

## **SC-502 Plan to Assist People with Severe Service Needs**

### **P-1. Leveraging Housing Resources.**

**P-1a. Development of New Units and Creation of Housing Opportunities–Leveraging Housing.** Attachment included in application

**P-1b. Development of New Units and Creation of Housing Opportunities–PHA Commitment-** Attachment included in application

### **P-1c. Landlord Recruitment.**

There are multiple strategies the CoC has used and continues to utilize in recruiting and retaining property owners. Strategies include dedicated staff, landlord incentives, partnerships, and information sharing during case conferencing. The CoC relies on consistent communication between property owners and dedicated staff to ensure landlords fully comprehend the benefit of supportive services offered by programs. The CoC has learned over the years that to recruit property owners and maintain strong property owner/staff relationships, project staff must engage in rapport building and education efforts. Through this regular engagement, staff ensure that property owners are well educated in CoC projects, their policies, funding, and other community supportive resources that will be made available to project participants. This strategy of communication and education, while at the same time addressing property owner concerns, has been proven most effective in recruitment, ensuring property owner trust and a long-lasting relationship. Property owner incentives, such as increased security deposits and risk mitigation funds have shown promise in recruiting new and retaining property owners. The first time the CoC offered a risk mitigation fund called the ‘Peace of Mind Fund.’ Through this Fund, seven property owners that had not previously been involved with CoC housing engaged. The Fund provided an extra security deposit if the tenant creates property damage. Throughout the history of the Fund, only one claim against the Fund for property damage was incurred. Success from this program helped those property owners maintain a relationship with housing providers. The CoC also ensures that housed clients have ongoing support and home visits, which helps lessen property owner concerns. CoC housing providers maintains a list of partnering property owners and engages them regularly to address ongoing and emergency issues and provide continuing education. Projects have recently placed 18 individual participants in units, in a time when the availability of affordable housing is nonexistent. By utilizing engagement, education, support, and incentives the CoC has demonstrated how well the strategy is working.

The CoC has incentivized funding rural communities in the annual HUD CoC competition. Through these efforts, new RRH programs have been implemented across the geographic footprint. These projects, funded in the last three years, have been able to become fully leased by implementing strategies communicated by the CoC. Although, the CoC quickly realized the importance of existing relationships with property owners and each funded project had to have more staff dedicated to property owner recruitment, engagement, and retention. In recent years, the CoC has employed an Affordable Housing Specialist, who was responsible for developing a Landlord Advisory Committee (LAC). The committee was made up of property owners and responsible for offering guidance on how to increase participation in CoC programs from other property owners. While the LAC was initially beneficial in deepening relationships with members of the committee, there was little benefit in adding new property owners. The LAC did

not sustain, but there were several lessons learned from the process. First, housing providers were able to better understand the thought process of property owners around evictions and how to mitigate that possibility. Another lesson learned was how communicating with individual property owners differs from management companies. Finally, the importance of one-on-one relationship/communication became even more solidified. The landscape is changing in the midlands of South Carolina, and more and more landlords are refusing to accept housing vouchers. Therefore, it is important the CoC tracks as much data as possible to recruit and retain property owners. Number of property owners who rent to more than one client by project and are retained even after eviction. The difference in retention of property owners between leasing and rental assistance projects. Data on what causes a property owner not to rent to participants involved in the CoC (income, arrest record, previous eviction, etc.). All these data elements will help in the marketing and education of prospective property owners. There is also data that can be captured from the program to assist with improving property owner recruitment. Looking at the length of time between engagement of the individual experiencing homelessness in RRH/PSH/EHV and them moving into a unit. Reviewing reasons for negative exit destinations to improve supportive services and minimize the number of clients who end up evicted.

**P-2. Leveraging Healthcare Resources–New PSH/RRH Project-** Attachment included in application

### **P- 3. Current Strategy to Identify, Shelter, and House Individuals and Families Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness.**

#### **P-3. a Current Street Outreach Strategy.**

The CoC has outreach staff that cover all 13- counties and use Coordinated Entry System (CES) procedures. Agencies throughout the CoC work as access points for CES process. This means they are trained to triage for care needed and make referrals to CoC agencies, including coordination with shelters to connect unsheltered individuals and families to services. Outreach staff are trained in Person-Centered Trauma Informed care, which is the strategy used when approaching unsheltered families and individuals. In addition, Outreach staff is trained in cultural competency and required to adhere by CoC wide policy standards that safeguard equity for people of color, LGBTQ+, and other underrepresented and underserved populations. Street outreach spends time working with clients on obtaining proper identification, directing them to providers who can assist with non-employment case income and following up regularly on the status of individuals applications for employment as well as housing and other supportive services. The CoC hosts case conferencing meetings monthly where there is a discussion about the individual or families' status around non-employment cash income, mental health services, and other needs identified for the clients. Often our most complex client situations are discussed to identify resources and options for care. In addition, outreach staff meet monthly with several law enforcement agencies, health care providers and mental health providers to coordinate and conduct consistent outreach efforts where unsheltered individuals and families stay. The staff frequently does community wide mapping of CoC service geographic areas to identify or confirm any new and existing outreach areas in the communities. Outreach workers identify people who are socially isolated (lacking internet, phone, and transportation) as a special population, and outreach takes place 5 days a week up to 12 hours a day with a varied schedule. These unsheltered individuals camp in wooded areas and are often difficult to locate and initially

resist engagement. CoC outreach workers talk with them and help meet their basic needs by providing kits with items like water, snacks, sleeping bags, and clothes which helps to develop stronger relationships. In addition, a downtown laundry facility for homeless individuals has demonstrated great success engaging people who typically do not seek shelter or other services. This facility coordinates with street outreach workers to notify them when specific persons who are least likely to request assistance are present for laundry services. Finally, outreach workers make special visits to meal share providers to engage those individuals least likely to engage in services. To connect unsheltered clients with services to assist them with exiting homelessness, outreach staff remains in contact with clients to inform them of shelter vacancies and works to get them document ready.

### **P-3. b. Current Strategy to Provide Immediate Access to Low-Barrier Shelter and Temporary Housing for Individuals and Families Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness.**

The CoC requires all funded projects to be low barriers models. Using a weighted matrix tool to score projects, the CoC's ranking committee considered how severe needs and vulnerabilities were addressed by project applicants. Greater points were awarded to applicants that demonstrated addressing chronic homelessness and removing screening barriers such as substance abuse, low or zero-income at entry, or disability.

CoC provides training on best practices of Coordinated Entry. In addition, by having trained staff on trauma-informed practices, agencies can build rapport and communicate with participants in a way that increases their likelihood to engage with programming and services. All intakes, support groups, educational materials, and one-on-one counseling are offered through trauma-informed, strengths-based, low-barrier practices.

Outreach staff work with shelters and temporary housing options to remain informed about vacancies and availability of resources. When there is no shelter capacity, outreach staff works with agencies that provide motel vouchers for short term placement and offers continuous support to the client until shelter placement is available and the client is ready. Motel vouchers are funded by private United Way resources, Emergency Food and Shelter Program funds, and local faith-based entities.

During the ranking and selection process the supplemental tool included specific targeted questions where more points were awarded to applicants that demonstrated their projects reviewed participant data and outcomes with an equity lens, including the disaggregation of data by race, ethnicity, gender identity and/or age. In addition, points were awarded to those applicants that demonstrated their organization identified programmatic changes needed to make program participant outcomes more equitable.

### **P-3.c Current Strategy to Provide Immediate Access to Low Barrier Permanent Housing for Individuals and Families Experiencing Unsheltered Homelessness.**

The CoC requires all projects to adhere to a Housing First approach. Our CoC agency housing staff have years of experience, trust from community partners, and the adoption of Housing First principles supports their efforts to house unsheltered clients. CoC agencies intake staff are equipped with scripted prompts to help people identify resources, family or other support

networks, or alternative housing options from sheltering settings. If diversion is unsuccessful, short-term financial resources are offered in the form of motel vouchers and/or prevention assistance. These resources are funded by private sources such as United Way and Emergency Food and Shelter Program funds. Short-term assistance is negotiated based on the client's situation and is paired with budget planning, employment assistance, and housing navigation. Rapid re-housing funds (CoC and ESG) are also used for those unsheltered; along with other non-HUD funding for security deposits from sources such as AFLAC, Mungo Corporation, NORD Family Foundation, Dominion Energy, Truist Bank, Big Lots, and Central Carolina Community Foundation. The CoC has also partnered with the South Carolina Housing and Redevelopment Authority (SC Housing) to prioritize the CoC's unsheltered clients in their Stability Housing Voucher program. The CoC partnered with SC Housing to apply for additional Stability Housing Vouchers and continue our relationship providing screening and referrals (letter in attachments).

The CoC monitors CoC funded permanent housing retention via a quarterly dashboard that measures performance at the agency level and incorporates the measure as a scoring item in performance monitoring. The CoC identifies common factors of people who return to homelessness by reviewing exit destination type to look for patterns such as needs for longer aftercare enrollment or additional financial support needed after permanent housing placement. The CoC has policies that all organizations must adopt that prioritize participant choice, rapid placement and stabilization in permanent housing through participant's consent.

For funded projects, annual performance monitoring evaluates projects on their implementation of a Housing First approach. During performance monitoring, each project is evaluated on compliance with the Housing First model by reviewing leases, policies, participant handbooks, case notes, service plans, etc. to ensure that participation in services is voluntary and that participants are not terminated due to substance use, reluctance to engage in services or treatment, lack of progress on goals, or other impermissible reasons. Projects who are found to have significant deficiencies in following Housing First are required to create a corrective action plan and if progress is not made by agreed upon deadlines the projects are reallocated. HMIS System Administrator reviews Annual Performance Reports quarterly with projects and discusses prior living situation, exit destination, and length of time between project entry and housed date.

#### **P-4. Updating the CoC's Strategy to Identify, Shelter, and House Individuals Experiencing**

The CoC utilizes data in multiple ways to support continuous quality improvement. The structure of the CoC has three committees that are responsible for reviewing data to improve performance: Data and Evaluation Committee, Policy Committee, and Grantee Advisory Committee. The Data and Evaluation Committee is responsible for monitoring all programs and continually uses APRs, CAPERs, and data quality reports to ensure effectiveness in all program types (SO, ES, RRH, and PSH). The Policy Committee is responsible for oversight of the Coordinated Entry System (CES) and through multiple data collection methods review and implement changes to CES for overall improvements. The Grantee Advisory Committee is comprised of all HUD CoC and ESG funded programs and is responsible for providing guidance and support around any changes to Written Standards and CES Policies and Procedures.

##### **P-4.1 Street Outreach**

The CoC operates street outreach in all 13 counties. Street outreach is integrated into every aspect of the CoC including the Coordinated Entry System, case conferencing, and partner meetings. Street outreach staff work closely with clients to meet their immediate basic needs and support unsheltered individuals and families in obtaining all the documents needed to move into housing when it is available (ID, birth certificates, Social Security card, etc.). Staff also work closely with SOAR specialists in identifying those eligible for benefits and assisting them in completing applications, even in unsheltered settings using handheld devices. The CoC maintains close relationships with the Public Defenders Office to help remove prior legal barriers that could deter housing placement. The City of Columbia operates a Homeless Court that is able to clear past charges based on establishing relationships with service and housing providers. We hope to expand this work to serve more people through enhanced promotion and street outreach. The Public Defender is key in Homeless Court's successful track record. Finally, street outreach is a critical component of Coordinated Entry by obtaining the vulnerability screenings needed to include clients on the by-name list.

The following is a list of data elements used to improve street outreach performance:

- For clients exiting to permanent housing, what percent were engaged with street outreach
- Review of street outreach exit destinations, to include % positive exits compared to previous years
- Demographics of those unsheltered on the by-name, including location to guide property owner engagement
- Percent of clients with increase in entitlement income (benefits) from street outreach

The CoC will use performance data primarily from HMIS to hold providers to performance standards, guide increase/decrease outreach coverage in unsheltered locations, identify when targeted technical assistance is needed, and ensure equality in outreach engagements. Street outreach teams across the CoC are trained in multiple evidence-based methods, including motivational interviewing and trauma informed care. In addition, all outreach staff must participate in all CoC training courses on Coordinated Entry, Housing First, and Data Quality. The CoC's by-name list is provided to all staff who offer street outreach with staff responsible for updating the vulnerability screening, as well as ensuring unsheltered individuals have a corresponding Coordinated Entry assessment.

New partners are constantly being incorporated into street outreach strategies. A monthly street outreach meeting is conducted, and invitations have been and will continue to be extended to business owners, law enforcement, healthcare providers, and community leaders. These monthly meetings ensure all areas in the CoC are covered, known locations identified, along with a consistent feedback loop that incorporates new partners is consistently completed.

#### **P-4.2 Low-Barrier Shelter**

The CoC is currently assisting the City of Columbia in its program design and planning to add 50 new units of low-barrier non-congregate 'pallet shelters' that offer a heated/cooled single room occupancy for adults. These units are targeted for our most chronically and service resistant unsheltered individuals. The 'pallet shelters' will allow pets to offer sheltering options to people who may have been reluctant to accept sheltering options if they would be forced to part with their animal companion. These units are expected to open by the end of the calendar year. The

CoC has attended planning meetings and offered written suggestions on program design and staffing, and access to HMIS and the Coordinated Entry System.

The CoC will work to ensure more shelters adopt a low barrier approach by monitoring program eligibility and implementation requirements outlined in CoC Written Standards. In each county where shelters are operating, the CoC will continue to enhance partnerships, assess resources and needs, and implement an evidence-informed process to achieve better outcomes. Local elected officials will be engaged to improve understanding of housing and shelter needs in their community with encouragement to dedicate resources. Data from performance monitoring, Coordinated Entry, and gaps analysis will allow the CoC to enhance existing infrastructure and add additional resources for low-barrier shelter. The annual Coordinated Entry evaluation will continue to include surveys and interviews with persons with lived experience who are currently in shelter to improve access. The pandemic revealed areas where sheltering could be improved and helped the CoC develop more options for non-congregate low-barrier shelter such as deeper partnerships with local emergency management officials and our health department. Our CoC Lead agency also manages Emergency Food and Shelter Program funds and encouraged new agencies to apply for motel vouchers, resulting in two new agencies, Sistercare and Salvation Army, accessing new motel voucher resources. The use of this type of low-barrier shelter and techniques that were implemented to expand the service will be used to cover the geographic footprint of the CoC.

**P-4.3 Permanent Housing:** The CoC seeks to provide an additional 500 units of permanent housing over the next five years, that will be housing first and low-barrier. The CoC Lead Agency, United Way, has dedicated five million dollars in private resources to permanent, rental housing. These funds were dedicated in spring 2022 with three project awards creating 160 units of affordable rental housing, ranging from one bedroom to four bedrooms serving people primarily at 30-60% area median income, that include access to services. Two of the supported projects are Low-Income Tax Credit applicants with the South Carolina Housing and Redevelopment Authority, leveraging over \$30 million in additional resources. A third supported project will leverage County ARPA funds and over \$5 million in additional resources.

CoC agency and CoC lead agency staff serve on the City of Columbia's Affordable Housing Task Force and its Development/Zoning and Advocacy/Public Education Subcommittees. This group is developing incentives for increased affordable housing development, strategies to streamline zoning and approval processes, and efforts to increase public education on affordable housing.

Increasing units through these efforts plus CoC, Stability Vouchers, and other sources will improve the CoC's ability to rapidly housing individuals and families with histories of unsheltered homelessness. Each CoC funded project will receive performance monitoring and review of the supportive services that are offered to ensure they meet the clients' needs and preferences. The CoC requires all projects to be Housing First. Each project must explicitly state their understanding of Housing First and how that will be implemented in their funded projects. Factors and indicators include the demonstration of low barrier and equitable project practices, policies, and procedures. Annual performance monitoring evaluates funded projects on their implementation of a Housing First approach. During performance monitoring, each project is

evaluated on compliance with its Housing First Principles by reviewing leases, policies, participant handbooks, case notes, service plans, etc. to ensure that participation in services is voluntary and that participants are not terminated due to substance use, reluctance to engage in services or treatment, lack of progress on goals, or other impermissible reasons. Projects that are found to have significant deficiencies in following Housing First are required to create a corrective action plan. HMIS System Administrator reviews APRs quarterly with projects and specifically discusses prior living situation, exit destination, and length of time between project entry and housed date.

#### **P-5. Identify and Prioritize Households Experiencing or with Histories of Unsheltered Homelessness.**

During selection of projects to be included in the CoC Special NOFO, a detailed process was used to ensure people with unsheltered histories were prioritized. The CoC, through an independent Ranking Committee, used a weighted matrix that evaluated projects submitted based on agency capacity, diversity of geography served, client-centered approach, outreach plan, and prioritization of serving those unsheltered. In addition, the threshold requirements were Coordinated Entry participation, Housing First and low barrier implementation, meeting match requirements, and financial feasibility. Having these standards while selecting projects for the application was the first step in ensuring resources provided through the Special NOFO would reduce unsheltered homelessness.

With this Special NOFO funding, the CoC will add 32 units of housing prioritized for unsheltered people. Additionally, the CoC will be able to offer a more aggressive and system-wide approach providing screening, referral, and housing placement by adding eight new staff positions to identify unsheltered individuals and families experiencing homelessness and coordinate support services and housing. CoC agencies will screen for vulnerability and use the CoC-adopted Prioritization Policy to match appropriate housing interventions which will most effectively serve and support those experiencing unsheltered homelessness. The outreach staff will facilitate clients attaining documents and connection to services and housing. The CoC will continue to provide training in cultural sensitivity, trauma-informed care, Coordinated Entry, and Housing First to support outreach staff. The CoC will organize outreach/unsheltered case conferencing meetings to discuss outreach staff efforts in the community and coordinate service plans to include access to case management, healthcare, mental health services, and housing.

Finally, the CoC hopes to facilitate intake and assessments where unsheltered individuals and families stay by increasing technological capacity through the availability of portable devices, such as laptops and tablets enabled with Wi-Fi hotspots, enabling access to HMIS and other resources such as SOAR applications in real time.

#### **P-6. Involving Individuals with Lived Experience of Homelessness in Decision Making— Meaningful Outreach.**

The CoC uses a variety of methods to outreach and engage those with lived experience in leadership roles and decision-making processes. Invitations to CoC meetings are extended to advocacy groups comprised of those who are currently experiencing or have recently experienced homelessness. Information is shared at emergency shelters and outreach staff encourage unsheltered individuals to attend meetings and get involved. All CoC meetings are

advertised openly, offered in-person and through virtual options, including being broadcast live on Facebook, with those with lived experience encouraged to attend. The CoC encourages all funded projects to maintain an oversight board made up of those with lived experience who are currently experiencing homelessness and/or receiving services. The CoC bylaws require at least one member with lived experience in addition to the chair of the Youth Action Board. This guarantees a minimum of two members with lived experience on the CoC Board. However, the Board of Directors has made a priority of recruiting additional individuals with lived experience to become board members. Those activities include email blasts to a contact list containing many individuals with lived experience, reaching out directly to service providers who are familiar with participants and the population served for a more intentionally targeted one on one recruitment, and prioritizing all CoC committees to have representation of people with lived experience. As board members, people with lived experience provide direct feedback and have voting power in CoC decisions, including CoC policy and procedures changes, the CoC competition ranking process approval, and any other decision-making process.

The CoC has conducted and will continue focus groups and feedback sessions to ensure that people with lived experience have a voice in CoC policy and service plans conversations to reduce unsheltered homelessness.

To solicit and consider opinions from a broad array of organizations and individuals, the CoC hosts publicized, well attended quarterly meetings that include presentations, discussions, and public comment about the system. Meetings are offered in a hybrid manner, offering a virtual option for those that cannot attend in person. Meeting notices are sent on social media (Twitter and Facebook), plus email blasts and the CoC website. The August 2022 meeting focused on the NOFO's HUD policy priorities; soliciting feedback from organizations serving those experiencing homelessness and individuals with lived experience, to be considered for the consolidated application.

The CoC has an elected board, general membership of over 50 diverse agency members, three locally oriented 'chapters', five CoC-wide planning committees, and the Youth Action Board comprised of currently and formerly homeless youth. The CoC has operated a Frequent Offenders Taskforce across justice system providers (Solicitor's Office, Public Defender's Office, and City Police) that helps diversify the opinions. The CoC coordinates with mainstream providers like school districts, Dept. of Social Services, and Dept. of Juvenile Justice to improve discharge planning. The CoC regularly conducts focused conversations in various areas throughout the continuum to better gain information about knowledge and interest in preventing and ending homelessness.

The CoC works closely with providers to receive information and feedback during their general membership meetings. The CoC's Policy Committee is responsible for conducting an annual evaluation of Coordinated Entry. CES Policy and Procedures outlines a process for conducting an annual CES evaluation and assessment. The policy states that qualitative data will be collected annually through online surveys and/or focus groups and interviews with CES stakeholders. This data will be supplemented by annual performance monitoring of CoC grantees along with feedback from Emergency Solutions Grant grantees. Once all this information is compiled and analyzed, a summary report will be provided to the CoC Board of Directors and



Members, Access Points, Service Providers, and other stakeholders. The overall purpose of the evaluation process is to assess the effectiveness of the CES, gather feedback from people experiencing homelessness and those who have received assistance through the CoC or ESG program, and provide recommendations for continuous improvements. Surveys are collected from participants experiencing homelessness and those who have received assistance from the CoC (to include ESG). Surveys are anonymous and can be completed on paper or online. Questions address access and satisfaction of services, knowledge of services, and an opportunity for respondents to write narrative responses about items important to them. In addition, CoC funded projects are encouraged to and do administer satisfaction surveys about their specific services. Based on feedback from those with lived experience of homelessness, the Policy Committee began discussing changes to the prioritization policy and vulnerability tool used by the CoC. Most respondents to the survey felt the wait time for housing was inadequate and getting help was difficult with the various screening assessments needed. The Policy Committee has already made changes to the prioritization policy related to Rapid Rehousing, shortening the time from engagement to housing. The committee is currently doing in-depth work on identifying a better vulnerability tool that accurately reflects the needs of the individuals/families and can be administered quickly throughout the CoC. The information and feedback provided gets taken back to the CoC's policy committee to evaluate and determine any changes needed to current policies and procedures.

**P-6a. Involving Individuals with Lived Experience of Homelessness in Decision Making– Letter of Support from Working Group Comprised of Individuals with Lived Experience of Homelessness.** Letter included in application

**P-7. Supporting Underserved Communities and Supporting Equitable Community Development.**

From a programmatic standpoint, the CoC provides required training on equal access and cultural competency. In addition, all organizations are required to adopt the written standards reflecting Equal Access in accordance with an individual's gender identity in Community Planning and Development Programs. Agencies may not require a client to stay in a different or separated area against their will or deny equal treatment because of their gender identity. Placements in shelter beds should not be based on complaints of another person when the sole basis of the complaint is client's nonconformance with gender stereotypes. Programs must take reasonable steps to address safety and privacy concerns and provide for privacy in bathrooms and dressing areas. Additionally, clients should have equal access to supportive services, regardless of how they choose to be housed. Shelters are required to develop written policies that specify how they will protect all residents, especially LGBTQ+ and gender non-conforming residents and other vulnerable individuals, from harassment and violence.

The CoC uses multiple data sources to identify underserved communities and how they interact with the homeless system. Most of this work is done through an annual disparities report that was overseen by the Data and Evaluation Committee. Data in this report comes from US Census estimates, the Point-In-Time count (PIT), Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), the CoC Racial Equity Analysis Tool provided by HUD, and state agencies (Medicaid, Department of Social Services, Department of Juvenile Justice, State Law Enforcement Division, State Department of Education, Department of Mental Health). The PIT count is an annual

assessment of the number of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons on a single day. The data allows communities to identify whether a person is an individual, a member of a family unit, or an unaccompanied youth. In addition, communities identify if a person is chronically homeless, indicating long-time or repeated homelessness and the presence of a disability along with demographic information. HMIS is a local information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness. The Racial Equity Analysis Tool is provided by HUD and designed to help CoC's identify racial disparities in the system. The tool is an overlay of the racial distributions of people living in poverty by race and ethnicity, age, and veteran status, sourced from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2011-2015 5-year estimates, and the most recent PIT count data. In recent years, the CoC conducted a needs assessment to better understand the contributing factors and dimensions of youth homelessness. This was completed by identifying a cohort of youth through HMIS, who were confirmed to be unaccompanied and literally homeless between 2014-2017. Through data use agreements and support from the SC state data-warehouse, SC Medicaid, SC Department of Social Services (DSS), SC Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), State Department of Education (SDE), SC Department of Mental Health (DMH), and the State Law Enforcement Division (SLED), the assessment team received all data related to the cohort's lifetime engagement with each system and examined areas of inequity. Within the 13-counties of the CoC, African Americans make up 32% of the general population, but more than 65% of the individuals experiencing homelessness during the most recent Point-In-Time Count. African Americans are even more disproportionately overrepresented in families with children who are experiencing homelessness (general population 32%/experiencing homelessness 77%). Whites, Native American/Alaskans, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Other/Multi-Racial groups are all underrepresented in those experiencing homelessness when compared to the general population. When examining unsheltered homelessness in the PIT count, 100% of the families with children who were unsheltered were African American. This disparity persists even in comparison to the population living below the poverty line. In the CoC's 13-counties, 43% of all individuals living below the poverty line are white and 49% are African American. When examining disparities in ethnicity, data indicates there is not a significant difference in the ethnicity of the total population and of those experiencing homelessness. There is a slightly lower percent of Hispanic or Latino individuals experiencing homelessness when compared to the overall population. These disparities were confirmed when reviewing the 'CoC Racial Equity Analysis Tool.' In CoC data, 49% of all people living in poverty identified as black; however, among the people experiencing homelessness during the annual point-in-time count 66% identified as black. Further, 67% of people in the 2017 unsheltered count were Black. For families experiencing homelessness during the count 77% were black. These two data sources confirm Black/African Americans are overrepresented in the homeless population when compared to the general population. An additional finding is African American unaccompanied youth (homeless youth between 17-24 years of age) are disproportionately represented in the sheltered population when compared to white youth and their rates in the general population. African American unaccompanied youth make up nearly 60% of unaccompanied youth in a shelter, but only make up a little over 30% of all youth throughout the 13-counties. For unsheltered youth, there was an equal number of white and African American unaccompanied youth counted in the most recent PIT Count, although the number of white youths compared to African American youth is 2 to 1.

The needs assessment of youth in transition uncovered additional areas of disparities including race and gender differences in data. Some, but not all, of those findings include:

- Of youth who became homeless after exiting foster care, 70% are AA, but only 41% of all youth in foster care are AA;
- Of youth who became homeless with an arrest, 42% were female, but only 22% of all juvenile arrests are of females;
- Of the youth who were homeless, 48% had a diagnosed mental illness, while only 17.5% of youth have ever been treated for a mental illness in SC.

The CoC's strategy to provide outreach, engagement, and housing interventions that serve populations who have not been served at the same rate they are experiencing homelessness includes targeted outreach, assessment that considers the specific experiences and vulnerabilities of underserved populations; prioritization; removing structural and other barriers; and using those with lived expertise to deliver services through paid employment. Street outreach is coordinated at the community level and tracked in HMIS so that all outreach workers can see locations, dates, times, notes, and which outreach staff are working with individuals. Teams are trained to be person-centered and use culturally appropriate strategies to engage. Outreach strategies are respectful and responsive. Staff are provided training to ensure that warm handoffs are made to coordinated entry, shelter or temporary accommodations, and housing providers. Staff focus on the individuals' strengths and resources to engage populations experiencing homelessness and to locate housing and supportive services of their choice. Staff receive regular training in trauma-informed care and take a harm-reduction approach when providing services. The CoC's assessment and prioritization process ensures housing interventions meet the needs and preferences of participants. Using a common assessment tool that considers the specific experiences and vulnerabilities of underserved populations ensures households are prioritized for the most appropriate housing intervention that meets their needs and preferences. The CoC will assess structural barriers and obstacles that prevent people from accessing available resources, including locations of service providers; dates and times services are available; the need for multi-lingual or other accessible services; documentation and identification requirements; and whether programs have lengthy or burdensome entry requirements that affect the likelihood of someone seeking those services. The CoC engages individuals with lived experience and provides training and technical assistance to CoC providers to encourage them to involve those with lived experience in delivering services, including outreach, housing location and case management. The CoC believes that employing and equitably compensating those who have lived experience and who are reflective of the population served will ensure programs are successful in ending homelessness, particularly unsheltered homelessness.