

Jefferson County Sheriff's Office



Sheriff Dave Marshak



County Executive Dennis Gannon

Homeless Outreach Team

Findings Report

January 1st to June 30th,
2022

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Unit Objective

On January 5th, 2022, the Sheriff's Office initiated a two-officer Homeless Outreach Team. The goal of this unit was to locate and identify the homeless population and their needs. The unit was also tasked with identifying additional resources in the county and what services resource providers could deliver to the population within the county. After six months of collecting data, the findings would be compiled into a comprehensive report for County Leaders to review.

Definition of Homeless

Based on federal guidelines, 42 U.S.C. § 11302, general definition of homeless individuals, four levels of homelessness exist. These categories are:

1) **Literally Homeless:**

- a) **Unsheltered Locations;**
 - i) an individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or
 - ii) an individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;
- b) **Emergency Shelters and Transitional Housing;**
 - i) an individual or family living in a supervised publicly or
 - ii) privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including hotels and motels paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, congregate shelters, and transitional housing) or
 - iii) an individual who resided in a shelter or place not meant for human habitation and who is exiting an institution where he or she temporarily resided;

2) **Imminent Risk of Homelessness;** an Individual or Family who—

- a) will imminently lose their housing, including housing they own, rent, or live in without paying rent, are sharing with others, and rooms in hotels or motels not paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, as evidenced by—
 - i) court order resulting from an eviction action that notifies the individual or family that they must leave within 14 days;
 - ii) the individual or family having a primary nighttime residence that is a room in a hotel or motel and where they lack the resources necessary to reside there for more than 14 days; or
 - iii) credible evidence indicating that the owner or renter of the housing will not allow the individual or family to stay for more than 14 days, and any oral statement from an individual or family seeking homeless assistance that is found to be credible shall be considered credible evidence for purposes of this clause;
- b) has no subsequent residence identified; and
- c) lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing;

3) **Homeless under other Federal Statutes;** unaccompanied youth and homeless families with children and youth defined as homeless under other Federal statutes who—

- a) have experienced a long-term period without living independently in permanent housing,
- b) have experienced persistent instability as measured by frequent moves over such period, and
- c) can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time because of chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance addiction, histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse, the presence of a child or youth with a disability, or multiple barriers to employment.

4) Fleeing/Attempting to flee Domestic Violence.

Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, the Secretary shall consider to be homeless any individual or family who—

- a) is experiencing trauma or a lack of safety related to, or fleeing or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous, traumatic, or life-threatening conditions related to the violence against the individual or a family member in the individual’s or family’s current housing situation, including where the health and safety of children are jeopardized;
- b) has no other safe residence; and
- c) lacks the resources to obtain other safe permanent housing.

Population referrals by source

During the month of January, Deputies from the unit made personal contact with several first responder agencies within the county and various other county agencies that would be dealing with subjects who may need assistance. During the next six months, these agencies were contacted and asked to send or refer individuals to us that needed assistance. Below are the number of referrals received from several of the agencies, and a breakdown of the demographics of the people contacted.

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Number of referrals</u>
Jefferson County Parks Department – Director Tim Pigg	1
Jefferson County Health Department – Jillian Bissell and Anne-Marie Denny	4
Jefferson County 911 – Chief Travis Williams	5
Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office – Department wide to include Jail staff	100 +
Arnold Police Department – Chief Bryan Carrol	16
Byrnes Mill Police Department – Chief Frank Selvaggio	0
Crystal City Police Department – Captain Mike Pruno	0
Desoto Police Department – Chief Jeff McCreary	0
Eureka Police Department – Lt. Michael Werges	0
Festus Police Department – Chief Tim Lewis	0
Herculaneum Police Department – Chief Sharia Kyle and Captain Mark Grobe	6
Hillsboro Police Department – Chief Steve Meinberg	0
Pevely Police Department – Chief Mark Glenn	8
Hillsboro Fire Department – Chief Brian Gaudet	1
North Jefferson County Ambulance District – Chief Jamie Guinn	3
Big River Ambulance District	1
Missouri Department of Transportation	2
Citizens of the County	7

Population Demographics

During the first six months of the unit being formed, Deputies assigned to the unit were able to locate approximately 64 subjects from over 150 referrals. The information for the located subjects is broken down below.

County Population as a whole: Subjects contacted – 64

Gender: Male – 33 (51%) Female – 31 (49%) Veteran – 3 (4%)

Age: 19 to 29 – 10 (16%) 30 to 39 – 18 (28%) 40 to 49 – 15 (23%)
 50 to 59 – 12 (19%) 60+ - 4 (6%) Unknown – 5 (8%)

Mental Health issues: Diagnosed – 9 (14%) Others showing possible signs – 10 (16%)

Admitted Drug users: 22 (34%)

Subjects with Criminal Past: 32 (50%)

Housing arrangement at time of location: Outside – 38 (60%) Hotel – 15 (23%) Other - 11 (17%)

Population Breakdown by Incorporation

Unincorporated Jefferson County: **Subjects contacted -- 29**

Gender: Male – 19 Female – 10 Veteran - 3

Age: 19 to 29 - 4 30 to 39 - 6 40 to 49 - 6 50 to 59 - 4 60+ - 3 Unknown - 5

Mental Health issues: Diagnosed - 3 Showing possible signs but undiagnosed – 6

Admitted Drug users: 8

Subjects with Criminal Past: 12

Housing arrangement at time of location: Outside - 18 Hotel – 1 Other - 10

City of Arnold: Subjects contacted -- 7

Gender: Male – 3 Female – 4

Age: 19 to 29 – 2 30 to 39 – 2 40 to 49 – 0 50 to 59 – 3 60+ – 0

Mental Health issues: Diagnosed – 2 Showing possible signs but undiagnosed – 2

Admitted Drug users: 5

Subjects with Criminal Histories: 5

Housing arrangement at time of location: Outside – 6 Hotel – 1 Other – 0

City of Byrnes Mill: Subjects contacted – 0*

City of Crystal City: Subjects contacted -- 3

Gender: Male – 1 Female – 2

Age: 19 to 29 – 1 30 to 39 – 1 40 to 49 – 0 50 to 59 – 1 60+ – 0

Mental Health issues: Diagnosed – 1 Showing possible signs but undiagnosed – 0

Admitted Drug users: 3

Subjects with Criminal Histories: 2

Housing arrangement at time of location: Outside – 3 Hotel – 0 Other – 0

City of Desoto: Subjects contacted -- 2

Gender: Male – 1 Female – 1

Age: 19 to 29 – 0 30 to 39 – 0 40 to 49 – 0 50 to 59 – 2 60+ – 0

Mental Health issues: Diagnosed – 1 Showing possible signs but undiagnosed – 0

Admitted Drug users: 2

Subjects with Criminal Histories: 2

Housing arrangement at time of location: Outside – 2 Hotel – 0 Other – 0

City of Eureka: Subjects contacted – 0**

City of Festus: Subjects contacted -- 7

Gender: Male – 1 Female – 4

Age: 19 to 29 - 1 30 to 39 - 4 40 to 49 - 2 50 to 59 - 0 60+ - 0

Mental Health issues: Diagnosed - 1 Showing possible signs but undiagnosed – 0

Admitted Drug users: 0

Subjects with Criminal Histories: 2

Housing arrangement at time of location: Outside - 4 Hotel – 3 Other – 0

City of Herculaneum: Subjects contacted -- 2

Gender: Male – 0 Female – 2

Age: 19 to 29 - 1 30 to 39 - 1 40 to 49 - 0 50 to 59 - 0 60+ - 0

Mental Health issues: Diagnosed - 0 Showing possible signs but undiagnosed – 0

Admitted Drug users: 0

Subjects with Criminal Histories: 0

Housing arrangement at time of location: Outside - 2 Hotel - 0 Other - 0

City of Hillsboro: Subjects contacted – 0*

City of Pevely: Subjects contacted -- 14

Gender: Male – 6 Female – 8

Age: 19 to 29 – 2 30 to 39 - 3 40 to 49 - 5 50 to 59 - 3 60+ - 1

Mental Health issues: Diagnosed - 1 Showing possible signs but undiagnosed – 2

Admitted Drug users: 4

Subjects with Criminal Histories: 9

Housing arrangement at time of location: Outside - 3 Hotel - 10 Other – 1

* Both of the Chiefs of Police for Byrnes Mill City and Hillsboro City advised that they do have limited contact with the homeless community and that the subjects in their jurisdictions tend to be transient due to the city's locations within the county. It should also be noted that the City of Hillsboro has the County Jail within its jurisdiction, and they regularly receive calls for service from the community for subjects that appear to be homeless, or that are loitering within the city who were just released from incarceration.

** The City of Eureka recently incorporated a small residential section of the county and advised that their contact with the homeless population within their city is mainly in the business district, which is based in St. Louis County.

Youth Population

While obtaining data from school districts within the county it was learned that they rely on guidance from the Missouri Department of Education which uses the federal guidelines of 42 U.S.C. § 11434a(2):

The term “homeless children and youth”—

A. means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence...; and

B. includes —

- i. children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters, or are abandoned in hospitals;
- ii. children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings...;
- iii. children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- iv. migratory children... who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

However, most districts advised that for a child to be listed as homeless it is as simple as the student saying their parents kicked them out of the house. Several districts advised they are forced to receive students from outside their district or even neighboring districts from around the metro area. Once a child is declared homeless and requires transportation, the district of origin for the student must pay for that transportation to the school the student is attending.

Contact was made with several of the larger school districts within the county to see what the homeless student population in each district looked like. The list below is what they reported:

Fox School District reported that out of 11,000 students, almost 300 students were labeled as homeless with district files.

Windsor School District reported that out of 3000 students, 36 students were labeled as homeless with district files. Windsor did advise that of the 36 students, 10 were staying in hotels with families as a result of house fires that displaced the families.

Northwest School District reported that out of 6215 students, 44 students were labeled as homeless with district files.

There was no further direct response from any of the other districts within the county.

Robin Scott with Jefferson County Community Partnership was able to provide this data on the homeless High School population for each district, as of August 2021:

Crystal City – 6	De Soto - 15	Festus - 4
Fox – 21	Grandview – 17	Herculaneum (Dunklin) - 3
Hillsboro - 19	Jefferson R-7 – 4	Northwest – 23
Seckman - 18	Windsor – 14	
Total – 144		

County-Based Resources

During the first two months of identifying resources, it was discovered that there were multiple groups, organizations, and businesses providing services in the county that were county-based. We also learned that several groups did not know the others existed. This led to a divided effort in obtaining funding and/or goods for distribution.

On June 1st the Outreach Team hosted a Resource Summit for all the services in the St. Louis metro area. Anyone who could provide a representative was invited to attend. There were over 175 people from over 80 organizations in attendance.

The outcome of this meeting lead to multiple organizations and groups learning of each other and establishing connections for distributing goods and services in a collaborative manner across the county. Several smaller groups were able to connect with larger organizations that provide goods and services to distribute those resources and more effectively make direct referrals to services.

This is a list of resources that we have found to be invaluable and that will assist anytime they are contacted: Jefferson County Health Department, Jefferson Franklin Community Action Group, New Hope Fellowship, Comtre, 25:35 Ministries, Finding Grace Ministries / The Harbor, Gracelife Chapel, St. Patrick Center, Festus Garden Apartments, Feed My People – High Ridge, Peace Pantry, Jefferson County Homeless Youth Initiative, Joyce Meyer Ministries, and The Free Store Desoto.

Point-in-Time (PIT) Count

On the night of February 23, 2022, multiple groups assisted in the annual Point-in-Time count throughout the county. The PIT count, which is federally guided, shows that the homeless population within Jefferson County has increased from 764 to 1559 persons. This is a 104 percent increase from 2021.

Homeless Outreach Team Success

Over the past six months, the unit has had several successful interactions with the homeless population. Many of these interactions involved assisting individuals with transportation to locations capable of providing essential support. In some cases, the Outreach Team provided sustained assistance over extended periods of time to resolve longer-term issues.

One such individual was fleeing a domestic violence situation with her father. The Outreach Team provided an escort for her to retrieve her vehicle and pet. After discovering she would be forced to sleep on the couch of an acquaintance for the long term, team members acted as liaisons with several resource providers.

Deputies were able to assist in verifying her statements to these organizations and within three months were ultimately able to obtain long-term funded housing and furnishings for her and her 5-year-old son.

The unit also assisted a transient male who was passing through the county in early spring. This individual had no family or friends in the area and was attempting to travel to Miami, Florida. Through relationships the unit established in the community, funding was eventually obtained from a private citizen for a one-way bus ticket to Miami. Deputies assisted in transporting the individual to the St. Louis bus station and helped him purchase his ticket.

Summary of Findings

Based on the information we have gathered from organizations, individuals, and past records, we can conclude the following:

The population of the county is continually changing in demographics. The statistics contained in this report do not adequately account for the number of people currently sharing residency with others, fleeing domestic violence situations, or those at immediate risk of losing their housing, since these groups tend not to reach out for help until they are without shelter or have some contact with law enforcement.

The main homeless population appears to be people between the ages of 30 and 49, most of whom have a documented criminal history. There also appears to be undocumented histories of drug use and mental health issues within a large amount of the population.

Of the population that we contacted, most were unable to sustain a job for a multitude of reasons, such as lack of transportation (both personal and public), lack of funding to obtain proper self-identification (birth certificates, social security cards, or state ID/driver license), current or past substance abuse issues, physical or mental health disabilities, lack of shelter to maintain personal appearance, and lack of cellular communications.

There are very limited affordable means of transportation within the county. The main means of public transportation is Jeffco Express, and most of its routes are along the Interstate 55 corridor between Arnold and Festus, with some to Hillsboro and Desoto. Jeffco Express makes no regular stops in unincorporated Jefferson County. There are currently no taxi-based transportation services within the county. Furthermore, there are no public transportation services that travel the Hwy 21 corridor from the County Court House in Hillsboro to the northern county line, east or west on Hwy 141 from Arnold to Fenton, east or west on Hwy M, MM, or W, the Hwy 30 corridor, or any connecting routes to adjoining counties.

Due to the lack of affordable, public transportation within the county, a large amount of the population is unable to reach services that can assist with health care, food, and the ability to sustain employment.

There are no established 24-hour shelters or transitional housing options available within the county. Any housing that is provided relies upon payment by a third party to a hotel located in the cities of Arnold, Pevely, and Festus. This leads to a mixture of demographics and potential risk for crime created in these areas. There is no separation available between men, women, or families. No separation between families with children and subjects that are dependent on drugs or alcohol. Furthermore, there is no vetting of the subjects to help ensure the safe operations of the facilities for the business owners and the general public who also have access to the hotels. These hotels become a dumping ground for individuals and families from within, but not limited to Jefferson County.

There are considerable resources for food, medical care, clothing, and personal hygiene products available across the county to anyone in need. The problem with obtaining the services is the lack of transportation to the

services or the lack of proper staffing to provide effective services from the provider to the population. One example of this is the Jefferson Franklin Community Action Group which helps distribute HUD funding, WIC funds, ERAP funds, and Energy assistance. This organization is currently processing over 3000 requests monthly with only 15 staff members. This causes a delay in effectively distributing these funds to help subjects in need.

Unfortunately, the Sheriff's Office is not positioned to provide financial assistance, even in small amounts, to those who need it. This issue may be a topic for discussion to explore options as this unit moves forward.

Several of the major organizations have developed a working relationship with this unit and they rely on the unit to be their "boots on the ground" in order to identify and verify subjects and their living conditions, as well as escort their staff to contact subjects for verification of statements on their applications.

The Sheriff's Office has an established Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) which consists of two licensed mental health counselors (one full-time and one grant-funded) who have been vital to the Outreach Team. Members of the CIT team generally spend an average of two days per week working with the Outreach Team in contacting, assessing, and providing services to the homeless population.