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## **FEWER PEOPLE ARE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN HOUSTON**

However, more than 6,300 people need a stable home

Houston, Texas (June 12, 2013) Houston has seen a 29% drop in the homeless population both sheltered and unsheltered since 2011, stated Marilyn L. Brown, President & CEO of the [Coalition for the Homeless of Houston and Harris County](#). And while that drop is something to celebrate, there were more than 6,300 people that were homeless during the evening of the 2013 Point-in-Time Homeless Count conducted under the auspices of the Coalition on January 29, 2013. The PIT Count is a federal requirement for all communities receiving funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The reason for this decline, said Brown, is that area homeless service providers are working collaboratively to help homeless individuals and families move into stable, permanent housing.

“Across the nation, homeless service providers have been charged by the federal government to move people from the streets and shelters into a housing environment tailored to their needs” said Brown. “Some individuals and families just need rent assistance, while others who are chronically homeless may need permanent housing that includes support such as help taking prescribed medication regularly or substance abuse counseling to prevent a return to homelessness.”

By federal definition, someone is considered chronically homeless if they experience four or more episodes of homelessness within a three-year period or one or more current consecutive years of homelessness. In addition, the individual must have a disabling condition that makes daily activities difficult, such as a medical or psychological condition or a substance abuse problem.

Houston area housing initiatives include Housing Houston’s Heroes, which has housed 557 homeless individuals and families, including 488 homeless veterans in the past

year. Other efforts include joining the 100,000 Homes National Campaign, which helps identify and house chronically homeless individuals nationwide. In Houston, there are between 1500 and 2000 chronically homeless individuals.

### **Some Causes of Homelessness**

Homelessness is a complex issue and effective efforts to prevent it require broad community participation. Triggers that may lead to homelessness include job loss, eviction, bills higher than earnings, domestic abuse, incarceration, mental and/or physical illness, drug and alcohol abuse or changes in family status.

### **YouthCount!**

As part of a nine-city pilot program, the greater Houston area PIT 2013 Homeless Count focused on a specific subpopulation, emancipated youth under 24 years of age, entitled YouthCount! Data was collected by canvassing areas where teens and young adults congregate, along with a survey given to students thought to be homeless in area school districts. The results revealed that more than 160 youth were homeless and that the majority of these children were living doubled up with family members in apartments. Two out of five of these youth had experience with foster care, and many had “aged” out of the foster care system leading to their homelessness. One issue that has been identified is that there is a lack of housing for youth less than 18 years of age in this community.

The **Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County** is a non-profit 501(c) 3 organization that provides support to Houston area homeless service providers that work directly with the homeless. The Coalition provides its agency clients with research about Houston’s homeless population; advocates on behalf of homeless individuals; and supports service providers with a myriad of programs including the annual Point-in-Time Homeless Count; the management of a database of homeless people, Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS); Homeless Court and other support programs. The Coalition works collaboratively with homeless service providers to shape the community response to homelessness in Houston and Harris County. For more information about the Coalition’s efforts, visit [www.homelesshouston.org](http://www.homelesshouston.org).

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