

Chapter 6: Homeless Needs

Nature and Extent of Homelessness:

The Arkansas Homeless Coalition states that there are a variety of problems that cause homelessness. The main cause is unaffordable housing for the impoverished. Secondary causes include mental illness, physical illnesses, substance abuse, lack of incentives to work, poor work ethics, and lack of decent education. The National Law Center for Homelessness and Poverty reports that over 3 million men, women, and children were homeless over the past year – about 30% of them chronically and the others temporarily. In many cases, people are in and out of the homeless system, which includes shelters, hospitals, the streets, and prisons.

On top of the 3 million who were homeless or marginally homeless, there are an additional 5 million poor people that spend over half of their incomes on housing, leaving them on the verge of homelessness. A missed paycheck, a health crisis, or an unpaid bill can easily push poor families over the edge into homelessness. A special enumeration survey was conducted through the Arkansas Department of Human Services Office of Community Services. The data reflect that on any given night, the estimated homeless count in the State of Arkansas is 7,400.

Homeless Population:

Since homelessness is a regional issue, data presented in this section is based on statistics for Craighead County. Characterization of the homeless population by jurisdiction, the availability of facilities and services, and gaps in services are based on the countywide data as presented in the County's 2004 Continuum of Care application to HUD and data generated under the County's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) as of November 30, 2004. The HMIS is a federally-required collaborative database that tracks homeless clients by last reported permanent place of residence.

Table 6-1: Special Needs Populations

	National Average
Chronically Homeless	30%
Severely Mentally Ill	22%
Chronic Substance Abuser	34%
Veterans	11%
Persons with HIV/AIDS	20%
Victims of Domestic Violence	34%
Youth (Under 18 years of age)	25%

Source: Arkansas Homeless Coalition/UALR 2004 Homeless Study

Table 6-2 provides the most recent detailed estimates of the homeless population in Jonesboro based on the individual facility assessment.

Table 6-2: Housing Facilities in Jonesboro

Facility Name	# of Family Beds	# of Individual Beds
Beds	Salvation Army	4
	CYS	310
	Women's Crisis	22
	Mid-South	48
	Total	4
		396

Sources: Salvation Army, Consolidated Youth Services, Women's Crisis Center, & Mid-South Health Systems

Inventory of Facilities and Services for the Homeless and Persons Threatened with Homelessness

Citywide there are a variety of programs available to assist homeless persons, persons, and families threatened with homelessness. Many of these programs target specific groups, such as the mentally ill and victims of domestic violence. Some of the programs operate on a countywide basis, while others are limited to a specific geographical area. Emergency shelters provide temporary shelter for homeless individuals and families. Transitional housing provides shelter for families making a transition from homelessness to permanent housing and limit residency to anywhere from 6 to 24 months. Supportive housing consists of housing that includes support services which tenants are required to use.

Following is a list of the facilities which provide services for the homeless and persons threatened with homelessness:

Emergency Shelters:

Salvation Army:

This facility is Jonesboro's only general shelter providing emergency housing assistance for sixteen men and five women. In 2006, the shelter served 864 persons which consisted of 590 men and 274 women. The services are for a limited time. The maximum length of stay is five nights. The facility has only 21 beds and they stay full. During the winter months they are filled to capacity and must turn people away. They provide two meals a day to 20-50 persons. In 2006, 20,995 meals were served to shelter clients and the community. There is a need to develop a larger facility to assist the people they can't help. They have implemented a Pay and Stay Employment and Assistance Program that helps their clients find jobs and work with job related skills. The stay is up to 90 days.

Address: 800 Cate Street, Jonesboro
Phone: 870-932-3785

Consolidated Youth Services:

This agency serves as a temporary shelter and help facility for the youth in the community. It serves a nine county area and served 310 children in 2006. CYS provides food services and shelter for 24 boys and 9 girls from the ages of 8 to 17 years old. The children served are those that have no home and/or those who have gotten into trouble either through drugs, alcohol or adolescence problems. This transitional program determines the length of stay based on the need of the client.

Address: 4220 Stadium Blvd., Jonesboro
Phone: 870-972-1110

Women's Crisis Center of Northeast Arkansas:

The Women's Crisis Center is Jonesboro's only domestic violence shelter providing housing, transportation, counseling, support groups, in-person or telephone consultation, safety planning, legal advocacy, prevention education, and other support services. WCC is looking at building a new facility that would allow the organization to service children with more educational programs. Lack of funding has limited the program's growth.

Phone: 870-933-9449

Inventory of Supportive Housing for Non-homeless Persons with Special Needs:

The following agencies provide services that assist special population groups such as non-homeless individuals with special needs.

Mid-South Health Systems:

Mid-South Health Systems, a non-profit corporation Community Mental Health Center provides housing, and crisis mobile team services that are available 24 hrs and 7 days a week. They also provide assessments, rehabilitation services for the mentally ill, medical detoxification, and school based services (providing a therapist on site to various schools in the area). Mid-South currently operates 22 therapeutic foster care units, 30 apartments for mentally ill, two (2) group homes for those with severe mental illness, and two lodges of five beds each for men and women.

Address: 2707 Browns Lane, Jonesboro
Phone: 870-972-4032

Jonesboro Human Development Center:

Opened in 1974, the Jonesboro Human Development Center is a nationally accredited, state-operated residential service for people with developmental challenges. The JHDC can house up to 120 people and is licensed by the State of Arkansas to provide adult services as an Intermediate Care Facility. The center teaches basic life and employment skills to individuals with a primary diagnosis of mental retardation. An array of services is provided by the facility including crisis intervention, training in behavioral control, medical care, and assistance in coordinating the transition of people served at the center back into community living arrangements. The goal of the facility is to help those being served reach their maximum potential while providing them with respect, dignity, training, and support. Because of the nature and focus of their service everyone who is admitted is potentially a transition candidate. Each person who lives there is evaluated annually to determine if he or she has advanced to the point where transition is a route to take. For some it may take several years, while others may be ready in a matter of months. The Jonesboro Human Development Center directly served approximately 250 people in 2006 and another 20 indirectly through assistance in coordinating services with other providers.

Address: 4701 Colony Drive, Jonesboro
Phone: 870-932-4043

Crowley's Ridge Development Council:

Crowley's Ridge Development Council is a multi-service, Community Action agency. It provides housing for mentally ill patients and low-income homeowners. The CRDC has forty one-bedroom apartments for the mentally ill. It also operates twelve 3-bedroom units for the low to moderate-income families through ADFA. The CRDC offers elderly services, substance abuse treatment and prevention services, a transitional living home for adult males, emergency food and shelter programs, weatherization and housing preservation programs, home ownership opportunities, and housing counseling services. It also provides day care referrals and day care food programs for persons with private, in-home day care centers. Family services consist of utility assistance, job, resume, and budgeting training, and a family enrichment program.

Additional funds are needed to help supplement all programs. The program also needs transportation services to help the low income persons travel to jobs and to centers throughout the area. A computer system that is networked is needed by the Agency. Lack of funding caused CRDC to turn away 60 persons in 2006.

Address: 2401 Fox Meadow Lane, Jonesboro
Phone: 870-932-0228

Abilities Unlimited, Inc.:

Abilities Unlimited Inc. provides work and housing for handicapped persons. They have 20 1-bed apartments at 510 Walnut (supported living for severe disabilities) and 5 1-bed apartments at 410 Huntington (independent living for severe disabilities) and employ 150 persons in work training through their woodshop retail thrift store production center and apartment complexes and the community. In addition, there are 175 participants receiving work training and skill development. Abilities Unlimited, Inc. has extended its service area to include Paragould, AR.

Address: P.O. Box 1207
2725 N. Church Street, Jonesboro
Phone: 870-932-1551

Pathfinders:

Pathfinders is a housing facility for developmentally disabled adults. Presently they have a 10-bed residential facility and are interested in growing. They opened a new workshop to assist clients in need of job development skills. Also, they are looking to build an eight unit apartment complex to assist more clients.

Address: 804 Loberg Lane, Jonesboro
Phone: 870-935-3586

David E. Puryear Center:

This housing facility is similar to Pathfinder, providing services for developmentally disabled adults. Presently they have a 10-bed residential facility. This transitional program has a waiting list of 50 people. There is only enough funding to support the current load.

Address: 2806 Fox Meadow Lane, Jonesboro
Phone: 870-932-0200

The following public housing facilities, agencies and entities provide housing and housing related services within the City of Jonesboro:

1. The City of Jonesboro
2. The Jonesboro Urban Renewal and Housing Authority
3. Jonesboro Ecumenical Center, Inc.
4. Christopher Homes of Jonesboro
5. Aspen Gardens
6. Walker Courts
7. North Acres Apartments
8. Bel-Aire Village
9. Crowley's Ridge Development Council
10. Mid-South Health Systems
11. Consolidated Youth Services
12. Jonesboro Human Development Center
13. Habitat for Humanity

14. Abilities Unlimited
15. Wesley on the Ridge
16. St. Bernard's Village

Federal programs:

The Jonesboro Urban Renewal and Housing Authority (JURHA) provide assistance to many low income families in Jonesboro by utilizing several federal programs:

1. HUD Rental Vouchers and Certificates provide low-income tenants with rental assistance in the private sector; approximately 1300 vouchers/certificates available.
2. The HUD Public Housing and Section 8 Family Self-Sufficiency Program is designed to remove barriers to self-sufficiency, such as education, employment, transportation, and childcare.
3. The HUD Public Housing Drug Elimination Program provides alternative activities for youth living in public housing developments and funds police substations with officers on-site. The Housing Authority in conjunction with the city has applied for funding and plans to apply again.
4. The HUD Public Housing CIAP program is designed around a needs assessment funded for the modernization of PHA projects and management improvements.
5. The HUD homeownership program provides homeowner units to low-income persons.

Homeless Subpopulations:

Chronically Homeless:

The Interagency Council on Homelessness has defined someone who is "chronically homeless" as "being disabled and either being continuously homeless for a year or more or having had at least four homeless episodes during the last three years.

Persons with Severe Mental Illness:

Severe mental illness includes the diagnoses of psychoses (e.g. schizophrenia) or major affective disorders (e.g. bipolar, major depression). To qualify as chronic, the illness must have existed for at least one year. According to national estimates, approximately one percent of the adult population meets a definition of severe mental illness based on diagnosis, duration, and disability. The major barrier to stable, decent housing for the seriously mentally ill is the lack of available affordable housing. A substantial majority of persons in this population depend solely on Social Security Insurance (SSI) payments. These payments permit very few persons in this population to afford rental housing on the open market.

Persons with Substance Abuse Problems:

According to a local drug and alcohol awareness center, an estimated 469 persons in Jonesboro had chronic substance abuse problems in 2006, either with alcohol or with other drugs, or sometimes with a combination of substances. In past surveys, substance abuse appeared to be a major factor in the cause of homelessness. A substantial number of homeless surveyed in 1997 (25.9 percent) stated that substance abuse had precipitated continual job loss and a subsequent inability to pay rent, resulting in eviction from their homes.

Veterans:

The U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) says the nation's homeless veterans are mostly males (4% are females). The vast majority is single, most come from poor, disadvantaged communities, 45% suffer from mental

illness, and half have substance abuse problems. America's homeless veterans have served in World War II, the Korean War, the Cold War, the Vietnam War, Grenada, Panama, Lebanon, Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan), Operation Iraqi Freedom, or the military's anti-drug cultivation efforts in South America. Forty-seven percent of homeless veterans served during the Vietnam Era. More than 67% served our country for at least three years and 33% were stationed in a war zone.

Persons Infected with HIV/AIDS:

The National Commission on AIDS states that up to half of all Americans with AIDS are either homeless or in imminent danger of becoming homeless due to their illness, lack of income or other resources, and weak support networks. The Commission further estimates that 15% of all homeless people are infected with HIV. Within Craighead County, 247 persons reported having HIV/AIDS.

Persons Suffering from Domestic Violence:

Many single women and women with children become homeless as the result of domestic violence. According to a study by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, 34 percent of the cities surveyed identified domestic violence as a primary cause of homelessness. Nationally, approximately half of all women and children experiencing homelessness are fleeing domestic violence. Homeless women often require additional counseling to work through psychological impairment from physical abuse to transition into the mainstream. In Jonesboro, 267 homeless persons were victims of domestic violence in 2006.

Youth:

Consolidated Youth Services served 99 homeless youth in 2006. These homeless youth are difficult to track because of their highly transient nature, their distrust of adults, and their distrust of services, usually born out of fear of being incarcerated or institutionalized.

Needs of Persons Threatened with Homelessness:

The "at-risk" population is comprised of lower income families and individuals who, upon experiencing a major life crisis that creates severe financial distress (job loss, medical emergency, etc.), might lose their housing and become homeless. Extremely low income households (those earning 30 percent or less of the median family income) are considered to be at greatest risk of becoming homeless. The overwhelming majority of these families typically experience a housing cost burden, paying more than 30 percent of their incomes for housing. In severe cases, such families pay more than 50 percent of their incomes for housing.

The at-risk population also includes individuals who are in imminent danger of residing in shelters or living on the streets. This is primarily due to the lack of access to permanent housing and the absence of an adequate support network, such as immediate family members or relatives in whose homes they could temporarily reside. These individuals, especially those being released from penal, mental or substance abuse facilities, require social services that help them make the transition back into society and remain off the streets.

Keeping people from becoming homeless requires emergency funds to pay for housing, food, and medical care. Homeless prevention also requires adequate planning for medical discharges, eviction prevention and relocation assistance, and coordination with code enforcement officials to minimize displacement of lower income households.

Needs of Persons Threatened with Homelessness due to Mental Illness:

Jonesboro's local Community Mental Health Center (Mid-South Health Systems) states that the current availability of case management for children and adults appear to be sufficient. The accessibility has improved tremendously recently due to an increase in a large number of mental health providers in the Jonesboro area.

There is, however, a concern with specific gaps in services. While the City of Jonesboro has a fairly good continuum of mental health services for adults, there appears to be a gap in mental health services for children and youth. MSHS states that our area has a very high number of (out of home) placements into residential programs for children with serious mental health problems. The following services are needed to assist parents in keeping their children in their home:

- Respite Care - licensed or certified individual homes that provide short-term care providing parents with rest and leisure time on a periodic basis. Many times, parents provide such intensive care and parenting for children and youth with special needs that their own needs go unmet. The availability of respite, for just a few days, often prevents the situation from escalating to the point that the child is placed in residential or hospital care.
- Expansion of therapeutic foster care - Therapeutic foster care provides for children who are in the custody of the State and have a serious emotional disturbance. These parents are trained to provide the care needed for these children within a home environment. The expansion of this service which does not require that the parent relinquish custody is a much needed service.
- Child/family specific support services. A child-centered system of care targeting the specific needs of the individual child and family providing for their particular needs with the needed combination of services will assist in preventing an out-of-home placement. This is a much more intensive case management approach with availability in the home 24/7.
- A family advocacy and support network. Currently a new Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health association is being formed which provides families with a resource to become involved in the mental health treatment planning for their child and other supportive services. Resources to support the continued development and expansion of this service for parents are needed.

Housing Needs: Expansion of semi-supervised apartments for adults is a definite need as well as supervised group homes for adults.