



DOUGLAS COUNTY HOMELESS INITIATIVE

THURSDAY, JANUARY 9, 2025

MINUTES

Thursday, January 9, 2025	9:00 AM	BOCC Hearing Room, Conference Rooms A & B
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- 1. Welcome & Introductions: Commissioner Laydon**

2. 2025 Vision & 2024 Year in Review:

Tiffany Marsitto, HEART Supervisor: HEART completed a total of 303 calls for service for the month of December. Of those 303 calls, 61% were proactive street outreach by HEART, 18% were dispatched by law enforcement, 11% were citizen calls, 5% were public referral forms, and 5% were community partner calls. The call outcomes included 49 individuals contacted by HEART, 17 were not from Douglas County, 30 were not homeless, 24 refused services, nine involved law enforcement action, 153 where no unsheltered person was found, four were provided general information, and eight unoccupied encampments identified. While 52 households received one or more services for December, the highest categories of HEART program enrollments included: 12 nights of hotel vouchers, 20 transportation assistance, eight referrals to housing support, and 13 were referred to a shelter of their choosing. During the month of December services provided by location include Highlands Ranch 33%, Castle Rock 19%, Parker 15%, Lone Tree 17%, Castle Pines 10%, Englewood 4%, Larkspur 1% and Other Douglas County 1%.

The 2024 HEART Impact report from January 2024 thru December 2024 includes reaching functional zero for Veterans, the Summer Point in Time (PIT) count for unsheltered individuals was six, 46% of individuals contacted by HEART last year wanted to engage in services, 33% of participants that were engaged with HEART were housed or sheltered, HEART conducted 1,344 proactive street outreach contacts, and 401 unduplicated people were served. The three highest services that were provided were case management, hotel vouchers, and transportation. HEART is averaging 126 calls per month on the HEART line. The 2024 accomplishments included a reduction of people sleeping outside during the Summer PIT count. This number went from 43 to 6 since the inception of the HEART. We encountered zero panhandlers and no encampments of more than one person during the Summer PIT.

A 2024 success story comes from a family of 10 that HEART received a referral for in August that had received an eviction. The family had children ranging from 18 to two. HEART provided a limited number of hotel vouchers for the family while referring them to the Douglas County Care Compact. Multiple non-profits, faith-based partners, and community partners met monthly to ensure the family had support to obtain employment, education, mental health resources, and shelter opportunities. The family was enrolled into the Generational Opportunities to Achieve Long-term Success (GOALS) program last month and are doing well in the program.

The vision for 2025 includes improving data tracking for parking lots and vehicle camping, increasing business engagement for filed trespass letters, posted signs, and creating a spreadsheet for business contacts.

Lastly, the Winter 2024 PIT count showed 37 individuals that were sheltered, nine individuals were sleeping outside, and 34 individuals were sleeping in their vehicles. The upcoming Winter PIT is scheduled for January 27, 2025. Five HEART Teams will be conducting the count along with the Metro Denver region, our local non-profits and community partners. Strive to Thrive will be on January 28th.

Functional Zero for Veterans & Families:

Rand Clark, Community Services Manager: A culmination of years of hard work resulted in the County receiving the classification of Functional Zero on Veterans Day, November

11, 2024. Multiple organizations including County staff, Metro Denver Homeless Initiative (MDHI), the VA, and community partners met monthly to conduct case conferencing to support Veterans to find housing outcomes. From January 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024, 64% of Veterans were housed within 98 days of being identified.

With the launch of GOALS, the County has begun a monthly case conference meeting to discuss systems of care and housing outcomes of families. As far as we are aware there are only seven families currently experiencing HUD defined homeless in the County; two families are in transitional housing, two are in emergency shelter, two families sleeping in their car, and one family was just recently identified.

The 2025 goal will be to use the systems that has been established for Veterans and apply the same methodology to the family population. We will establish baseline data for families in the first quarter, meet quality data standards by the second quarter, and to maintain a monthly By Name List for all Veterans and Families.

Aurora Regional Navigation Campus:

Jennifer Eby, Assistant Director, Community Services: The Aurora Regional Navigational Campus will be a low barrier campus focused on individuals experiencing homelessness. The campus will have the capacity to serve 500 individuals and can go up to 600 people during emergency events. There will be a continuum of services available on-site in addition to safe parking, individual hotel rooms for transitional shelter, pallet shelters, and a day shelter with internet access.

In April of 2024, the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) entered into an intergovernmental agreement with the City of Aurora for Douglas County to provide \$1,125,000 towards the renovation of the Campus and in return we will have access to five beds at a minimum for HEART access. Douglas County is partnering with Arapahoe County, Adams County, and City of Aurora in this endeavor, and this provides opportunities for more agencies in each of those Counties to help provide services. We will continue to engage with the City of Aurora and engage with their newly hired operator to give feedback of what HEART is seeing in the community. Renovations are in the foundation phase, and they are expecting to have a limited quantity of beds available by the second quarter. Renovations are expected to be complete by the third quarter.

Legal Update:

Jeff Garcia, County Attorney: The County took two proactive homeless solutions in 2024 including instituting a camping ban and an immigration crisis response. The camping ban was amended on September 24, 2024, to reflect the change in the requirement for shelter availability. Immigration Crisis Response ordinances included Non-Sanctuary County Resolution, Public Health Order, support to MACC for expedited employment, legal action to permit County cooperation with federal government, a letter to Denver Mayor requesting they repeal sanctuary laws, and an ordinance to limit bus unloading. In addition, Douglas County challenged two state statutes that prohibit law enforcement and our courts from cooperating with ICE and we are currently on appeal in Federal and State Court. In 2025, we will continue to monitor changes to the laws and update ordinances accordingly.

GOALS:

Steven Dodrill, Community Programs Administrator: On September 20, 2024, the Generational Opportunities to Achieve Long-term Success (GOALS) celebrated its grand opening. GOALS is operated by Family Tree. Douglas County will have access for temporary shelter up to five families. The program ranges from four to nine months and takes a 2-gen approach to help families reach self-sufficiency with wrap around services. The program focus' include health and wellbeing, employment and financial stability, children's academic success, and building community connections. Since the opening, two families representing 13 individuals, have been placed. Looking forward to 2025, Douglas County will continue to collaborate with Coordinated Service Matching (CSM) Partners and to maximize the potential of the GOALS program.

In 2024, the County received a grant award from Proposition 123 funds for \$50,000 to develop a pilot program. The Housing Stability Program (HSP) supports residents at risk of homelessness through rental assistance, utility support, and case management. To date, HSP has assisted four households avoid homelessness and provided over \$20,000 in assistance. In 2025, the objectives will include continuing to support households at risk of eviction to maintain stable housing and to apply for additional funding to support this program.

Communications:

Caroline Frizell, Interim Director of Communications: In 2024, the distributed news stories included the HEART Check donation, the Winter Shelter Network gift cards, the Aurora Regional Navigation Campus, the PIT news conference, Co-responder week, achieving Functional Zero for Veteran Homelessness, and the GOALS ribbon-cutting event. The 2024 news results showed 8,130 views for those six stories. Social media resulted in 52 posts on Facebook, X, Instagram, and LinkedIn and received 48,677 impressions. This showed a 77% increase in reactions over 2023 and demonstrated increased community engagement. There were 11 posts on Nextdoor with 231,450 impressions. Using an Email marketing platform called MailChimp the County sent out 9 new emails with 11,554 recipients per email at a 40% open rate. Douglas County was mentioned 148 times in online, print, radio, and TV news. The website has 21 active web pages related to the Homeless Initiative and received 13,443 views in 2024. Upcoming 2025 communications efforts are rooted in the Homeless Initiatives objectives and will continue to support these efforts.

Douglas County Community Foundation (DCCF):

Kirsten Swanson, DCCF, Executive Director: The Douglas Has Heart Fund has a balance of \$3,993.00. The total amount of donations since inception are \$13,994.00 with \$5,400 raised in 2024, and \$10,000.00 of grants have been distributed. DCCF would like to double or triple those donations in 2025 by incorporating a standing line item in their quarterly newsletter using similar philanthropy model that they use for the Community Emergency Relief Fund (CERF).

3. **Executive Committee Member & Municipal Updates:**
Jason Gray, Mayor Castle Rock: Commissioner Laydon and additional Commissioner's toured the Nuvia Veterans Administration Clinic in Castle Rock. Anticipated opening date will be the end of February.

Cassie Ratliff, Family Tree, Chief Impact Officer: Paolo Diaz has been selected as the Chief Executive Officer. He was formerly with Adams County Human Services.

4. **Public Comment:**
Mary Grothe, Sunday Salmon: Sunday Salmon has opened on the corner of Park Street and Wolfensberger in Castle Rock. Its on the West side of the building. They are currently open on Sundays serving gluten free, nutritious family style meals. The meals are free for those in the community, and they serve dinner three times on Sunday at 5:00p.m., 6:00p.m., and 7:00p.m. This last Sunday they served 100 meals.

5. **Closing Comments: Commissioner Laydon**

The Next Regular Meeting Will be Held on Thursday, February 13, 2025 @ 9:00 a.m.

The Douglas County Homeless Initiative provides a collaborative meeting space for a diverse group of community partners to discuss issues related to homelessness. These meetings are not a forum for discussion of specific land use applications or development projects in individual jurisdictions. Please contact the relevant jurisdiction to inquire about how to participate in the public input process for specific projects.