

Newsletter

Building a Clearer Picture: Advancing Data-Driven Solutions for Homelessness in Nashville



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From the Desk of April Calvin

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The federal government strongly advises every Continuum of Care to utilize a unified database system to gather comprehensive data on the state of homelessness in each city or region. Since the inception of Nashville's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) in 2008, achieving complete coverage has remained a challenge. Nevertheless, the importance of this data collection cannot be overstated.

The White House's United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) recommends that communities improve data sharing to serve people experiencing homelessness more efficiently and emphasizes the importance of high-quality data. Additionally, Objective 2.3 of the Nashville Local Continuum of Care's Homelessness Planning Council Strategic Plan commits to maximizing community-wide HMIS data collection, sharing, and usage.

It is with great enthusiasm that I announce, following the first anniversary of the Office of Homeless Services, we have achieved numerous successes—most notably, a significant increase in HMIS data access points and near-comprehensive community data coverage. As we move forward, our data and understanding of homelessness will continue to evolve, marking a historic moment in our efforts.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the Nashville Rescue Mission for being a long-standing and valued partner, helping the Office of Homeless Services achieve this goal. Two additional methods have contributed to our community-wide increase in data collection: expanding the number of access points through outreach efforts, which has allowed us to capture data on individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness for an average of five years or more.

"You can't find solutions to something you can't actually see, so having this data will give us our clearest understanding ever of people experiencing and at risk of homelessness in Nashville—and that is hugely impactful," said Mayor O'Connell. "To truly address and resolve episodes of homelessness in Nashville, the city must understand the depth and breadth of the challenge. For the first time, we will have a true picture of need in our community and actionable ways to improve quality of life for everyone."

Another vital development has been the use of the HMIS data system as the primary database for Metro's Cold Weather Overflow Shelter. In just one week, we captured data for 516 unduplicated individuals.

Increasing data coverage is essential for three key reasons:

- **Connecting people to services more quickly:** Improved data allows us to link individuals to vital services, resources, and housing options in our community with greater efficiency.
- **Assessing resource needs:** Enhanced data coverage helps gauge the resources required to address this complex issue locally. As homelessness grows nationally, we must fully understand the severity of the problem to request adequate funding.
- **Securing federal funding:** Increasing bed coverage in our local application for federal funds is the most strategic way to gain additional resources for Nashville.

Nashville is laying the groundwork to begin an effective and strategic process to address the needs of our citizens. Together, we are building a stronger foundation to tackle homelessness and improve lives in our community.

-April Calvin

Compassion in Action: Cold Weather Shelter Brings Warmth and Hope to Our Community

The Cold Weather Shelter exemplifies compassion in action, providing warmth, safety, and dignity to those facing the harsh realities of winter. Between November 29 and December 6, 2024, the shelter served 1,308 guests, including 516 unique individuals. This vital effort would not be possible without the extraordinary dedication of volunteers who go above and beyond to make a difference. Guests expressed heartfelt gratitude with comments like, "I love it here. I sleep so well." You can help by volunteering at WeGo Central to guide individuals with bus routes (sign up through Hands On Nashville) or donating hygiene products on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM at 3230 Brick Church Pike. Thank you to Director, Gerald Smith and the General Services Team for your donations. Together, we can make a lasting impact.



HMS checking in guests with a smile. (Kelly Muldoon)

- Volunteer Opportunities: Volunteers are needed at WeGo Central to assist individuals in finding bus routes. Sign up via [Hands On Nashville](#).
- Donations: Hygiene products are accepted on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM at 3230 Brick Church Pike. S
- Text Alerts: Text OHSALERT to 888-777 for updates on shelter openings.
- Hotline: Call (615) 862-6391.



Donations for hygiene products are accepted on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM at 3230 Brick Church Pike. (Shervlon Brooks (L) with General Services and Tytiauna Ruffin (R), Shelter Manager)

Empowering Safer Communities: Landlord Engagement Hosts Lifesaving Narcan Training

Landlord Engagement recently hosted a Narcan and harm reduction training at the Donelson Library, equipping property managers and service providers with the tools and knowledge to save lives during opioid overdoses. This training is vital in fostering safer communities, as it empowers those on the front lines of housing and support services to respond effectively in emergencies. By understanding harm reduction practices and the use of Narcan, participants are better prepared to protect tenants and visitors, creating environments where safety and compassion are prioritized. This initiative underscores the importance of proactive education in combating the opioid crisis and saving lives.



Building Hope Together: Community Partners Shine at Nashville Rescue Mission Resource Fair

Thank you to our incredible community partners who joined us at our recent resource fair at the Nashville Rescue Mission. Pictured above and to the right are a few of the participants. Together, we made a meaningful impact, providing resources and support to over 125 individuals in need. Your dedication and compassion help strengthen our community and bring hope to those we serve. Let's keep this momentum going! We invite you to join us at our monthly resource fairs and continue making a difference. For more information, email Joseph.Parker@nashville.gov—we'd love to have you be part of this important work!



Staff Appreciation: One-Year Anniversary Milestones & “Rookie of the Year”

Congratulations to these outstanding team members on their one-year anniversary with the Office of Homeless Services! Your servant leadership and commitment have strengthened our impact, improving support for community partners and our neighbors in need.



Dr. Marvin Trotter-Assistant Director of Programs
Hannah Meineke-Outreach
Raquel DeLaHuerga-CoC Manager
Dr. Monte Talley-Coordinated Entry Manager
TyTiauna Ruffin-Emergency Services Manager



We are thrilled to congratulate our very own Raquel De La Huerga, Continuum of Care Manager, on receiving the "Rookie of the Year" award from The Nashville Coalition for the Homeless!

Raquel's dedication and hard work ensure that processes and protocols are implemented with integrity, equity, and care for all. She is a passionate advocate for those with lived experience, community partners, government agencies, and anyone committed to supporting our unhoused neighbors.

We are incredibly fortunate to have Raquel on our team, and the community is equally fortunate to have her as a leader. Please join us in celebrating this well-deserved honor!


Get Involved and Stay Connected



OHS Weather and Community Alerts are moving to MEANS (Metro Emergency Alert & Notification System)

Please text "OHSALERT" to 888-777 to register

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