



City of Hamilton Report for Information

To: Mayor and Members
General Issues Committee

Date: April 9, 2025

Report No: HSC25011

Subject/Title: Movement of Individuals living in
Encampments to Housing

Ward(s) Affected: City Wide

Recommendations

- 1) That Report HSC25011 respecting Movement of Individuals living in Encampments to Housing **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Key Facts

- This is the first report-back following Council direction to staff at the November 27, 2024 Council meeting for ongoing semi-annual reporting on unsheltered individuals and their access to shelter or housing.
- This report highlights that 372 individuals were recorded in the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) as individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness during the reporting period and outlines the extent to which these individuals secured emergency shelter, transitional housing, and other housing in the reporting period.
- Data was analysed for a defined six-month reporting period of July 1 to December 31, 2024.
- This report is meant to provide information to Council to inform their decision-making process. Staff will continue to provide General Issues Committee (GIC) with semi-annual, data-driven reports of a similar nature, with the aim of enhancing data completeness in future reporting where possible.

Financial Considerations

As this report provides information only, there are no budget impact(s) or costs associated with the report.

Background

At the November 27, 2024, Council meeting, Council passed the following motion:

“That staff be directed to report back to the General Issues Committee (GIC) on a semi-annual basis respecting the number of individuals that have transitioned out of tent encampments to social housing, residential care facilities, transitional housing, and shelter beds.”

This report is the first report-back, providing an overview of the individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the city, and the frequency and duration of their stays in shelters and housing for the reporting period of July 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024, and is informed by the data collection from the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) database.

Analysis

1) Methodology, Data Sources, and Limitations

Data on individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness is collected by the Housing Focused Street Outreach (HFSO) team, who interact with individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness through a housing first, rights-based lens to connect individuals to services and supports. Individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness can consent to having their personal information and service interactions stored within the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS).

Once individuals have consented to data collection the following data is collected and stored in the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS):

- Name and personal details;
- Housing History (individual’s current housing situation as well as when clients move from one housing type to another e.g. unsheltered homelessness to long-term housing; and,
- Goods and services – referrals to financial aid, housing supports, mental health and physical health, Protocol awareness and education, Indigenous specific supports, pet-related supports and referrals, and shower/washroom, shelter, drop-in, and weather event referrals.

If individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness secured a shelter bed, transitional housing, or other housing including social housing or a subsidized bed within a Residential Care Facility (RCF) that is part of the City of Hamilton Subsidy Program, this data is gathered from:

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- Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS);
 - For a subsidized bed in a Residential Care Facility (RCF) that is part of the City of Hamilton Subsidy Program or for housing secured through the Access to Housing (ATH) program, through respective City program records;
 - For certain organizations serving asylum claimants, through the records of these organizations.

The data reported here is not exhaustive of all individuals that experienced unsheltered homelessness during the reporting period. As previously stated, individuals must consent to have their information stored in the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS). The Housing First Street Outreach Team (HFSO) takes a relationship-based approach with individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness and is instrumental in helping individuals connect to needed services. Even with this approach, not all individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the City, nor those accessing housing services will be captured due to declined consent. In addition, once individuals consent to having their information in Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS), it can be challenging to collect and document their daily sheltered or unsheltered homelessness experience.

2) Individuals Experiencing Unsheltered Homeless as recorded in the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)

For the six-month reporting period, staff recorded 372 unique individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness in the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS). Table 1 illustrates the number of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness and the recorded types of shelter / housing they secured during the reporting period. Of the 372 unique unsheltered individuals, 158 individuals secured some form of shelter / housing in the reporting period.¹

The most accessed form of shelter or housing for individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness was emergency shelter beds. For the 130 individuals who stayed in an emergency shelter during the reporting period (Row 1 of Table 1), the average length of time spent in the shelter was 46 days per individual (not shown in Table), in a reporting period of 183 days. On average, individuals stayed in the shelter for 3 distinct stays, but this number widely ranged from 1 to 35 distinct stays per person (not shown in Table).²

A total of 49 individuals (Row 3 of Table 1) were recorded in the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) as housed in other housing during the reporting period. "Housed in other housing" is a broad category capturing the following: home ownership, housed in family's house / apartment, lodging house, rental at market

¹The sum of Rows 1, 2, and 3 of Table 1 will be different than the reported 158 unique individuals that secured some type of shelter / housing, because some individuals secured more than one type of shelter / housing, they are counted in all relevant categories.

² Individuals can book into and out of shelter multiples times during the reporting period both before and after a recorded instance of experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Emergency shelter stays identify how many times an individual has had an instance of staying in the shelter regardless of length of stay.

price, rental at market price with rent subsidy, residential care facility, single room occupancy, social and community housing, and supportive housing.

Table 1: Number (and percent) of unique individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness³ by program access or housing outcome

Row	Category	Number (and percent)
1	Unique individuals identified as staying in an emergency shelter at least one time in reporting period	130 (32%)
2	Unique individuals identified as staying in transitional housing at least one time in reporting period	13 (3%)
3	Unique individuals identified as housed in other housing⁴ at least one time in reporting period	49 (12%) ⁵
4	Unique individuals with no recorded program access or housing outcomes in reporting period	214 (52%)
5	Total unique individuals identified as unsheltered at least one time in reporting period	372⁶

Individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness spent approximately 16% of days in the reporting period in some form of shelter or housing (emergency shelter, transitional housing, or other housing), and 52% of days in unsheltered homelessness (not shown in Table). However, a third of the time in the reporting period is unaccounted for – as in there is no recorded unsheltered status, housed status, or program outcome recorded. The unsheltered population is transient by nature, with the number of unsheltered individuals fluctuating daily and seasonally, which makes this type of data collection

³Includes only individual client records for those who have consented to have their information collected and stored in the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) and may be an underrepresentation of the total population of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness and accessing programs or realizing housing outcomes during the reporting period. Excludes short-term housing programs not using the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) database, e.g. Bakhita House and Wesley ASAP. Excludes other local transitional housing programs not funded by the City (e.g. YMCA).

⁴“Housed in other housing” includes the following housing types: home ownership, housed in family’s house/apartment, lodging house, rental at market price, rental at market price with rent subsidy, residential care facility, single room occupancy, social and community housing, and supportive housing. These results can overlap with and/or conflict with information about an individual’s housing status collected directly from the residential care facility and supportive housing programs.

⁵ Excludes two individuals that were housed in a subsidized bed in a Residential Care Facility (RCF) that is part of the City of Hamilton Subsidy Program.

⁶ If an individual secured more than one type of shelter / housing, they are counted in all relevant categories. Thirty-two (32) individuals secured two different types of shelter / housing, and one individual is counted in all 3 categories. Therefore, while the total number of unique individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness is 372 individuals, the sum of rows 1, 2, 3, and 4 is 406.

challenging and highlights why the relationship-based approach employed by the Housing First Street Outreach (HFSO) team is a best practice approach.

3) City Program Records⁷

Through City program records it was confirmed that three individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness (as reported in the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) database) were housed in a subsidized bed in a Residential Care Facility (RCF) that is part of the City of Hamilton Subsidy Program. Two individuals were housed through the Access to Housing (ATH) program during the reporting period.

4) Records of Organizations Serving Asylum Claimants

Through the records of Wesley ASAP and Bakhita House, it was confirmed that two individuals that experienced unsheltered homelessness (as reported in the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) database) accessed a shelter bed with one of these organizations, and three individuals accessed housing through the support of one of these organizations.

5) Next Steps

This report provides an overview of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness, and the extent to which they secure emergency shelter, transitional housing, or other housing accommodations during a defined six-month reporting period of July 1 to December 31, 2024. Data completeness is an ongoing challenge, and staff will look to make enhancements to data for future reporting periods, including efforts to, where possible, increase the level of Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) consent obtained. Staff will return to General Issues Committee (GIC) with reports of a similar nature for subsequent six-month reporting periods to build knowledge around the extent to which individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness secure shelter, transitional housing, or other housing.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

This report provides information on individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness, and the extent to which they secured housing during a defined six-month reporting period. Reviewing this information over a series of reporting periods will provide Council to have more relevant information so they can best address homelessness in the city, which aligns with Strategic Priority 2.1 – *Increase the supply of affordable and supportive housing and reduce chronic homelessness.*

⁷ Housing status information for two individuals is not captured in the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) reported data Section (2) of this report.

Consultation

Two City-funded shelters serving asylum claimants (Wesley ASAP and Bakhita House) were consulted to confirm whether unsheltered individuals accessed their services, as these organizations do not use the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) database.

Appendices and Schedules Attached

N/A

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