



Providing Compassionate Care for Worcester's Homeless Population

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Part 1

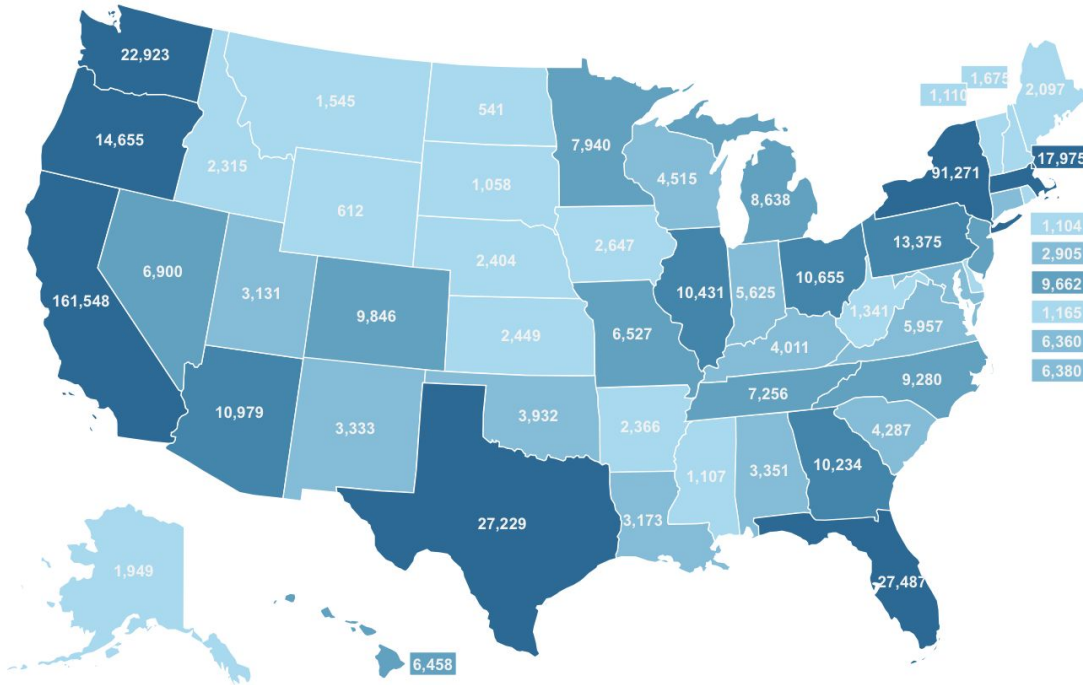
Definition & Characterization of the Homeless Populations



Definitions

- **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)** defines a person as:
 - **Homeless:** “lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and sleeps in a shelter designated for temporary living accommodations or place not designated for human habitation”
 - **Chronically Homeless:** “Either (1) an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has been continuously homeless for a year or more, OR (2) an unaccompanied individual with a disabling condition who has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.”
 - **Sheltered Homeless:** staying in emergency shelter, safe haven, or transitional housing

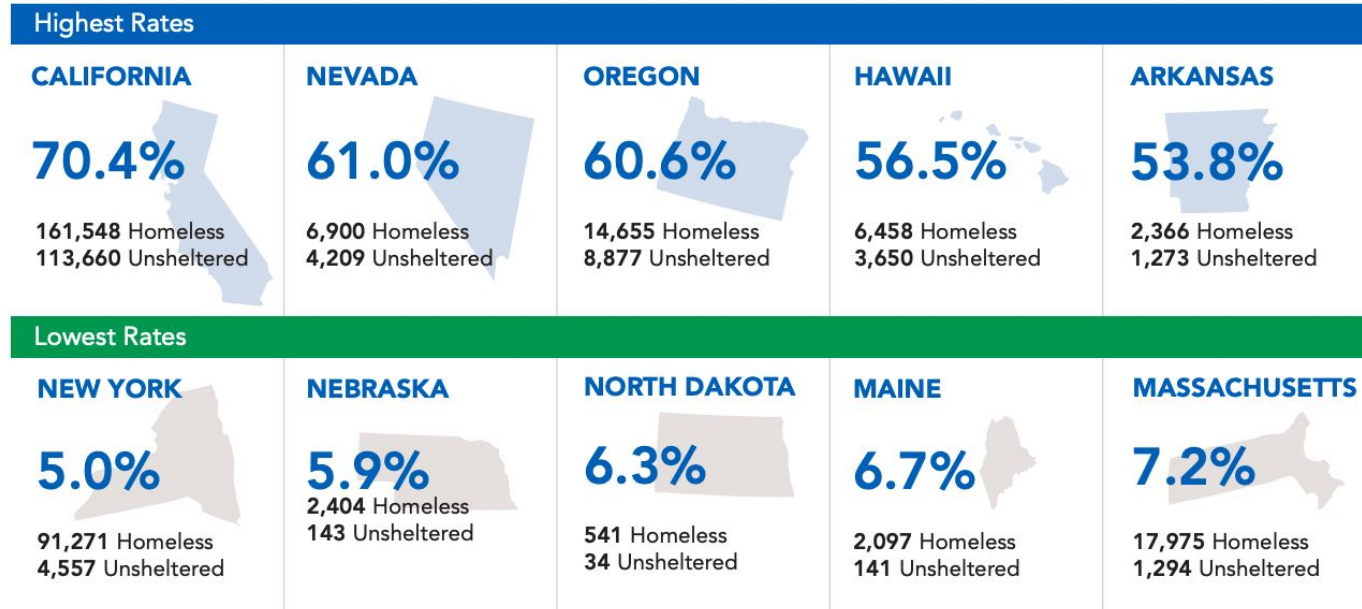
National Statistics - Geographic Distribution



- **Total in 2019: 567, 715**
- **Total in 2020: 580,466**
- **Highest Numbers (by state):**
 - California: 161,548
 - New York: 91, 271
 - Florida: 27, 487
- **For Comparison:**
 - Massachusetts: 17,975

National Statistics - Geographic Distribution

EXHIBIT 1.7: States with the Highest and Lowest Percentages of People Experiencing Homelessness who were Unsheltered
2020



National Statistics - Demographics

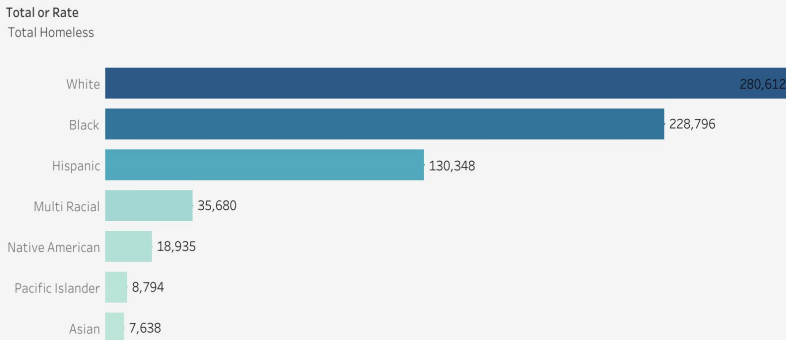
Gender

- Men are more likely to experience homelessness - account for 70% of individuals
- Females - 30%, Transgender - 0.8%, Non-binary - 0.3%

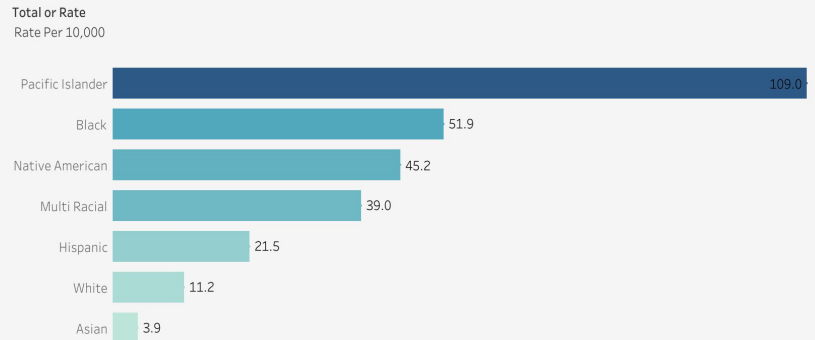
Race

- National rate of homelessness 18 per 10,000
- Pacific Islander, Black or African American, Native American, Multiracial, and Hispanic populations have elevated rates of homelessness
- For total homelessness - numerically, White Americans make up the largest group

Counts and Rates by Race / Ethnicity, 2020

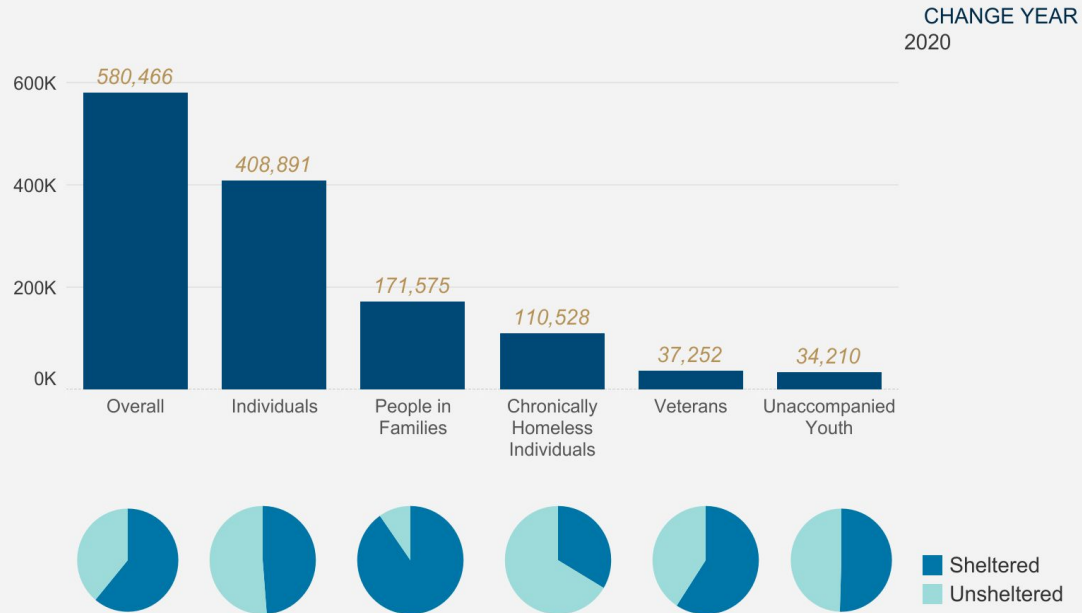


Counts and Rates by Race / Ethnicity, 2020



National Statistics - Types of Homelessness

Total Number of People Experiencing Homelessness per Year by Type, 2007–2020

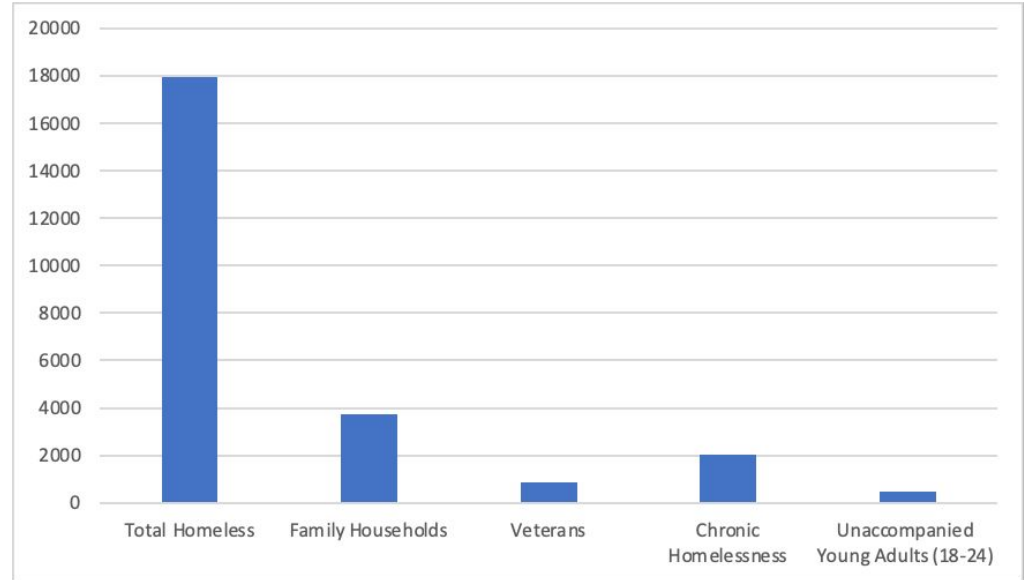


Subgroups

- Individuals - 70% of homeless population
- People in families with children - 30%
- Chronically homeless - 19%
- Unaccompanied youth (under age 25) - 6%

Homelessness in Massachusetts

Category of People Experiencing Homelessness	Numbers*
Total Homeless	17,975
Family Households	3,714
Veterans	836
Chronic Homelessness	2,024
Unaccompanied Young Adults (18-24)	481
*Numbers as of January 2020	



Statistics of Worcester's Homeless Population

- Total 1,401 people homeless on a given night in Worcester city/county on any night in 2020
 - 16.9 per 10,000 people
- 7% increase in Worcester's homeless population between 2007 and 2020
- Median rent in Worcester \$1,450 (two bedroom apartment)

Category of People Experiencing Homelessness	Numbers*
Total Homeless	1,593
Family Households	280
Veterans	155
Chronic Homelessness	63
Youth	83
*Numbers from 2019	

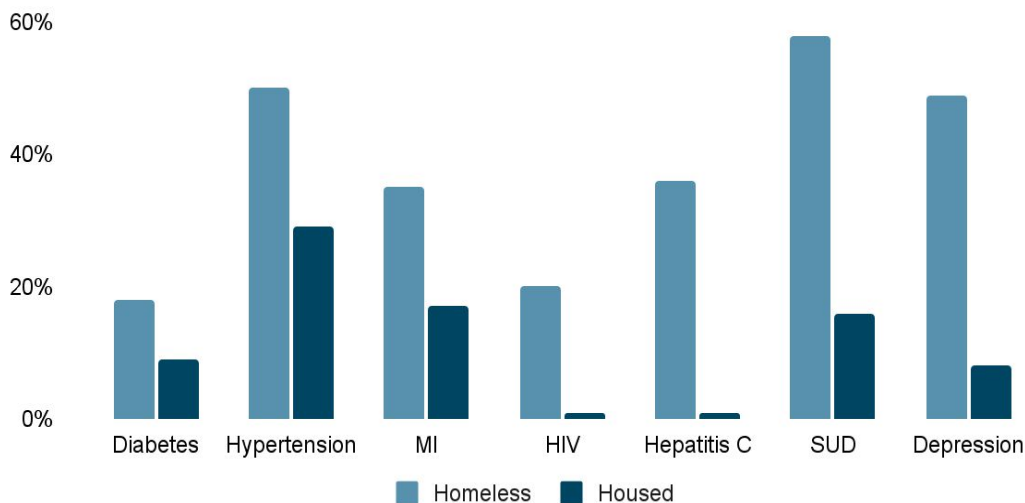
Health Risks

“You can’t talk about [sobriety] with someone if they’re worried about food and shelter.” -- Justin LaPorte, Recovery Coach at HOAP

Health Risks

- Average life expectancy 50 years
- Less access to healthcare
- Higher rates of hospitalizations for physical health, mental health, and SUD

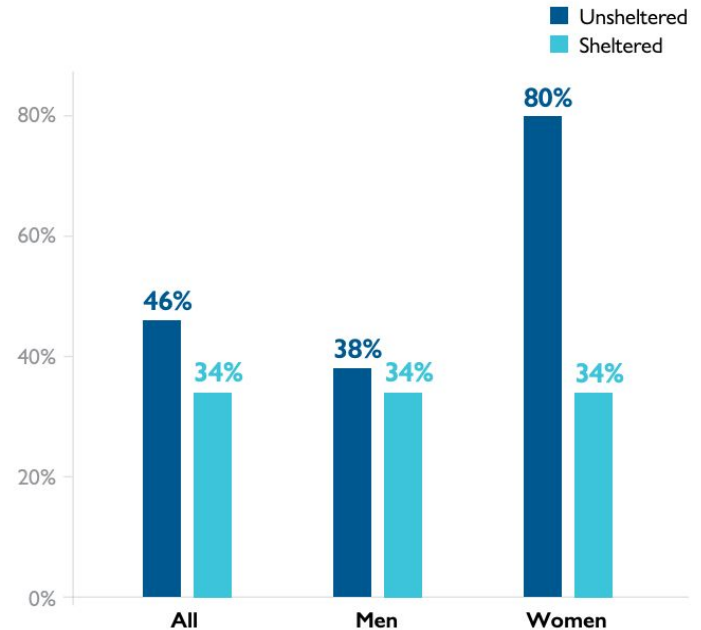
Health Conditions in Homeless Compared to Housed Populations



Social Risks

- History of ACE in homelessness
 - 85% of women
 - 77% of men
 - (52% in general population)
- Trauma can be the cause or result of homelessness
 - Unsheltered women report trauma as a cause at higher rates than men

FIGURE 3. Unsheltered and sheltered adults who experienced trauma¹⁰





Parts 2 and 3

Interprofessional Teams and
Population Health Advocacy



Interprofessional Teams

- Physicians - Dr. Garcia, Dr. Babu, Dr. Silk
- Recovery coaches - Justin LaPorte
- Outreach specialists - Brian Bickford and Barbara of PATH Homeless and Outreach Services for Eliot Community Human Services
- Case workers
- Non-profit organizations - LIFT, Hector Reyes House, Dismas House
- Shelters - 25 Queen Street
 - Occupancy 94 people. 58 emergency shelter beds
- Faith-based organizations
 - Hotel Grace, St. John's Food for the Poor, Mustard Seed
- Detox facilities - Community Health Link, Washburn House

Organizations in Worcester

- Community Healthlink (CHL)
- **Homeless Outreach & Advocacy Project (HOAP)**
 - Founded in 1985
 - Clinic at 162 Chandler St.
- Central MA Housing Alliance
- Living in Freedom Together (LIFT)
- Eliot Community Human Services: PATH
- Hector Reyes House





LIFT - Living in Freedom Together

- LIFT is a non-profit organization dedicated to ending the sex trade and to providing a community of support to survivors
- They offer:
 - Youth mentorship
 - Legislative advocacy
 - Court Advocacy
 - Recovery home
 - Vulnerability shelter
- Their mission: to end systems of prostitution through the implementation of the Equality Model.
- Jana's Place - a recovery home for those who have experienced prostitution with substance use and mental health disorders
 - Provides mentoring, case management, in-house health care, life/job skills development
- HARBOR - 15-bed low barrier-maximum vulnerability shelter

The Equality Model addresses structures of violence, incorporates transformative justice, and breaks cycles of oppression.



Eliot Community Human Services: PATH

- PATH: Project for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness
- PATH personnel provide services to individuals residing in emergency shelters, streets, or encampments throughout nearly 50 sites throughout the Commonwealth
- Outreach Clinicians and Engagement Specialists engage, assess, and collaboratively develop a recovery-oriented treatment plan that incorporates identified needs and preferences of the person served
- One of the many services provided by Eliot Community Human Services



Inspired to make a difference.
Equipped to get it done.

Hector Reyes House



- Residential substance use treatment for Latino men
- Offers in house medical treatment and cognitive behavioral therapy
- Training and employment options designed to promote recovery and reduce odds of relapse
 - Café Reyes restaurant
- Anger management, financial literacy, and parenting groups



Individual Level

Providing Compassionate Care

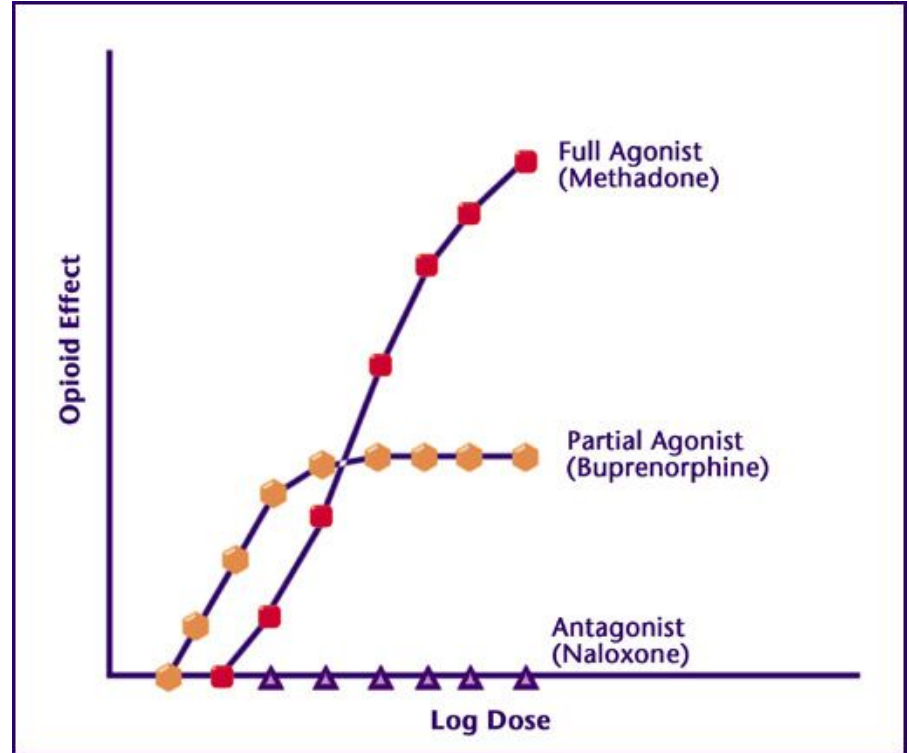
- *Keep an open mind and get to know the patient's story.*
- *Remember that they are someone's family member, friend.*
- *Common goal / language: Maintaining good health.*



Systemic Level

Strategies

- “Housing first”
 - Meet housing needs first → then manage disease(s).
 - Invest in new housing, subsidize low-income housing.
- MAT (medication-assisted treatment)
 - **Methadone:** Full opioid agonist given in controlled doses. Administered daily in methadone clinics.
 - **Suboxone:** Buprenorphine + Naloxone (Narcan). Prescribed med taken daily.
 - MAT shown to decrease overdose deaths.
- Supervised injection / consumption sites





State & Local Measures

State & Local Measures: Substance Use

- During 2020, opioid-related overdose deaths in MA rose by 5% to a total of 2,104.
- **MA House Bill 2088 & Senate Bill 1272**
 - 10-year pilot program establishing 2+ supervised consumption sites.
 - Virtual hearing held on 09/27/21.

Safe Consumption Sites Directly Meet the Needs of the BMC Community

Grayken Center for Addiction staff testified to the state on the need for safe consumption sites to address opioid overdose deaths.



Boston Globe via Getty Images

State & Local Measures: COVID Relief

- MA: State government dedicated 20% of COVID relief budget towards funding new housing / low-income housing.
- Worcester: City government dedicated <20% of state aid to housing.
 - Instead, Worcester increased police department funding → funded efforts to police homeless population.


Departmental Strategic Objectives & Performance Measures	Actual FY18	Actual FY19	12/31/2019 Actual FY20	Projected FY21
Objective: Support safe and affordable housing options				
City investment to create and preserve affordable housing (CDBG/Home/WLAP funds)	\$2,571,446	\$3,695,196	\$2,771,134	\$4,674,475

State & Local Measures: Tent Removals

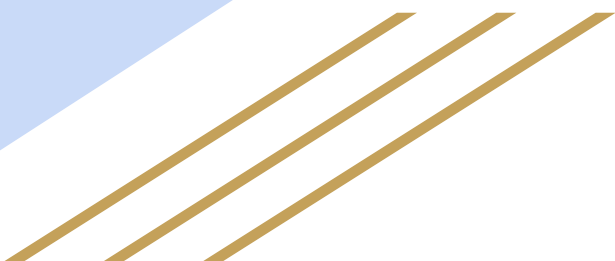
- “Mass & Cass” in Boston.
 - Acting Mayor Kim Janey issued executive order on 10/19/21 aimed at clearing the 100+ tents set up in the streets since the summer.
 - Suffolk County Sheriff’s Office now enforcing outstanding warrants.
- Worcester - Blackstone River camp behind Walmart removed on 10/20/21.
- Healthcare providers / public health officials generally advocate for increased housing options, not tent removals.



LONG-TERM SOLUTION = HOUSING FIRST



Part 4
Service + Experiential
Learning



Service / Experiential Learning

- Ride-alongs with Brian & Barbara (Eliot)
- Breakfast at St. John's
- Flu clinic at Mustard Seed
- Dinner at Dismas House
- Meeting with guests at Hector Reyes House
- Tour of Hotel Grace and 25 Queen St. Shelter



Addressing Community Needs



- St. John's Food For the Poor - Cooked breakfast and served food
- Ride alongs with Barbara and Brian - Outreach in the woods and streets, handed out socks, ponchos
- Flu clinic at Mustard Seed - helped administer Covid vaccines (boosters and first/second doses) and flu shots

NOT-SO-TYPICAL SOUP KITCHEN



We feed up to 700 people every weekday.

ABOUT US AT A GLANCE



How we do it.

OUR PROGRAMS



Free take-home food.

HELP FEED THE HUNGRY



Many ways to give!

VOLUNTEER



Join us — groups and individuals welcome!

PEOPLE ARE TALKING



A conversation with Bill Riley, soup kitchen manager.

Overview of Experiences



Highlights:

- Gaining awareness of the intersections of homelessness/mental health/substance use
 - Through dinner at the Dismas house, meeting at the Hector Reyes House, Road to Care meeting
- Learning about those working hard to address these issues
 - Politicians - Etel Haxhiaj
 - Social workers - Barbara and Brian (Eliot)
 - Program organizers - Nikki Bell (Jana's Place), Mike from the Dismas House
- Impact of healthcare workers - Dr. Castiel, Dr. Babu, Dr. Garcia (many others!)

References

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Questions?