiness requirements
- **2.** Consumer choice and self-determination that emphasizes client choice in housing and needed supports
- **3.** Recovery orientation that supports clients as they work at their own pace toward self-defined goals
- **4.** Individualized and client-driven supports that are voluntary, individualized and culturally appropriate
- **5.** Social and community integration through building community connections based on the client's specific needs and interests

Homeward Structure

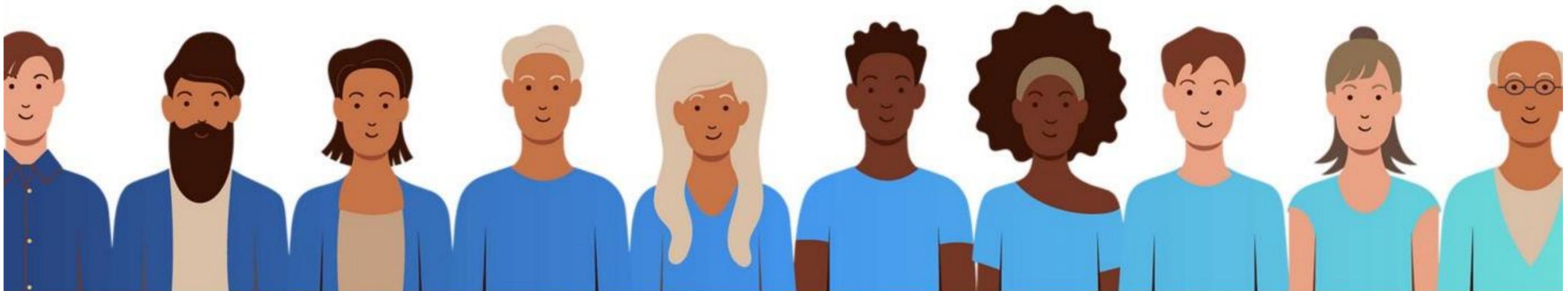
- As a small organization, **Homeward relies on committees** to achieve our goals:
 - Grant Committee
 - Finance Committee
 - Coordinated Services Committee
 - Services Council
 - Homeward Directors Council
 - Racial Equity Committee
 - Communication Committee
 - Housing Committee – Joint committee with OpportUnity and PCHTF
- Committee membership is made up of community partners, government officials, homelessness organizations, and people experiencing homelessness.

Allocation of Federal Funds

- **Continuum of Care (CoC) Funding:**
 - Centralized Intake, HMIS, Planning Grant, Rapid Rehousing, Permanent Supportive Housing, Supportive Services Only
- **Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Funding:**
 - Centralized Intake, HMIS, Homeless Prevention, Rapid Rehousing, Shelter, Street Outreach
- All organizations who receive funds are required to contribute a portion of dollars for the programs
 - CoC – 25% match
 - ESG – 100% match

Community Funding Process

- HUD outlines a **structured competition process** to allocate funds within the community:
 - Homeward Grant Committee reviews and scores applications
 - Homeward Board reviews and approves the proposed allocation of the funds
 - **City of Des Moines is the Collaborative Applicant** and votes to approve the submission of the overall grant application.

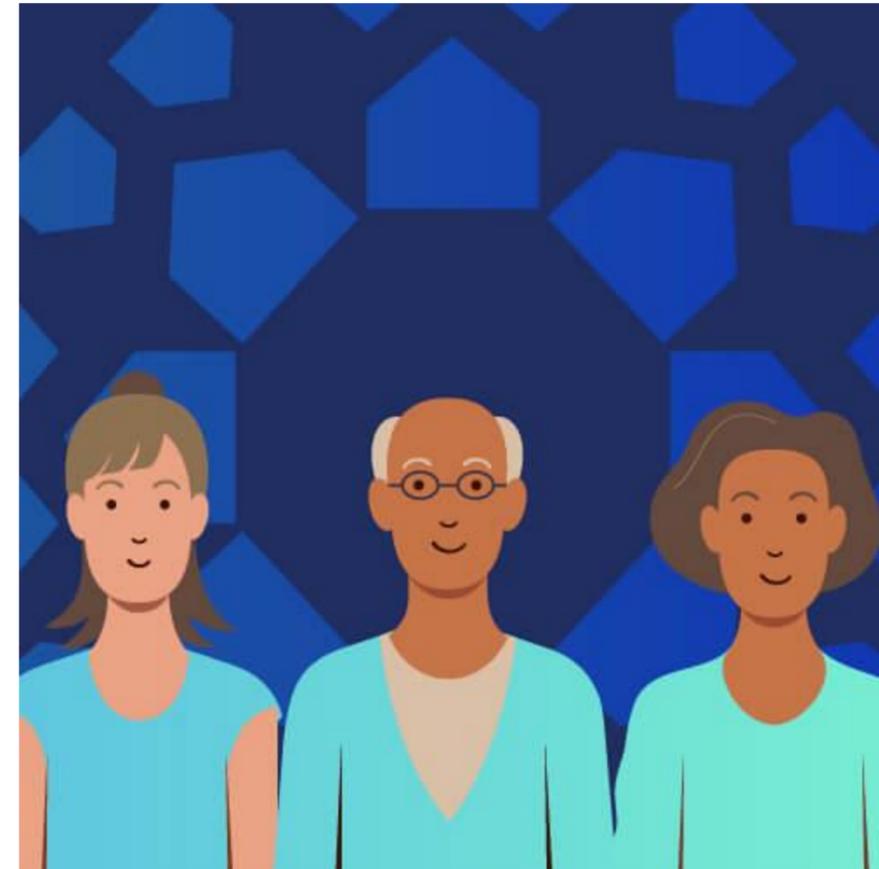


Homeless Coordinating Council (HCC)

- The Homeless Coordinating Council is comprised of **local elected officials and community partners**. The group:
 - Learns about homelessness in Polk County and the resources available
 - Brings information learned back to their communities and organizations
 - Provides input regarding community strategy to end homelessness.
 - Addresses needs in community resources
- Focused on collaboration across the County, engaging suburban communities and creating partnership across the region
- Quarterly meetings are open to the community

Homeless Coordinating Council

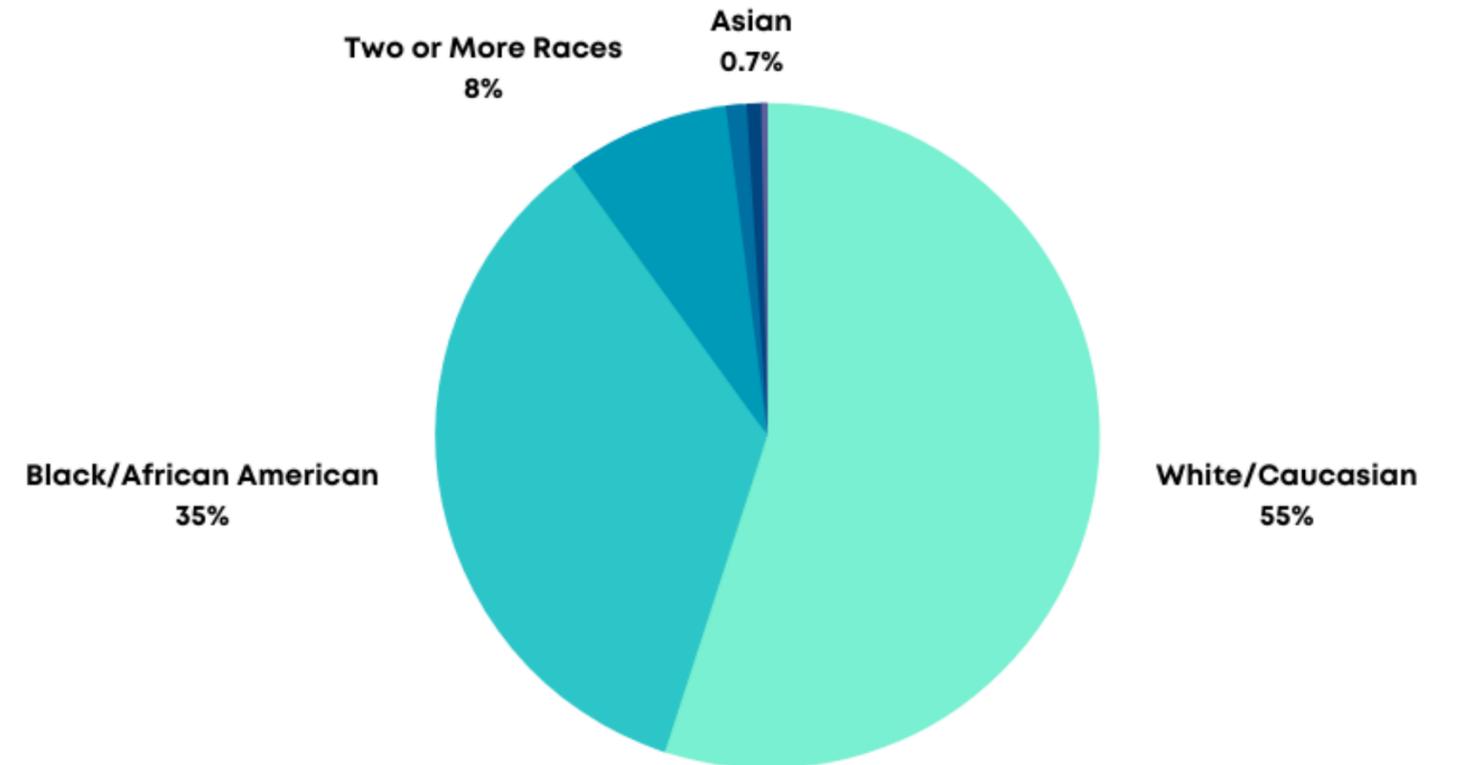
- **The group has achieved:**
 - Connecting with more communities and leaders across Polk County in conversations about homelessness
 - Shared municipality-specific information on affordable housing needs
 - Created space for regular updates on homelessness
- **The group is working on:**
 - Extreme Weather Work Group
 - Unsheltered Study



Community Members Served in the Homeless System - 2021

Racial Demographics of Clients Served

- 55% Caucasian/White
- 35% Black/African American
- 8% Two or More Races
- 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native
- 0.7% Asian
- 0.3% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander



Ethnicity Demographics of Clients Served

- 11% Hispanic or Latino
- 89% Not Hispanic or Latino

Why Homelessness Occurs in Our Community

People experience homelessness in Polk County due to systemic or societal barriers such as:

- **A lack of affordable and appropriate housing**
- **Financial, mental, cognitive, behavioral and/or physical challenges**
- **Racism and discrimination**
- **Family conflict or domestic violence**

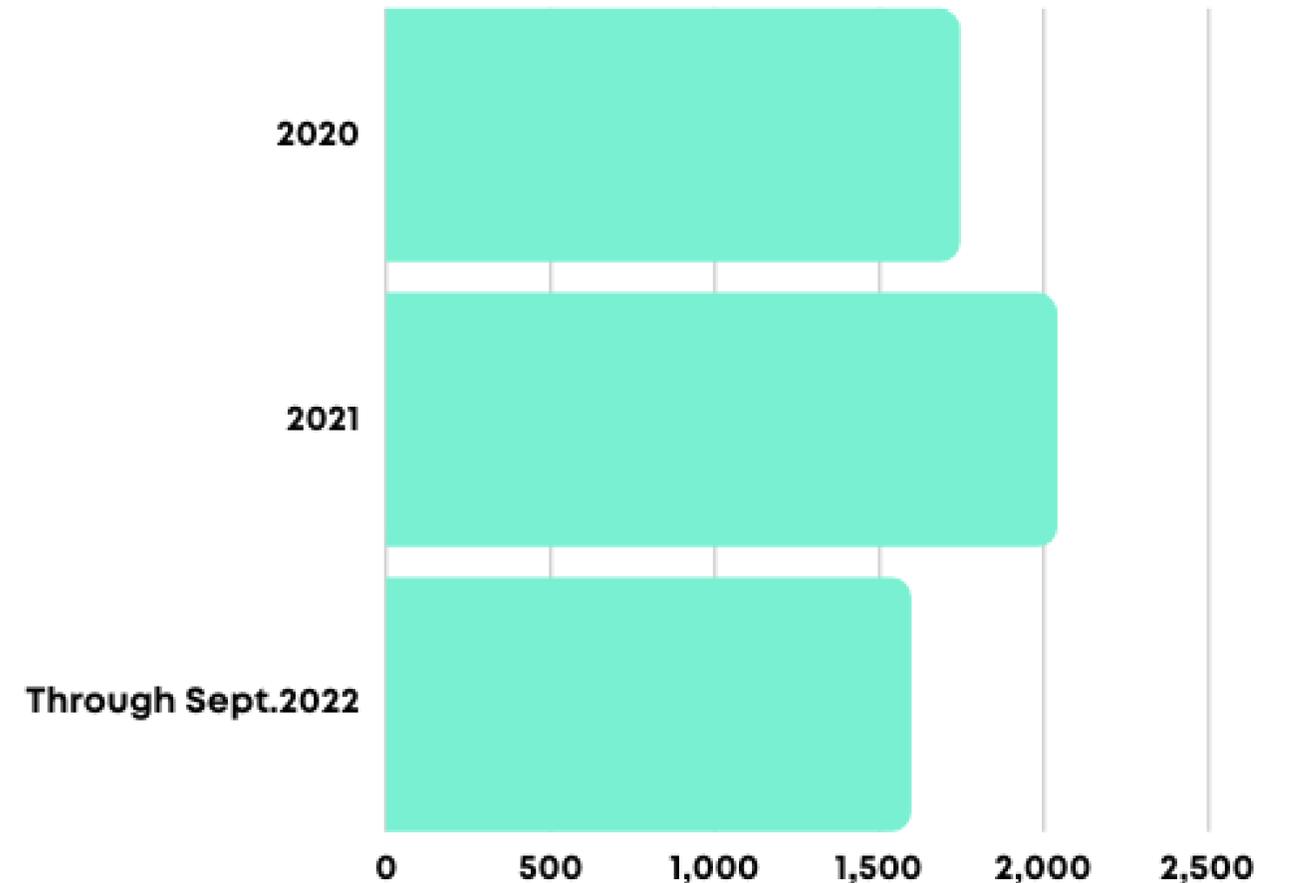
What is the Need in the Community?

- The need for homelessness supports far outpaces available resources in the community
 - There are currently **521 households** experiencing homelessness on the waitlist for housing support
 - There are **76 family households** (with children) on the waitlist for emergency shelter. This is the highest number since COVID began.
- A challenging rental housing market makes it difficult for program staff and clients to find appropriate housing, even when resources are available.
- With winter weather quickly approaching, it is urgent to support individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Polk County

Numbers Behind the Need

Intakes completed at Primary Health Care's Centralized Intake are on the rise, with more people seeking support for a housing crisis.

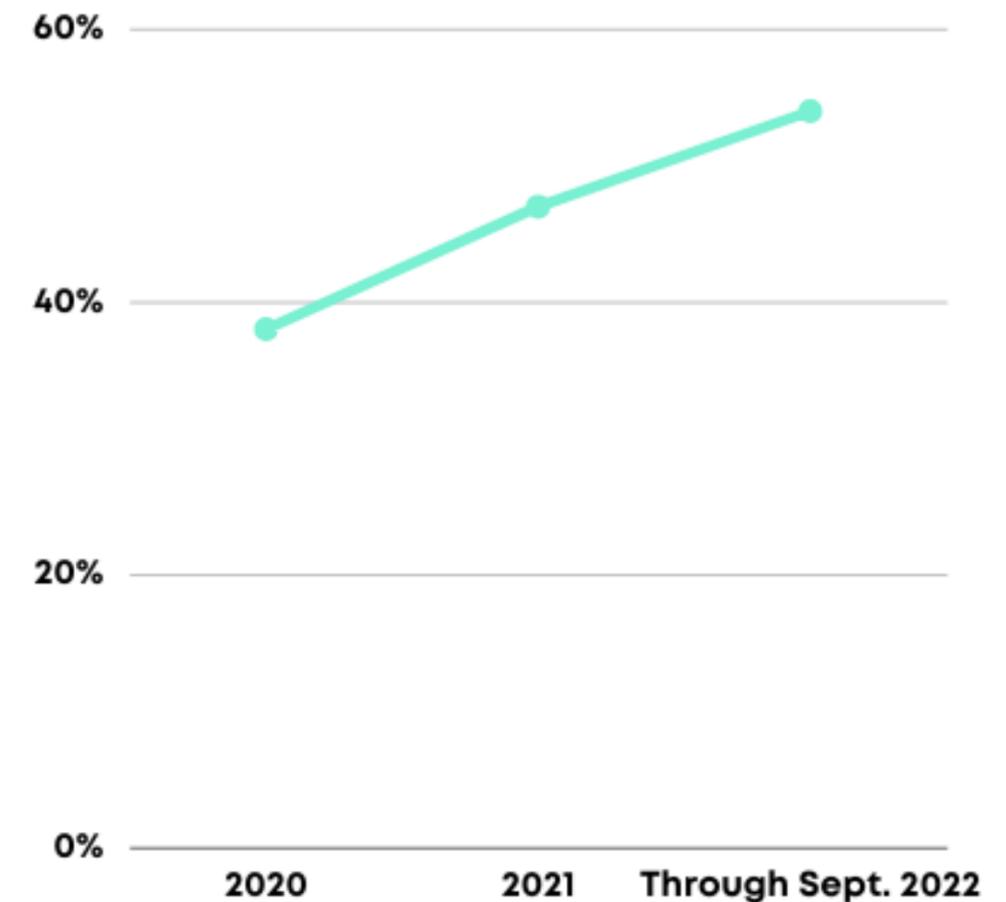
- In 2020, **1,744** households completed an intake
- In 2021, **2,041** households completed an intake
- Through September of 2022, **1,595** households have completed an intake



Numbers Behind the Need

The needs of people experiencing homelessness in our community are also escalating.

- In 2020, **38%** of people who completed an intake scored in the Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) range, meaning they experience high vulnerability due to barriers such as mental health, disability, correctional history, substance use, and domestic violence.
- In 2021, **47%** of households scored in the PSH range
- Through September 2022, **54%** of households have scored in the PSH range



What is Impacting Homelessness Trends?

- Compounding impact of **COVID-19** on finances, health, and wellbeing in Polk County
- Many COVID programs or resources are no longer available
- **Economic struggles-** inflation, stagnant wages, and rising rents
- Mental health, healthcare, and developmental needs of individuals and families
- A person on disability is paid \$841 a month, but the fair market rate for a 1-bedroom apartment is \$889.
 - **Fair market rent** increased by \$119 from last year's rate of \$770
- **Lack of safe, affordable, accessible housing** for people experiencing homelessness
 - Similar struggles for those experiencing poverty and at-risk of homelessness
 - Many formally affordable properties being sold

What We're Doing Now

- Submitted annual application of \$4.6 million in 2022 HUD funding for the community
- Applied for new federal funding opportunity of \$4.4 million for unsheltered homelessness
- **Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program grants** have completed their second year serving young people under 25
- Partnering with the City of Des Moines and Primary Health Care to administer **housing vouchers**
- Connecting with new partners to create systemic changes and better support our community members experiencing homelessness

How Can We Take Action?

- We can make homelessness a **rare, brief, and one-time experience** for Polk County residents with sufficient investments in housing and supportive services
 - Successes in **Veteran's** homelessness- enough resources are available to meet the need! This population has been at “functional zero” since 2016.
 - **Youth** Homelessness Demonstration Program provided targeted federal dollars and community collaboration to reduce homelessness for young people under 25
 - Added 35 new housing units for young people/families and supportive services- youth waitlists dropped dramatically
 - Winter 2022 Point in Time Count showed 0 youth unsheltered for the first time
- The Homeless Response system cannot act alone– need investments in mental health, healthcare, basic needs, and other related systems

Next Steps to End Homelessness

- We must **advocate for and leverage federal dollars** to build affordable housing and support homelessness services
- Building a plan around the results of the Unsheltered Study to eliminate barriers to shelter and housing
- Our community has a **dire lack of affordable housing** and increasing rental barriers for people experiencing homelessness- How do we partner on long-term, innovative solutions to support individuals and families?
- Future **legislation and advocacy for systemic change** including eviction expungement, tenants rights, support for youth and families, and more



Questions, Thoughts, and Discussion

Thank You!

WEBSITE

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