

# CONTRA COSTA HOMELESS CONTINUUM OF CARE

2015-2016 FISCAL YEAR ANNUAL REPORT



Contra Costa Council  
on **Homelessness**

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## Letter from the Council Chair

The 2015-16 Fiscal Year was complete with great accomplishments and innovation as the County's Continuum of Care (the Continuum) and the Council on Homelessness (the Council) developed new strategies to meet its goals in addressing and preventing homelessness.

At the beginning of the year, the Continuum was in the midst of planning and conceptualizing its new Coordinated Entry System: the Continuum's centralized and coordinated process designed to integrate consumers' intake, needs assessment, and provision of services, including referrals to permanent housing when appropriate. This resulted in a completely new model that would fortify the Continuum's referral and outreach system through Coordinated Entry.

The Council also continued the work that it started back in 2015 for the **Zero: 2016** Campaign; the campaign to end veteran and chronic homelessness. During the year, the Continuum became one of the first to create a "by-name" list of homeless veterans and chronic homeless, which is being recognized as the national standard to achieve a better picture of those who are truly in need and how many veterans and chronic homeless are returning to homelessness. These tools have also been effective in case management for homeless consumers navigating multiple social service, health, and housing agencies.

As demonstrated in this report, the strategies to address and prevent homelessness, and the work to implement these strategies, are working. The report provides a summary of the outcomes and performance measures of the various types of programs and services provided by the Continuum partners. Every single performance measure was met! Even more notable was the decrease in numbers of homeless individuals identified in the Point-In-Time Count over the last five years.

Contra Costa County still faces struggles with homelessness as the housing market continues to pose challenges to households throughout the region. Additionally, the sluggish rate in the creation of affordable housing only means that homelessness, and the threat of homelessness, will continue. As we move forward into fiscal year 2016-17, it is these types of challenges that make the Continuum's work even more important.

There is much to be proud of in our efforts to address homelessness during FY 2015-16 and FY 2016-17 has already proven to be full of optimism, hope, and success.



Gabriel Lemus, Chair  
Contra Costa Council on Homelessness

## Contra Costa County Homeless Continuum of Care and Council on Homelessness

In 1997, the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HUD) required that communities seeking HUD homeless funding apply as a collaborative of local agencies, called a Homeless Continuum of Care. The Contra Costa Homeless Continuum of Care (Continuum) is comprised of service providers, members of the faith community, businesses, funders, education systems, and law enforcement, working in partnership with consumers to find stable housing.

The Continuum is governed by the Council on Homelessness (Council), a group of 15 members appointed by the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors. The Council provides guidance in the development and implementation of long range planning and policy of homeless issues in the County.

### Fiscal Year 15-16 Annual Report Summary

As a governing body, the Council on Homelessness references data from the many data sources collected in the Continuum of Care, to represent the landscape of homelessness in Contra Costa County. This data aggregates the individual situations and personal stories of the 6,000 plus homeless people in our Continuum of Care. Data cannot capture everyday struggles, or convey the peace of mind when homeless individuals are housed, or the physical and psychological benefits of a place to call home.

However, the data can help to understand the need and impact. It can guide the Council in understanding how many people in the community struggle with mental health issues, chronic disease, or how many families slept on the streets in the middle of winter. This data also illustrates how many people transition from the streets, to shelter, to permanent housing. The numbers are exciting and demonstrate the impact this Continuum has on the lives of the almost 6,500 homeless people in the system of care last year.

A significant success for the Continuum is the 28% decrease in the number of people identified in the annual Point in Time Count since 2011. More notable is the Performance Measures data from agencies that provide prevention, intervention, and housing programming, reaching a greater number of people in need each year. Performance Measures for Fiscal Year 15-16 demonstrate improvements in all program types across the system of care. These improvements suggest that system-wide changes in the Continuum are resulting in reduced length of time homeless as people are obtaining housing quicker, and with effective placements such that fewer people return to homelessness.

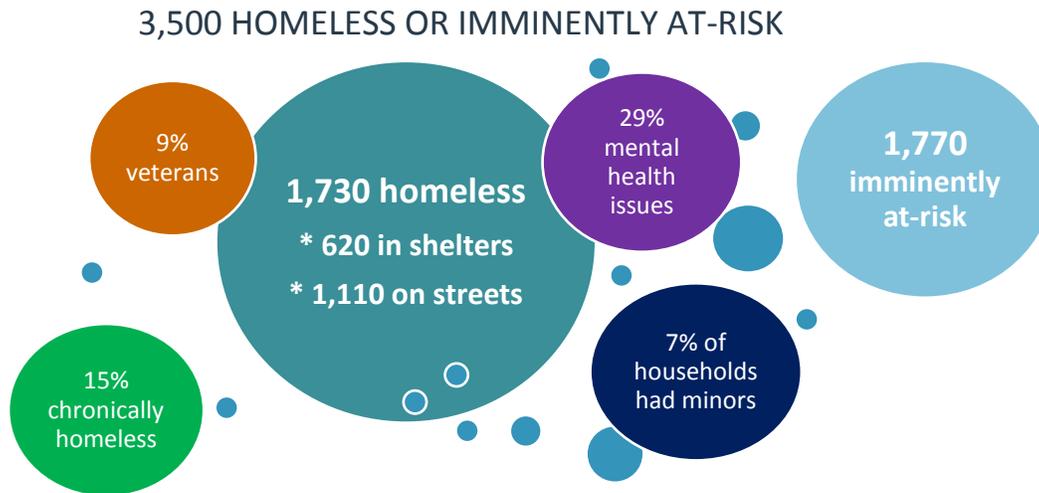
Despite all these accomplishments and improvements across the system, the Continuum continues to struggle in meeting the needs of many people that are homeless in the community. Newly identified homeless enter the system monthly, and lack of affordable housing hinders efforts to keep those at-risk in their homes or find new homes for those already struggling with homelessness.

The Continuum and all its partners continue to build the infrastructure for an effective system that meets the needs of the at-risk and homeless population. Data tells us that these efforts are working!

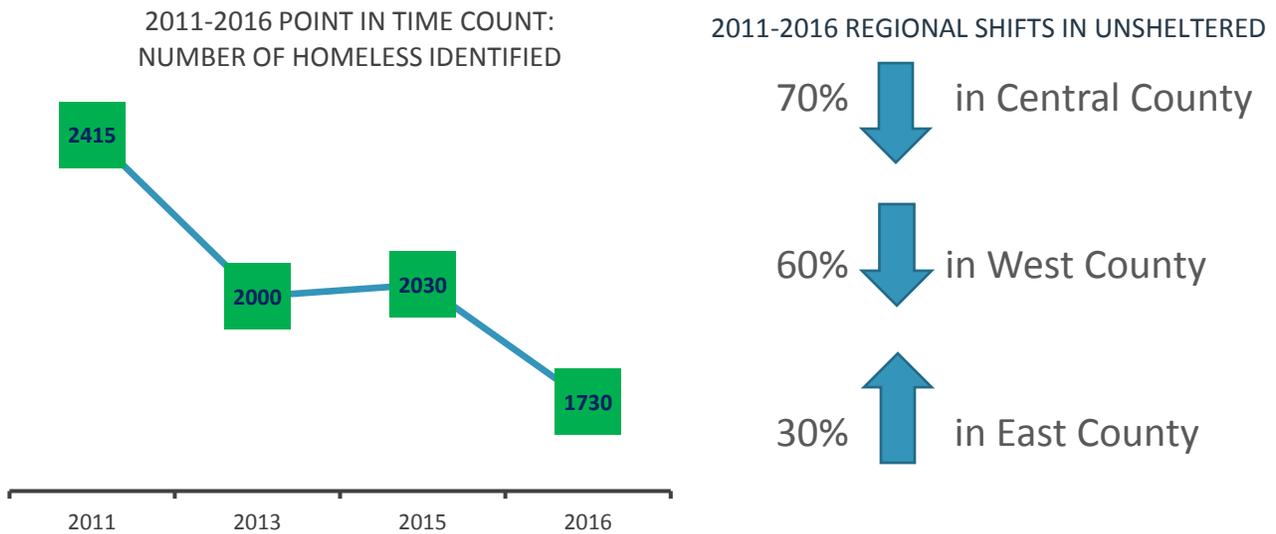
Please contact Health, Housing, and Homelessness Services at [homelessprograms@hsd.cccounty.us](mailto:homelessprograms@hsd.cccounty.us) for more information about this report or activities within the Contra Costa Homeless Continuum of Care.

## 2016 Point in Time Count – A Decrease in Numbers

On the evening of January 27, 2016, there were 3,500 individuals identified as homeless or at risk of homelessness in Contra Costa County through the [Point in Time](#) (PIT) Count. The PIT Count is an annual identification and survey of all homeless people residing in shelters or living on the streets in the county. Slightly less than half (1,730) of the 3,500 individuals were literally homeless and 1,770 were at risk of homelessness. Among the literally homeless, there were 620 people in shelters and another 1,110 were sleeping on the streets. Youth under the age of 18 made up 11% of the homeless population and two-thirds of those youth were residing in shelters the night of the count. Two-thirds of the population are male.



There has been a 28% decrease in the number of people identified through PIT in Contra Costa in the last five years. PIT also demonstrated a significant regional shift across the county for unsheltered individuals. More people reported sleeping outside or were found in encampments in East County relative to 2015 data, and fewer in West and Central County.

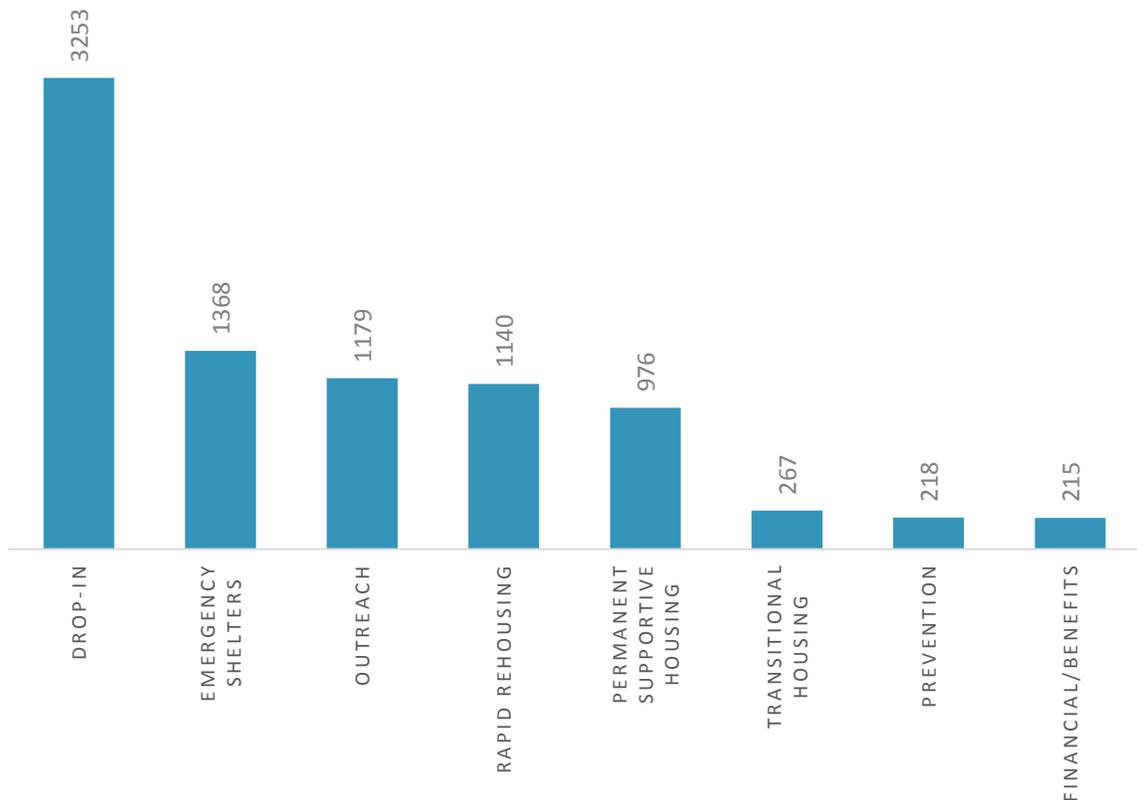


## Homeless Services in the Continuum

The Continuum serves thousands of at-risk, homeless, and formerly homeless people of all ages and demographics through the many service providers delivering homeless prevention and intervention programs. Each type of service is described below:

- **Emergency Shelters** provide temporary shelter for people that have no safe and healthy sleeping arrangements. Consumers generally come from uninhabitable locations (encampments, streets, or vehicles), are fleeing domestic violence, or lost temporary housing.
- **Support Services Only** programs include a variety of services to assist homeless individuals in “getting back on their feet” and/or simply provide basic health needs. SSOs include drop-in centers and financial and benefits programs.
- **Transitional Housing** is short-term housing for underage youth and families to get them off the streets and into more stable living environments until permanent housing can be established.
- **Rapid Rehousing** programs provide short-term financial assistance and services to help those who are experiencing homelessness to be quickly re-housed and stabilized.
- **Permanent Supportive Housing** links long-term, safe, affordable, community-based housing with flexible, voluntary support services to help the individual or family stay housed and healthy.
- **Street Outreach** provides basic hygiene supplies, housing and shelter referrals, food, and water.
- **Prevention Programs** provide short-term financial assistance to help families and individuals stay in their homes and avoid entering homelessness.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE SERVED BY PROGRAM TYPE IN FY 15-16



## The County's Homeless Population

The Contra Costa Homeless Continuum of Care served almost 8,500 consumers during Fiscal Year 2015-16 in a variety of homeless programs. Almost 1,000 of these consumers were previously homeless individuals now residing in Permanent Supportive Housing, and another 218 utilized prevention programs. Almost 6,500 individuals were literally homeless and residing in shelters or living on the streets in encampments or their vehicles. The number of people served by the Continuum continues to rise as more agencies and programs become part of the Continuum.

### FISCAL YEAR 2015-2016

6,455 Homeless Individuals  
796 Households with Minors



**Race/Ethnicity:**

- 42% Black/African American
- 37% White/Caucasian
- 9% American Indian
- 17% Latino/Hispanic

**Gender:**

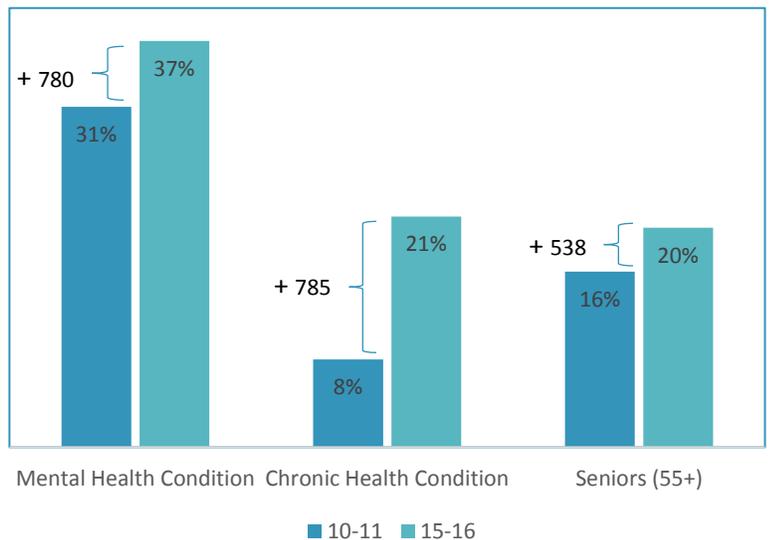
- 44% Female
- 55% Male

**Other Demographics:**

- 43 is the average age
- 58% with a Disabling Condition
- 37% with Mental Health Condition
- 32% People in Families
- 19% Employed
- 32% are Chronically Homeless Adults
- 9% Veterans

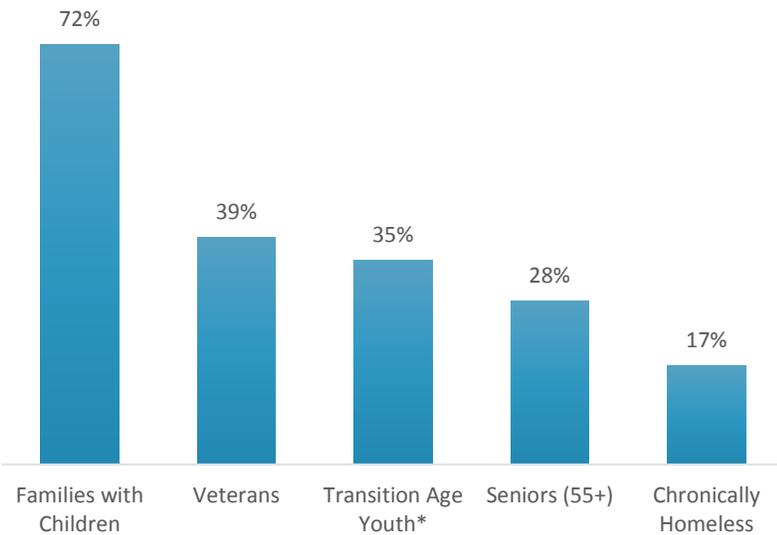
The homeless population demographic has changed in a few important ways over the last five years. First, the total number of people reached through programming continues to increase as new programs are developed within the Continuum. Certain higher-risk sub-populations experienced greater increases than others. In FY 15-16, the County's homeless population had a **higher proportion of seniors and individuals with chronic or mental health conditions** than in FY 10-11.

PERCENT OF HOMELESS POPULATION IN HIGH-RISK SUB-GROUPS FOR FY 10-11 AND 15-16



A third of those served exit our system of care into permanent housing. However, housing outcomes were different across the various sub-populations served by the Continuum. Almost three-quarters of youth exit to permanent housing (along with their families) and 39% of Veterans exit to permanent housing. Chronically homeless and seniors more often end up back on the streets or in shelters.

**PERCENT OF SUB-POPULATIONS EXITING TO PERMANENT HOUSING**



Despite positive outcomes, the number of homeless individuals in the system of care remains high because of a significant “in-flow.” Twenty-nine percent of the people served were newly identified, meaning they had not utilized our Continuum for services in prior years either because they are new to homelessness, or were homeless in another community. Among the newly identified, 28% had lost their housing in a County other than Contra Costa.

**Continuum Wide Performance Measures Met**

The Continuum met almost all of its Performance Measures for FY 15-16. Performance Measures are outcome data required by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to track progress and outcomes in HUD-funded Continuum of Care programming. Performance Measures are utilized by the Continuum to track progress in outcomes and improve programming to better meet the population’s needs. In 2015, the Continuum of Care established Performance Measures for all types of homeless programming (Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, Rapid Rehousing, Support Services and Outreach, and Permanent Supportive Housing). Performance Measures for three key program types are provided below. The dotted line illustrates targets for each measurement identified by the Continuum. There were improvements in at least two Performance Measure for all Program Types since 2014-15 Fiscal Year.

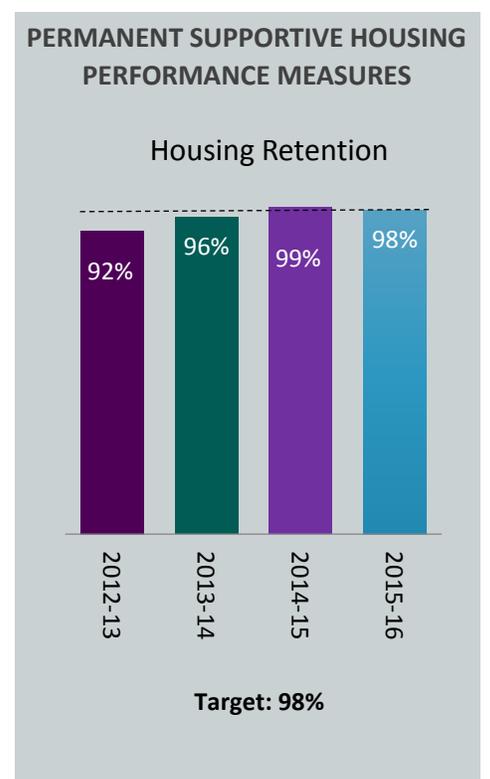
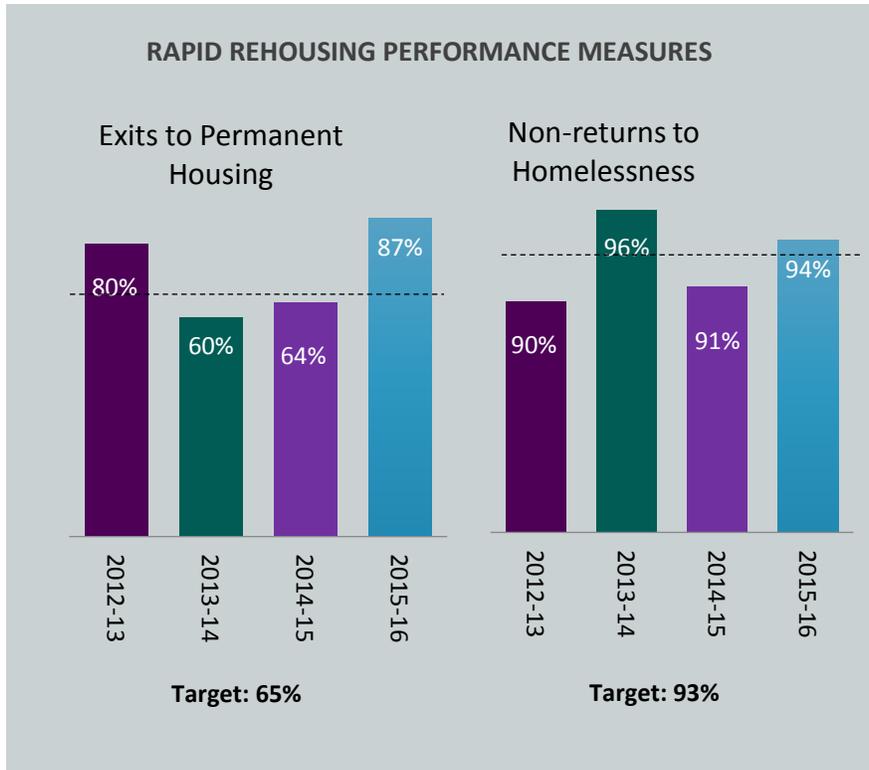
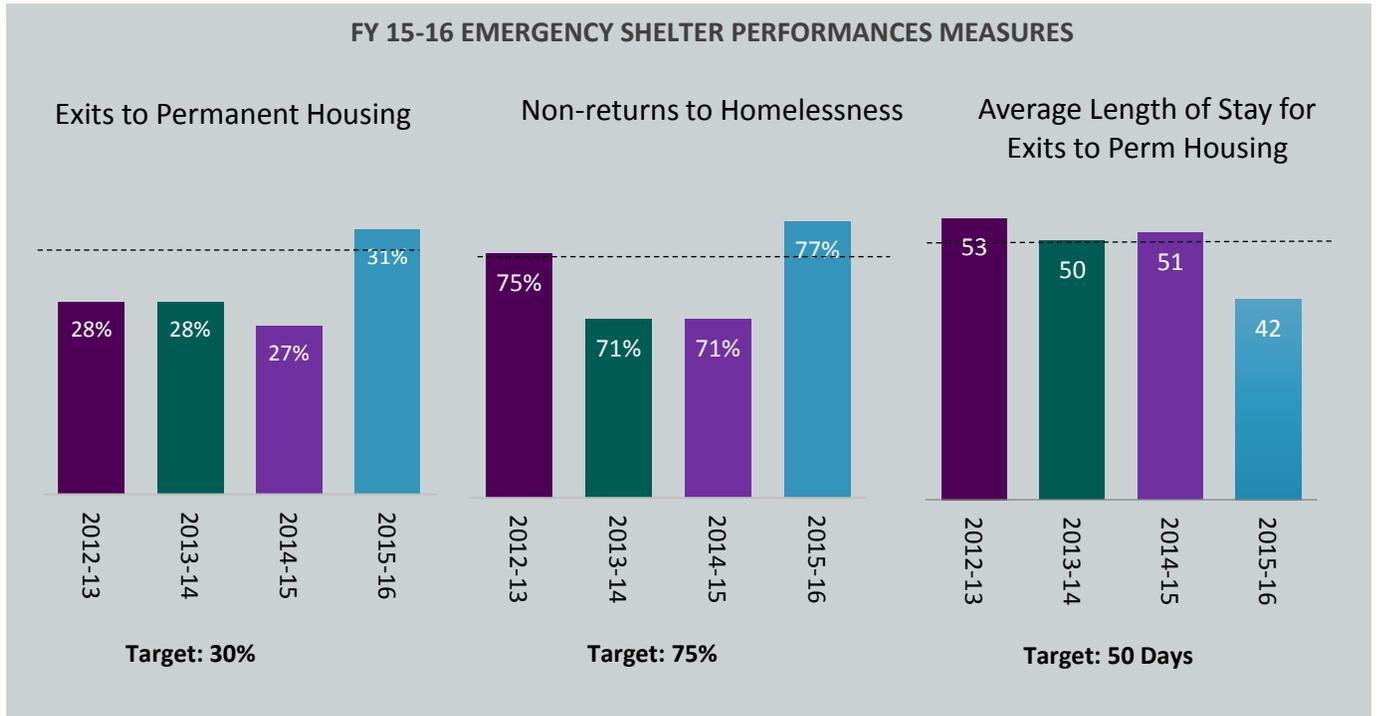
*Exits to permanent housing increased for emergency shelters, transitional housing, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing and fewer are returning to the streets.*

*Non-returns to homelessness increased for all programs that house consumers (emergency shelters, transitional housing, and rapid rehousing), indicating that people are getting placed into housing opportunities that fit their needs best and can sustain housing.*

*Length of time in emergency shelters and rapid rehousing programs decreased, suggesting the system is moving people out of homelessness quicker.*

*Housing retention for consumers in permanent supportive housing remains high and on target.*

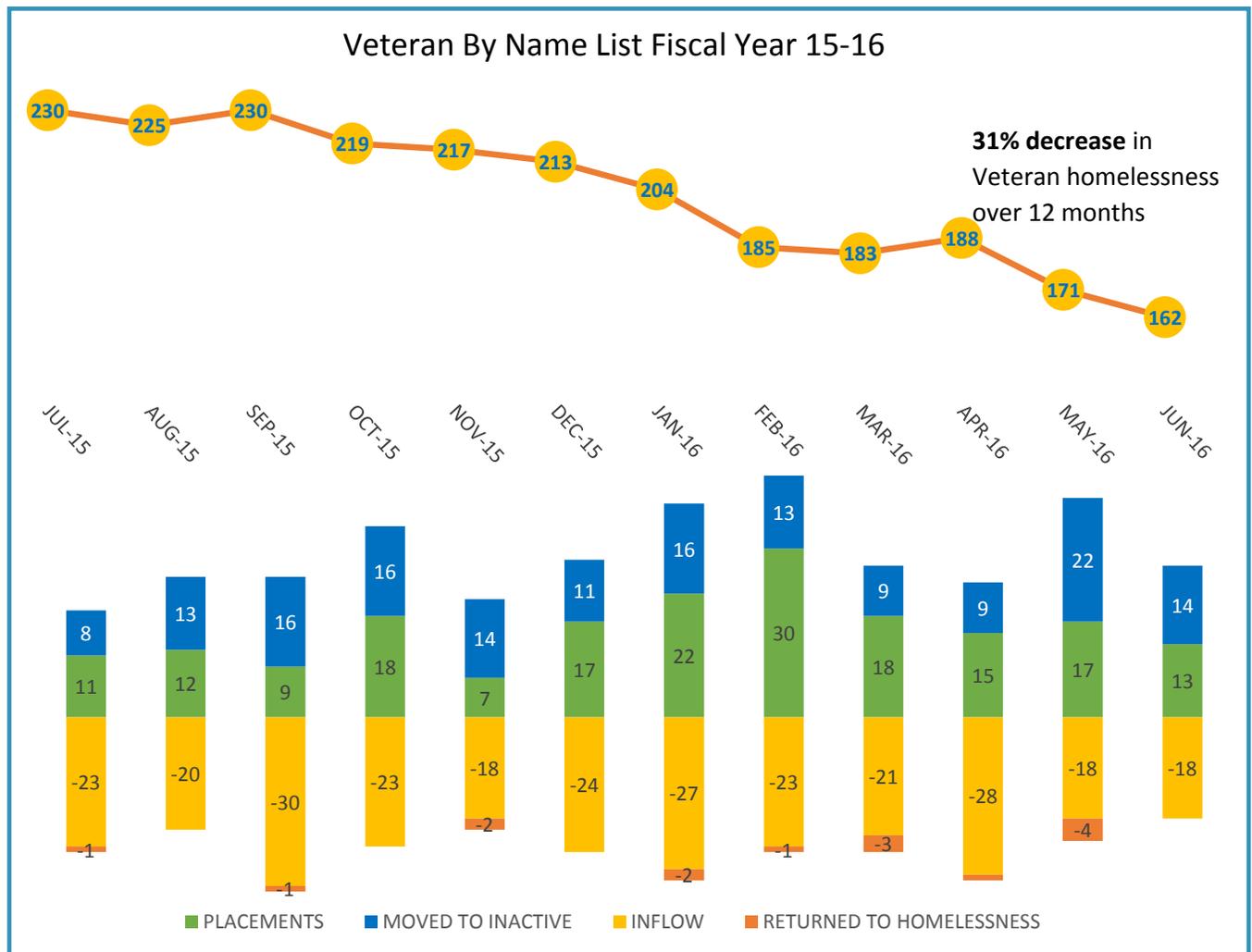
Key Performance Measures from Fiscal Year 15-16 are provided below.



## Zero:2016 — By Name Lists

In January, 2015, Contra Costa joined 70 other communities across the U.S. working to quickly and efficiently reduce the number of veterans and chronically homeless people in need of permanent housing through the national Zero: 2016 campaign organized by [Community Solutions](#).

On-going technical assistance provided through the campaign has focused on data around housing placements, as well as understanding in-flow of new and returning homeless veterans and chronically homeless. To best track this data, Contra Costa County has created a “By Name List” of homeless veterans and the chronically homeless in our community. This tool is becoming a national standard to help communities get a clearer picture of who needs help, how many people are being housed and how many people are entering or returning to homelessness each month. During the 15-16 fiscal year, the number of homeless veterans on the By Name List decreased by 31 percent.



The Veteran By Name List has become a critical tool for case management with veterans currently in our system. Now case managers meet twice-monthly to discuss every Veteran on the By Name List to identify needs, resources, and next steps to achieving better health and housing. The Continuum will build the Chronic By Name List in the next fiscal year to meet the new HUD chronic definition.

## Coordinated Entry

Implementation of the Coordinated Entry System in Contra Costa County is underway with greater agency participation in VI-SPDAY completion. The VI-SPDAT is the Coordinated Entry assessment tool used to identify case management and housing needs. By the end of the 15-16 FY, 32% of adults had completed a VI-SPDAT. The Continuum also developed a model for the Coordinated Entry System that illustrates how consumers move through the system of service providers into permanent housing.



Consumers may self-refer or enter the homeless system of care through referrals from service providers, law enforcement, primary and behavioral health care providers, business owners, and community members. Referral agencies then work with consumers to identify, assess, and prioritize health and housing needs.



## IDENTIFICATION, ASSESSMENT, AND PRIORITIZATION

### Homeless Info

Referrals to service providers  
Shelter referrals  
Housing needs assessment



### CORE

Day and nighttime outreach  
Referrals to behavioral health  
Housing needs assessment  
Street medicine  
Benefits enrollment  
Shelter placement



### CARE

Warming center  
Primary and behavioral health services  
Shelter referrals  
Benefits enrollment  
Housing needs assessment  
Rapid Rehousing screening



Consumers work with service providers to obtain the most appropriate permanent housing for each household. Some utilize emergency and transitional shelter while working toward permanent housing.



## HOUSING PLACEMENT

Housing services:

- Financial Assistance and Services to rapidly rehouse individuals
- Housing Navigation
- Housing Location



## A Legal and Personal Identity

“Kris” lived in Oakland all of her life, but details about her identity were unclear as she had been raised by her grandmother under a nickname. She worked most of her adulthood as an inn keeper at a motel in Oakland, obtaining a wage (under the table) and room and board through her employer. When that employer passed away, Kris became homeless. Kris entered our system of care unsure of her officially documented name or birthdate and had no personal identification. Without identification Kris was unable to obtain the necessary benefits to gain housing or healthcare.

Kris did know that she was raised in Oakland, guessed her age to be 73, and remembered the street she grew up on and the middle school she attended. Contra Costa County Emergency Shelter staff started a six-month effort to learn Kris’ identity. The Oakland School District allowed shelters staff to look through every yearbook from the years she may have attended. They found her senior picture and her real name, and discovered she was actually 93 (20 years older than she’d thought). That was all the information she needed to obtain a Social Security card, Cal Fresh, and Medical benefits with the certified documentation provided by the school district. Finally, Kris was approved for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for elderly individuals, the last resource necessary to obtain housing.

Kris has warmed the hearts of many at the shelter as she has taken it upon herself to “manage” the laundry. She greeted each new shelter consumer with clean towels and linens. Kris has been described as “a mother” and “natural caretaker” to staff and consumers at the shelter.

Kris is now living in transitional housing and working with a housing navigator to identify affordable senior housing complexes.

