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### **COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS AND PARTNERS REFLECT ON THE SUCCESSES OF 'HOUSING FOR HARVEY' AND EXAMINE REMAINING CHALLENGES ONE YEAR AFTER THE STORM**

**Houston, TX** – As the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Harvey’s catastrophic flooding in Houston approaches, the Coalition for the Homeless is reflecting on the system challenges and successes immediately before the storm and in its aftermath. From the first day of rainfall on August 28, 2017, through February—and even still today, though to a smaller extent—the Coalition for the Homeless and other local homeless service providers shifted staffing and monetary resources to help the community recover from Harvey. Although the Housing For Harvey program prevented homelessness for nearly 1,000 individuals who were living in disaster shelters after the storm, Harvey’s destruction disrupted the system and caused the region’s first increase in the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness since 2011.

In the days leading up to the storm, [The Way Home](#) partners played a critical role in keeping Houston’s homeless population safe and dry. Street outreach teams encouraged individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness to seek shelter and emergency shelter partners made extra room to ensure no one was turned away. Many local emergency shelters operated at upwards of 150 percent capacity for months following the storm.

The Coalition for the Homeless joined with partners of The Way Home, local government and federal agencies including the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and The American Red Cross to create “Housing For Harvey,” to prevent homelessness and transition individuals and families out of disaster shelters. In just 41 days, Housing For Harvey prevented homelessness for 936 precariously-housed individuals (meaning that before the storm, they were living with friends/family or their names were not listed on their lease, so they were not immediately eligible for FEMA assistance). The program also provided them with guaranteed six-month rental assistance and case management support, as well as a furniture package, home goods and food items.

Collaboration and a “can-do” spirit were vital to the success of Housing For Harvey. Over \$1 million in donations were made to the Coalition in the days and months after the storm, allowing the Coalition to quickly place resources where they were needed the most. Simtech Solutions, Inc. donated their time, developing an app that allowed partner staff to quickly triage individuals residing in disaster shelters. Local organizations and businesses like the Houston Food Bank and CORT Furniture made generous donations to create Food Pantry Boxes and Welcome Baskets. Exclusive Furniture made sure that furniture, food, and home goods were delivered to families within 24 hours of their moving out of disaster shelter.

Additionally, dozens of local property managers reserved more than 700 units for the program, ensuring that private rental units were available exclusively for Hurricane Harvey survivors during a tight rental market. Among the properties that answered the call for apartment units was Villa

Serena Communities, a valuable partner of The Way Home's permanent housing programs since 2015.

"In preparation for the storm, our management worked overtime to ensure minimal damage, disruption, and displacement to our residents," said Steve Moore, co-owner of Villa Serena Communities. "Early warnings helped prevent loss of vehicles and staff helped first-floor residents, especially elderly individuals and those with disabilities, move upstairs. When The Way Home asked for units for Housing for Harvey, we placed about 60 households across six of our properties and I would do it again in a heartbeat. Many of those tenants are now paying rent on their own and I expect they'll be great long-term residents."

After the original six months of rental assistance, households still in need of assistance were transferred to an eviction prevention program administered by Harris County Community Services Department and the Houston Housing Authority. 70 percent of households (234 of 334) have transitioned out of the program, with another 25 households expected to successfully transition by the end of August. 88 percent of those who have left the program have either returned to their living situation prior to the storm, are self-paying for their apartment, or enrolled in a subsidized housing program.

"I'm proud of what we did with the Housing For Harvey program, preventing homelessness for nearly 1,000 individuals who found themselves in disaster shelters after the storm," said Marilyn Brown, President and CEO of the Coalition for the Homeless. "While the Housing for Harvey program was extremely successful, the post-Harvey efforts were a major disruption to our regular homeless services and planned work for 2018. The Way Home has housed more than 14,500 homeless individuals, veterans and families with an 84 percent success rate since 2012, but we have a lot of work ahead of us, and we rely on support and donations to continue our progress."

The Coalition recently announced results from the annual Homeless Count & Survey, which showed an increase in the unsheltered homeless population in Houston for the first time since 2011. On the night of January 22, 2018, there were 4,143 total sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals in Houston, Pasadena and Harris, Fort Bend and Montgomery Counties (1,614 unsheltered and 2,529 living in shelters). On the night of the Count, 18 percent of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness reported that they became homeless due to Hurricane Harvey, whether it was their first time homeless or not. In statewide comparisons, Houston had a higher uptick in results, but all major cities in Texas showed Homeless Count increases in 2018.

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For more information on the Coalition, including a snapshot of efforts from 2012 to present, please access our Press Kit: [bitly.com/CFTHPressKit](http://bitly.com/CFTHPressKit).

The Coalition for the Homeless is a 501(c)3 nonprofit whose mission is to provide leadership in the development, advocacy, and coordination of community strategies to prevent and end homelessness. Learn more at [www.homelesshouston.org](http://www.homelesshouston.org).