The Tipping Point: Unsheltered Outnumber Sheltered, the Unintended Consequences of a Robust Economy

A report on homelessness from the North Dakota Coalition for Homeless People produced in cooperation with the Rural Community Assistance Corporation under a technical assistance grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development.
Introduction

Determining the numbers of people experiencing homelessness and assessing their needs has always been a difficult challenge. With North Dakota’s robust economy bringing dynamic conditions in terms of escalating housing prices, diminishing vacancy rates and an influx of people seeking employment and housing into North Dakota, never has such an assessment been more important. Many North Dakota service providers who work with the homeless population have reported an influx of people from across the United States seeking services, many of whom were homeless in their state of origin and are homeless when they arrive in North Dakota. Additionally, many service providers have reported that there are increasing numbers of long-term residents who are having difficulty maintaining housing because of rapidly increasing rents.

The fast paced growth in North Dakota has made collecting accurate and timely data regarding population and employment numbers challenging at best. A recent HUD report, “New Oil and Gas Drilling Technologies Bring Significant Changes and Challenges to Housing Markets” (http://www.huduser.org/portal/periodicals/ushmc/summer12/USHMC_2q12_ch1.pdf) points out that “...particular issues concerning the available data make it difficult to assess the effect of oil and gas industry activities on a housing market area, especially the determination of housing needs and demand.” In a recent meeting between members of the National Low Income Housing Coalition and HUD officials, NDCHP’s executive director pointed out to Secretary Shaun Donovan that the study was accurate in reporting that there are housing challenges associated with energy production and that there are certainly data constraints in quickly developing rural areas, but that the study did not address the effects of fast paced energy development on local homeless populations. This study is, in part, a response to those conditions.

The North Dakota Coalition for Homeless People’s (NDCHP) core mission is the planning and development of housing and services for people who are experiencing homelessness. The quickly changing conditions in the state and the rising numbers of people who are unsheltered have made planning very difficult. NDCHP has conducted an annual point in time count of homelessness during the last week of January since 2007. The timing of the count is mandated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and is scheduled for the last week of January to ensure an unduplicated count across the United States.

Program statistics from NDCHP member agencies have long indicated that North Dakota’s homeless population is larger in the summer months. It had become increasingly clear that NDCHP was undercounting the number of people who were unsheltered. NDCHP administers the state’s Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) which tracks people in emergency shelter, transitional and supportive housing and the services they receive so conducting a sheltered count is not difficult; however, determining the numbers of unsheltered people during the last week of January is considerably more challenging. A shortage of volunteers who are willing to canvass parking lots, encampments under bridges and in other remote locations at 5:00 AM (the optimal time to reach the unsheltered) guarantees an undercount.
NDCHP determined that it was essential to undertake a *semiannual* count instead of merely an *annual* count. This allows NDCHP to track the seasonal, as well as, annual fluctuations, and to provide a better estimate of the unsheltered count. Additionally, the semiannual count ensures better tracking of the rapidly changing housing environment throughout ND.

HUD’s January Point in Time is used to determine the numbers of emergency shelter beds, transitional housing beds and permanent supportive housing beds needed throughout the state. The calculation uses specific formulas that take into account the homeless numbers, as well as an inventory of beds that are designated specifically for people who are homeless and beds under development. However, the formulas alone are inadequate to determine bed needs and the supportive services needed for people to maintain the housing ("Calculating Unmet Need for Homeless Individuals and Families", HUD 2006). These determinations must be informed by other factors such as family composition, numbers who are employed, availability of affordable housing, housing search services, availability of rental assistance, availability of employment and other factors.

NDCHP determined that in addition to the homeless count it was necessary to collect qualitative data from service providers, providing them with the opportunity to describe the conditions on the ground, and the quickly changing environment in which they work. This represents the first time NDCHP has collected this type of qualitative data. NDCHP applied to HUD for technical assistance in conducting a homeless needs assessment using both quantitative and qualitative data. HUD assigned the Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC), a nonprofit that specializes in the development of sustainable rural communities throughout the western United States, to work with NDCHP to design and implement a study that captures the dynamic conditions in North Dakota as it applies to providing shelter, housing and services to the state’s homeless residents.

**Acknowledgements**

NDCHP wishes to acknowledge RCAC, whose collaboration made this study possible, as well as HUD whose assistance made RCAC’s collaboration possible.

Additionally, NDCHP thanks Minot State University for administering the qualitative data questionnaires and for contributing to the questionnaire design. NDCHP members also contributed to the study design during their fall of 2011 quarterly meeting. Members also volunteered to coordinate the unsheltered Point in Time count in each of the state’s eight planning regions, and other volunteers conducted the actual counts. NDCHP also acknowledges the 84 agencies who anonymously responded to the qualitative data questionnaire and the 349 unsheltered households who anonymously responded to the unsheltered survey.
Finally, NDCHP thanks the 39 stakeholders who met in North Dakota’s planning regions to review and assess the data and provide the estimates of needed homeless beds and the services needed to maintain them.

**Executive Summary**

A sharp rise in homelessness seems counterintuitive in a robust economy; however, North Dakota is experiencing an increase in homelessness, and the employment boom is helping to drive the growing numbers.

Poor economic conditions in other areas of the United States and the excellent economic conditions in North Dakota create a push/pull effect as jobseekers leave states with few opportunities and flock to North Dakota to take advantage of the opportunities that exist in the energy industry and other job sectors. Existing housing stock is inadequate to meet demand, and housing production is not keeping pace. The result is a three or fourfold increase in housing prices and a reduction in vacancy rates to as low as 0% in much of the state.

Low income families, people on fixed incomes and those with special needs are being priced out of the market. Households who qualify for housing vouchers find them to be difficult, if not impossible, to use because of a lack of available housing. If housing is available, the cost frequently does not fall within the parameters of the voucher. HUD subsidized low income housing projects are opting out as soon as they are able in order to take advantage of current market rates. Many landlords in western North Dakota have stopped signing leases and have opted to go month to month enabling multiple rent increases per year. Market rate housing is not working for many of the state’s lower income residents.

A significant number of the incoming opportunity seekers are people who were homeless in their state of origin. Many arrive not realizing that housing is in short supply and that, even if successful in obtaining employment, the prospects of finding housing are more challenging. Others arrive unprepared to successfully enter North Dakota’s job market. The result is working people and those seeking work are frequently found living in cars or tents and other places not meant for habitation. Still others come without understanding how harsh North Dakota’s climate is.

One might think that these opportunity seekers need little more than affordable housing to solve their problems, but the data suggest otherwise. Many of those who have come, and those who have been priced out of the market, share the same barriers to housing stability that one would associate with the “traditional” homeless population. Rates of mental illness, chemical dependency and domestic violence among North Dakota’s unsheltered are high, as is the numbers who are veterans.

In addition to producing affordable workforce housing, North Dakota must be prepared to produce low income, supportive and transitional housing.

The large number of people experiencing homelessness has stressed North Dakota’s homeless response system beyond its capacity. Shelters are full and yet there are more people who are unsheltered than who are in the system of shelters. Agencies receive calls daily from in and out of state requesting shelter...
and services. Even agencies that do not provide housing are getting requests for assistance. Transitional and supportive housing programs that strive to move people toward self-sufficiency are finding no destination for those who are ready to exit their programs. The resulting bottleneck is rendering programs, that were once effective, powerless in moving people forward and creating opportunities for others to enter their programs.

This study strives to put North Dakota’s housing challenges into context and to explain the changing dynamic of homelessness in North Dakota. Additionally, the stresses to homeless service providers and the changing fabric of North Dakota’s communities are highlighted. The study arrives at determinations of homeless bed needs and supportive services informed by quantitative and qualitative data collected by NDCHP and its partners. NDCHP recognizes that these targets are fluid with both upward and downward pressures. Finally, NDCHP makes policy recommendations based on the data and suggests who the responsible parties for the recommendations should be.

The nine policy recommendations iterated at the end of this study place a large portion of the responsibility on the state, but call for partnerships between federal, state and local government as well as nonprofit and for profit businesses, and the faith and service communities. Because of the scope, magnitude and complexity of the homeless problem all sectors are affected and should be engaged in solutions. A variety of perspectives, resources and skill sets are needed if we are to be successful in ending or mitigating homelessness.

North Dakota is in an excellent position to respond to these challenges. Economic prosperity has brought housing and homeless challenges to the state, but it has also brought the resources needed to respond. Currently, the federal government takes the lead role in providing resources to combat homelessness; however, the federal government has serious budget challenges and cannot be expected to do more than it does already. The people of North Dakota must meet these challenges with the knowledge, expertise and resources that we are fortunate to possess.

**Methodology**

The study consists of these components:

  - The definitions of sheltered and unsheltered should be noted.
    - Unsheltered are those who are outside, in a tent/vehicle or other location not meant for human habitation including a dwelling with no operating utilities.
    - Sheltered are those who are in emergency shelter, domestic violence shelter or transitional housing facility.
The state’s Housing Inventory Chart (HIC), updated in January of 2011 (still accurate as of July 27, 2011), of beds dedicated solely to people who are homeless

- This chart is maintained by the North Dakota Coalition for Homeless People and is a HUD requirement. The HIC identifies the number of emergency, transitional, and permanent supportive housing beds and the target populations and subpopulations for each.

Four questionnaires administered to 168 service providers

- The first questionnaire was administered to emergency shelters, domestic violence shelters and transitional housing facilities.
- The second was administered to Public Housing Authorities.
- The third applied to County Social Services, Community Action Agencies, Salvation Army units and other social service and mental health providers.
- The fourth questionnaire was administered to Community Housing Development Organizations, Community Action Agencies who develop community housing and other Nonprofits who develop affordable housing.

The questionnaires were administered by telephone to Executive Directors or Program Directors between November of 2011 and January of 2012 by research students at Minot State University, NDCHP staff and RCAC staff. Respondents were informed that their responses would remain anonymous. The survey responses were compiled to identify significant themes, common concerns and other trends affecting North Dakota’s homeless population and the service providers who serve them. NDCHP and RCAC staff conducted the analysis of the questionnaires and sought to answer these underlying questions:

- What impact has North Dakota’s robust economy had on the homeless population?
- What impact has North Dakota’s robust economy had on service providers who serve the homeless?
- What impact has North Dakota’s robust economy had on quality of life for North Dakota’s most vulnerable citizens?
- What geographic areas of the state are experiencing changes in homeless numbers and what differences exist between regions?
- What ideas do North Dakota’s service providers have to improve the housing opportunities for North Dakota’s homeless population?

Stakeholder meetings where participants used the Point in Time information and Housing Inventory Chart along with HUD’s standardized formulas to calculate unmet bed needs for people experiencing homelessness

- The questionnaire data was used to inform final decisions on the estimate of need. Also considered in the calculations were shelter overflow (people on mats or sitting in community areas of the shelter over night) and beds currently under development.
Results

This section is divided into three parts, the summer Point in Time Count, the homeless needs analysis, and qualitative data including common themes and trends.

Summer Point in Time Count

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Total Number of Homeless</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region 1 (volunteers estimated they identified 10% of homeless people)</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 2</td>
<td>412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 3</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 4</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 5</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 6</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 7</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 8</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewide total</td>
<td>1773</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Housing</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Shelter</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV Transitional Housing</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DV Emergency Shelter</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Cross Flood Shelter</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoCR Sex Offender Shelter</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheltered total</td>
<td>807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Homeless</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The unsheltered number of 966 represents a tipping point in that it is the first time that the number of unsheltered has exceeded the number of sheltered in North Dakota. Never before has North Dakota's unsheltered number even been measured in triple digits. This marked increase is due to a combination of factors. A large influx of people from out of state seeking work in North Dakota's robust economy, a shortage of available housing and the subsequent rise in housing costs drive the rising numbers of unsheltered and sheltered alike.

The statistics below apply to the interviews with unsheltered households only.

1. Where did you stay last night?
   a. Own apartment without utilities 9.7%
   b. Vehicle/tent 43.6%
   c. Motel with voucher 2.4%
   d. Outside 38.8%
   e. Place not for human habitation 5.5%

2. Homeless more than a year or 4 or more times
A common perception is that most of the people residing in cars, tents and other unsheltered locations are job seekers or members of the workforce that need little more than access to affordable housing to end their homelessness. The data above suggests that there are other obstacles to housing stability for many of the unsheltered. The percentages of people experiencing mental illness, substance abuse and domestic violence are consistent with what would be expected in a survey of the “traditional” homeless.

It is also important to note the high number of people that qualify as either long term or chronically homeless. This suggests that the influx of people includes some who were homeless for some time before coming to North Dakota. This is anecdotally supported by calls that North Dakota homeless shelters get on a daily basis from people who are homeless in other states and want to come to North Dakota in hopes of improving their odds of employment and becoming housed.

The high percentage of veterans is of great concern and is about triple the rate of veterans that are members of the general population. The percentage is also about 10% higher than previous counts in North Dakota. Perhaps veterans are more attracted to the types of job opportunities that exist in North Dakota.
Dakota, but the study does not directly address that question. What is clear is that the trend is counter to the goal of ending veteran homelessness by 2015 iterated in *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to End Homelessness* ([http://www.ich.gov/PDF/OpeningDoors_2010_FSPPreventEndHomeless.pdf](http://www.ich.gov/PDF/OpeningDoors_2010_FSPPreventEndHomeless.pdf)).

The data also support the contention that many of the state’s homeless are from other states. Nearly forty percent indicate they are here for employment opportunities. Of those, only about a quarter could return to permanent housing in their state of origin. What is unknown is how many of those would be able to return to employment in their home state.

### Needs Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homeless Bed Needs by Region</th>
<th>Region 1 Williston</th>
<th>Region 2 Minot</th>
<th>Region 3 Devils Lake</th>
<th>Region 4 Grand Forks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of beds</strong></td>
<td><strong>Target population</strong></td>
<td><strong>Supportive services</strong></td>
<td><strong>Number of beds</strong></td>
<td><strong>Target population</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Emergency shelter</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>Single Males and Females, Households with Children, Transition aged youth</td>
<td>Case management for Severe Mental Illness/Dual Diagnosis, Addiction services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Transitional Housing</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Single Males, Single Females, Households with Children, Domestic Violence and Non-domestic violence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Permanent Supportive Housing</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Single Males and Females, Serious Mental Illness, Substance abuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Emergency Shelter</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Single Males and Females, Households with Children</td>
<td>Transportation assistance, Representative payee services, Childcare, Case management for Severe Mental Illness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Transitional Housing</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Households with Children, Single Males and Females</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Permanent Supportive Housing</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Single Males and Females, Households with Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Emergency Shelter</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Single Males and Females, Households with Children, SMI and Substance abuse</td>
<td>Case management for Severe Mental Illness, Addiction services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Transitional Housing</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Households with Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Permanent Supportive Housing</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Single Males and Females, Serious Mental Illness and Dual Diagnosis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Emergency Shelter</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Single Males and Females, Households with Children, Single Males with Children,</td>
<td>Social detox, Medication monitoring, Case management for Severe Mental Illness,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Transitional Housing</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Single Males and Females,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Service Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region 5 Fargo</td>
<td>c. Permanent Supportive Housing</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>Single Males and Females, Households with Children, Transition aged youth</td>
<td>addiction services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Emergency Shelter</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Single Males and Females, Households with Children, Transition aged youth</td>
<td>Comprehensive case management for chronically homeless, youth, dual diagnosis etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Transitional Housing</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Households with Children, Transition aged youth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 6 Jamestown</td>
<td>c. Permanent Supportive Housing</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>Single Males and Females, Households with Children, Transition aged youth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Emergency Shelter</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Single Males and Females, Households with Children</td>
<td>Medical/prescription assistance, Financial literacy training, Daily living skills, Case management for Severe Mental Illness, Addiction services, transportation assistance, Food support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Transitional Housing</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Single Males, Single Females, Households with Children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 7 Bismarck</td>
<td>c. Permanent Supportive Housing</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Households with Children, Single Males, Single Females</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Emergency Shelter</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Households with Children, Single Males and Females</td>
<td>Medical monitoring/prescription assistance, Childcare, Social detox, Case management for Severe Mental Illness, Transportation assistance, Community day center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Transitional Housing</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Households with Children, Transition aged youth, Single Males and Females</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 8 Dickinson</td>
<td>c. Permanent Supportive Housing</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Single Males and Females, Households with Children, Serious Mental Illness, Substance Abuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Emergency Shelter</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Single Males and Females, Households with Children</td>
<td>Representative payee, Case management, Severe Mental Illness counseling, Domestic violence counseling, Transportation assistance, Food support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Transitional Housing</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>Single Males and Females, Households with Children, Domestic Violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Permanent Supportive Housing</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Single Males and Females, Households with Children, serious mental illness and Substance abuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statewide total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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### Table 1.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Emergency Shelter</th>
<th>Transitional Housing</th>
<th>Permanent Supportive Housing</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>% of Regional Total</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>% of Regional Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 1</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 2</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 3</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 4</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 7</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 8</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2.0

The analysis quantifies the bed needs by North Dakota’s eight planning regions and is informed by the qualitative data below. Included are the supportive services that stakeholders determined were needed to support those bed needs.

**Eastern North Dakota stakeholders indicated a greater percentage of need for supportive housing and western North Dakota stakeholders indicated a greater percentage of need for emergency shelter. Influencing factors include the limited number of existing shelter beds in the west contrasted with the east and the fact that there seems to be a migration of people with greater needs from the west to the east where more services are available.**

### Table 2.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Vacancy Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Williston</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minot</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bismarck</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickinson</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Forks</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fargo</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: City Planning Departments
The data illustrate the housing shortage as it is distributed from west to east. There is no indication that these vacancy rates have improved. In fact, recent reports from Jamestown indicate a vacancy rate of .75% (Jamestown Housing Authority) and reports from Fargo (City Planning Office) show the rate has gone down to 2.5%. Grand Forks reports a similar drop in their vacancy rate. This demonstrates the housing shortage is extending to the east.

**Qualitative Data**

The following data are derived from 84 interviews with a variety of service providers who work with the homeless. The questionnaires were administered by Minot State University sociology students and were directed toward executive and/or program directors.

**Emergency Shelter, Domestic Violence, Transitional Housing Questionnaire**

1.a What is the average length of stay in the shelter?

- Average length of stay for transitional housing ranged from 7 months to 2 years.
  - Two years is the maximum allowable stay for transitional housing.
- Emergency Shelter stays ranged from 7 to 120 days.
- Eight shelters reported that their average length of stay was greater than 1 month.
- Four reported that average stays were less than 1 month.
- Four respondents reported that the average length of stay is increasing.
- Several respondents reported that they have a maximum allowable stay.

It is common for some homeless people to move from shelter to shelter once their maximum stay has been reached. Shelters serving more people and experiencing longer length of stays have to turn more people away.

1.b How many days per month is the shelter at capacity?

- Nine of 13 shelters reported that they are at capacity every day.
- Two domestic violence shelters reported they were rarely at capacity.
- Two shelters reported that they were at capacity more than 50% of the time.
- Some shelters have overflow in community areas and by placing mats on the floor. Others report allowing people to stay in drop in centers not meant for overnight stays.

1.c Is this an increase over previous years?

- Eleven of 13 shelters report that the number of days per month at maximum capacity has increased from previous years.
  - One stated that they were new and had no baseline for comparison.

2.a Describe family composition of those seeking services.
Respondents reported serving households of all compositions.
Several reported increasing numbers of families including two parent families and single parent families with either male or female single parents.
Respondents indicated that they are seeing increasing numbers of working families.
Respondents also reported seeing increasing numbers of seniors.
Several respondents only serve individuals or females with children.

2.b How many households are turned away each week?

The aggregate number of households turned away from shelter each week is between 150 and 172.
Only 1 domestic violence shelter reported no turn aways.

2.c Do you make referrals to other agencies for turn aways?

100% of respondents make referrals for turn aways.

2.d Are the referrals tracked to see if the household was able to obtain shelter?

Fifty-eight percent of respondents reported that they track referrals to determine if the household was successful in obtaining shelter.

What percent of referrals are successful in obtaining shelter?

Respondents who track referrals reported that only 37% of turn aways were successful in finding shelter.

3.a What are the primary reasons for homelessness of those seeking services?

Respondents in western North Dakota reported that a lack of available and affordable housing was the primary reason for homelessness.
Domestic violence was also reported by western respondents.
Respondents in eastern North Dakota were more likely to report more traditional reasons for homelessness such as mental illness, chemical dependency, low job skills and domestic violence.

3.b What are the systemic reasons for homelessness of those seeking services?

Several respondents did not understand the question and cited personal reasons for homelessness (mental illness etc).
Those who understood the question reported a lack of affordable and available housing as the primary systemic reason.

4.a Approximately what percent of those seeking services are employed?

In western North Dakota estimates ranged from 50 to 80%.
In eastern North Dakota estimates ranged from 0 to 50%.
4.b What are the main industries of employment of those seeking services?

- The primary industries of employment for whose seeking services were service industries such as restaurant, hotel and janitorial work. Day labor, construction, CNA and retail were also frequently mentioned.
- Three respondents reported that some are working at oilfield jobs.

5.a Approximately what percentage of those seeking services are new arrivals to North Dakota?

- Estimates ranged from 10 to 80%, with the highest estimates coming from western North Dakota.
- The most common response was in the 40% to 60% range which is consistent with the July 2011 Point in Time count survey results.

5.b From what state are they coming and why?

- Every state in the United States with the exception of Hawaii was mentioned.
- The most commonly reported states were Michigan, California and Texas.
- Hopes of employment, particularly in the energy sector, were the primary reasons for coming to North Dakota.

5.c Is it difficult to serve long term residents, if so why?

- Eleven of 13 respondents reported that having difficulty serving long term residents.
  - The primary reason cited was that shelters are full of people from outside North Dakota.

6.a Approximately what percent of those seeking service from the shelter are in need of additional services from outside resources (other agencies)?

- Responses ranged from 60 to 100% (average 82.67%).
  - Food assistance, medical care, mental health and addiction counseling, job training and education, and childcare were most commonly cited.

6.b Are those services readily available? Are they accessible?

- Seven of 13 respondents reported that services were available.
- Five of 13 reported that those services were accessible.
- Mental health and chemical dependency services were the most difficult to get.

7.a Regarding those seeking housing and related services, are there significant trends in needs or demographics?

- Respondents consistently reported that when homeless clients are able to obtain housing vouchers, the client is unable to use the voucher due to lack of affordable or available housing.
- Respondents reported that people are in need of more basic necessities such as diapers, food, and personal care items.
Some respondents reported they are seeing more chronic unemployment, more single fathers, more large families and more mental illness among their clients.

7.b Can you identify trends that have emerged in the last 6 months, 12 months, 24 months?

- Trends identified include:
  - More working homeless
  - More people from out of state
  - More people calling ahead from other states trying to access shelter
  - More people of color
  - More families with small children
  - A shortage of housing

8.a Inside the shelter has the number of incidents and severity of injuries changed in the last 2 years?

- Seven respondents reported no.
- Four reported yes.
  - Respondents reporting yes were primarily from western North Dakota.
  - Respondents seeing increased violence reported that they are seeing more domestic violence and more severe injuries.

8.b If so how did they change?

- Respondents seeing increased violence reported that more children are impacted.
- More money is contributing to increased drug and alcohol related violence.

8.c Outside the shelter has the number of incidents and severity of injuries changed?

- Of those reporting increased violence, the most common trend reported was an increase in the use of weapons.
  - One western provider reported that “men use to settle disputes with their fists, but are now using guns and knives.”

9.a What has local government done to help develop housing for low income and homeless people? Is this sufficient?

- All respondents with the exception of those in Fargo reported that local government has done little or nothing to assist in housing people who are low income or homeless.
- Anger and cynicism was evident in some of the responses.
- Several respondents reported a need for more local government support for nonprofits and low income housing.

9.b What has state government done to help develop housing for low income and homeless people?

- All respondents reported that the state had not done enough to help develop housing for low income and homeless people.
One reported that the state had put up barriers to housing development.
It is important to note that the questionnaire was administered at the very beginning of implementation of the Housing Incentive Fund.

- Western respondents reported a need for state dollars to develop emergency shelter.
- A desire for more housing tax credits was reported by some. It was not specified whether they meant state or federal credits.

9.c What has the federal government done to develop housing for low income and homeless people?

- The overwhelming response was that the federal government had done something to help develop housing but that it was not enough.
  - There were positive comment concerning the HEARTH Act, and the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act, but frustration was expressed concerning the federal budget process and gridlock, as well as administrative red tape.
- One respondent stated that there should be an easing of program requirements such as the ability for extended family to stay in low income housing.

10. What has the private sector done to ensure that homeless and low income people are housed?

- One third of respondents reported that the faith and business communities have provided donations to nonprofit service providers.
- Several reported that the private sector is quickly developing housing for profit and is ignoring the needs of low income people.
  - Some commented that private sector landlords are contributing to the problem by “skyrocketing the rents.”
- The respondents reporting charitable donations made note of the great importance of those donations in the recipient agencies’ capacity to help those in need.
  - It should be noted that the questionnaire was administered before the implementation of a successful church sheltering program in Fargo/Moorhead.

11. What solutions to homelessness and housing for low income people would you like to see in your service area?

- There were a variety of responses including:
  - State funded permanent supportive housing
  - Assistance in developing affordable housing
  - Fund for prevention and re-housing
  - Improved human service delivery
  - Low income housing preservation
  - Mitigation of poor credit and background checks
  - Funds for the development of emergency shelter.

12. Does your agency have staffing challenges?
Ten of 12 respondents reported staffing challenges.
Reasons cited included competition with energy sector wages and staff burnout.
Respondents reported that they were doing a “big job with small resources.”

13. Tell me about the last client you dealt with” What was their situation? What did you do to assist them? What was the outcome?

There were several inspiring stories including a single father with a 1 year old son who had been homeless for 4 months. “The father was working 3 jobs but commuting long distances and had much of his income going towards transportation and daycare. We provided him with shelter, diapers, food, medication and car repair. He is saving for housing and hopefully will be able to exit the shelter soon.”

14. Do you have any additional comments?

“Things are going to get worse before they get better.”

Public Housing Authorities

1.a How many units of Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers does the Housing Authority have?

Responses ranged from 0 to 1220

1.b Has the number of vouchers decreased, if so, why?

Most reported no decreases.
All reported difficulty in using vouchers because of low vacancy rates (lack of availability) and rents well beyond the FMR.s

1.c How many individuals/families are on the Housing Authority’s waiting list and how long is the wait?

Two reported no waiting list.
Others reported waiting lists of just a few to 649 to “very high”
Length of wait ranged from two months to two years. The most commonly reported wait time was “a year or more”.
All who had a waiting list reported that the length of time households wait to receive a voucher is increasing.
Several Housing Authorities reported that voucher recipients despite receiving an extension, are frequently unable to use the voucher due to a lack of affordable housing.

1.d Approximately how long does it take an individual/family with a voucher to find housing?

One reported that the list is so long that some have located housing by the time a voucher is available.
Other comments include:
They don’t. We are issuing vouchers but less than 10% are finding housing. 30-40 days; however, there are many who come back with nothing because of lack of availability or the units are in substandard condition. Most reported 60 days or not at all. Two responded 6 months or longer

1.e How many units of public housing does the Housing Authority have and what is the vacancy rate?

- Eight reported no public housing.
- Others ranged from 25 to 950.
- Of those who offer public housing vacancy rates for all but one varied from 0 to 8%.
- One reported that their vacancy rate was once 50%, but is now about 25%.
- Several commented that people prefer a voucher to public housing.
- Several reported very high turnover.

1.f Does the Housing Authority have preferences, if so what are they?

- One reported local North Dakotans.
- One reported victims of fire, tornado or other disaster.
- Five reported elderly or disabled.
- Seven reported no preferences.
- Other preferences mentioned include domestic violence victims, and homeless.

2.a How often does the Housing Authority receive requests for housing or housing vouchers.

- All but two reported daily with requests ranging from 1 to 30 per day.
- The two who do not receive daily requests receive weekly requests.

2.b Approximately how many inquiries per week?

- One stated “uncountable”.
- Other responses ranged from 1 to 100 per week.
- Some reported that inquiries are increasing.

3.a When prospective clients cannot be served where are they referred?

- Seven reported other Housing Authorities.
- Three reported Community Action.
- Three reported County Social Services.
- Four reported homeless shelters.
- One reported no place to make a referral.

4.a Approximately what percent of those individuals and families seeking assistance are homeless?

- Two reported none.
Several reported that they do not track the number but that “it seems to be increasing.”

Four reported 10% or less.

Three reported 30% or higher with the largest estimate being 90%

Several reported that they have many who are not literally homeless but are doubled up.

4.b What are the primary reasons for their homelessness?

A lack of affordable housing was the primary reason cited.

Other factors mentioned include:
- Credit and criminal history
- Lack of employment or underemployment
- Evictions
- Mental Illness
- Disability

Several mentioned that many of their homeless clients are people who have come from out of state looking for work.

Several reported they do not track that information.

5.a Describe the family composition of those seeking assistance?

Respondents reported seeing a wide range of households seeking assistance.
- Elderly and disabled were the most frequently mentioned groups.
- Most reported seeing increasingly numbers of households with children, including single parent and intact families.
- Some reported increasing numbers of young people.
- Significant numbers of individuals were also reported.

6.a Approximately what percent of those seeking housing are new arrivals to North Dakota?

Estimates ranged from 5 to 60%. Estimates in the west were considerably higher than the east.

Several reported getting calls on a regular basis from out of state people seeking housing when they arrive in North Dakota.

One reported getting requests from people who are new arrivals, but that they have a preference for long term residents.

6.b From what state are they coming and why?

Every state in the union was mentioned with the exception of Hawaii.

Minnesota was most frequently mentioned.
- Of those reporting Minnesota as a point of origin many stated that the influx is largely new Americans seeking vouchers they can port out of state.

Reasons for coming to North Dakota included job seeking and available vouchers.

7.a Approximately what percent of those seeking services are in need of additional services?
Most frequent response was “all of them.”
Other responses ranged from 2 to 95%.

7.b Are those services readily available? Are they accessible?

- Seven reported yes.
- Four reported no or unknown.
- Services mentioned include:
  - Food support
  - Health care
  - Social services
  - English language instruction
  - GED’s

8.a Regarding those seeking housing and related services are there significant trends in needs or demographics?

- The most common response is that there were more out of state people.
- Two Housing Authorities mentioned new Americans.
- Two commented that applicants were getting “younger and younger.”
- Several reported that they are seeing larger families.

8.b Can you identify trends that have emerged in the last 6 months vs the last 12 months, 24 months?

- New Americans were most frequently cited.
- Out of state people seeking vouchers was frequently cited.
- Language barriers and cultural clashes.
- Large influx of “people keep coming with everything in increasing shortage.”

9.a What has local government done to help develop housing for low income and homeless people? Is this sufficient? If not describe how local government can assist.

- Eleven reported that local government has done little or nothing
- Several reported that their community is supporting the development of housing, but not affordable housing.
- NIMBY was mentioned as a major obstacle.
- Three reported CDBG funds were available from local government and one mentioned Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT).
- Suggestions include:
  - Greater focus on low income and affordable housing
  - Updating aging housing stock
  - Local housing studies

9.b What has state government done to help develop housing for low income and homeless people? Is this sufficient? If not please describe how state government can help.
The Housing Incentive Fund was mentioned by some. (It is important to note the HIF was in very early stages of implementation at the time of this study.)

- A few lamented that the HIF was focused on western North Dakota.
- Low Income Housing Tax Credit and HOME funds were mentioned.
- Five said they felt the state had done little or nothing.
- One commented that the state was going the opposite direction by passing SB 2049 eliminating property tax exemptions for nonprofits providing low income housing.
- The only suggestion was to create a greater commitment to affordable housing in general.

9.c What has the federal government done to help develop housing for low income and homeless people? Is this sufficient? If not, please describe how the federal government can assist?

- Most mentioned that HUD has been the primary factor in the development of low income housing, but that they are frustrated with:
  - Insufficient Administrative funds
  - Budget cuts
  - Administrative red tape
  - Portability rules
  - Inaccurate FMRs
- FEMA’s flood response and HUD Veterans Administration Supportive Housing vouchers were mentioned favorably.

10.a What has the private sector done to ensure that homeless and low income people are housed? Is this sufficient? If not, please describe how the private sector can assist.

- Nine report little or nothing.
- Two mentioned the purchase of tax credits or development of tax credit housing.
- Several mentioned that the private sector is exacerbating the situation by raising housing costs and focusing on moderate to high income housing.
- A few mentioned charitable donations and faith groups assisting in development of low income housing.

11.a What solutions to homelessness and low income housing do you think would be effective in your service area?

- More emergency shelter, particularly in the west.
- Low income housing
- Funding for supportive services
- More of all types of housing
- Grants for acquisition and/or construction.
- More apartment complexes
- Greater access to tax credits that goes beyond oil and flood impacted areas.
- Greater coordination and “mission integration.”
12.a Tell me about the last client you served? What was their situation? What did you do to assist them? What was the outcome?

- “Our last client was a New American family. We got them voucher assistance through a translator and now they are in an apartment.”
- “We had three young men in our lobby after hours. They’re from Georgia, living in their car at this time. One is employed with an oil company. They have been staying in the Wal-Mart parking lot.”
- My last client was a domestic violence victim. We got her into an apartment in a secure building.”
- “I just rented two apartments to two families who had been on the waiting list for 2 years. When people get housing they keep it.”

Social Service Agencies, Human Services, Mental Health Agencies

1.a Have requests for services increased over the last 6 months?

- 16 of 21 respondents report yes.
- Comments include:
  - “Yes, there are more requests for people needing housing, but there is no place for them to go.”
  - “Yes, for rental assistance. We get a lot of people wanting us to find a place to live although we can’t help them with that...people living in our low income guidelines are paying twice as much as before...the vacancy rate is less than half a percent.”
- Of the 16 reporting increased service demand, all report requests for housing assistance. Other reported increases include:
  - Income maintenance
  - Food support
  - Child abuse and neglect services
  - Utility Assistance
  - Childcare
  - Gas vouchers

1.b Do requests include requests for housing?

- The majority of social service agencies do not provide housing, but almost all reported getting regular requests for housing.
- Some report that they have to refer people out of their service area for housing.

2.a Approximately what percent of your clients are homeless?

- 19 of 21 reported that they have homeless clients.
  - Most reported that 5 to 25% of their clients are homeless.
The highest estimate was 75%.
The lowest estimate was 1%.

Several commented that they have clients who are not literally homeless, but are precariously housed (doubled up in unsustainable situations).

Many reported that they are getting requests for service from people living in tents and cars. One commented:

- "We can’t remove kids for welfare because Mom is in a tent, could be a cardboard box or a camper."

2.b What are the primary reasons for prospective clients' homelessness?

- All respondents refereed to cost and/or availability
  - Most common response was the high cost of housing.
  - Unavailability was the second most commonly reported response.
- Other factors mentioned include:
  - Mental Illness
  - Chemical dependency
  - Physical disabilities
  - Little or no income
  - Flood
  - High cost of childcare
  - Tribal areas reported high unemployment as a primary reason.

2.c What are the systemic reasons for homelessness?

- High cost and low availability were the primary reasons mentioned.
- Comments include:
  - "There was not sufficient planning for the oil boom. It was not portrayed accurately by the media. They showed it as a great place to live because there are jobs, but what they don’t say is that there is a shortage of housing. Workers have driven across the country and can’t even get a hotel. It is mainly oil workers."
  - "A lot of clients have moved out because they can’t afford to live here anymore."
  - "Many people have been returning to the reservation."

3. Describe family composition of those seeking services:

- All types of households are reported: however, households with children were the most common.
- Other household characteristics reported include:
  - Elderly
  - Disabled people
  - Women who have come with someone seeking work and found themselves in abusive relationships
  - Increase in two parent household seeking assistance
Large families

Individuals

4.a Approximately what percentage of those seeking services are new arrivals to North Dakota?

- Four report 5% or less
- Three report 10%
- Two report 10-25%
- Three report 30-40%
- One reported 50%
- 2 reported 80-90%

4.b From what state(s) are they coming?

- Responses include comments that they are coming from every state. Specific states mentioned include:
  - Michigan (7)
  - California (3)
  - Texas (6)
  - Minnesota (4)
  - Florida (2)
  - Oklahoma (4)
  - Wisconsin (2)

4.c Is it difficult to serve long term residents?

- 11 report yes
- 10 report no

5.a Approximately what percent of those seeking services are employed?

- Range is 0 to 100%.
- 13 report > 50%
- 7 report < 50%
- 7 are in the 30 to 70 % range.

5.b What are the main industries of employment?

- 15 report service industry (retail, food service, etc)
- 4 report oil field workers
- 2 report farm/agricultural
- 3 report construction

6.a Are the clients in need of additional services?

- 18 report yes
Services mentioned include:
- Mental health
- Domestic violence
- Financial counseling
- Food support
- Child care
- Substance abuse treatment
- Rental assistance
- Gasoline
- Transportation

6.b Are those services readily available, easily accessible?
- 11 report no
- 6 report yes
- Lack of adequate transportation was frequently cited as an impediment to obtaining services.

7.a Regarding those needing services, are there significant trends in needs or demographics?
- Many report changing demographics. Changes noted include:
  - Clients from out of state
  - Increasing number of Native Americans needing service
  - More youth and young adults

7.b Can you identify trends that have emerged in the last 6 months vs. the last 12 months, 24 months?
- Respondents did not differentiate between 6, 12 and 24 months but did report these trends:
  - Influx of people from out of state
  - Diminishing supply of available housing
  - Rising rents
  - Influx of New Americans
  - Increase in domestic violence
  - Increase in substance abuse
  - Higher stress levels of people seeking services
  - More mental health issues
  - More people with multiple barriers

8.a What has local government done to help develop housing for low income and homeless people? Is this sufficient? If not please describe how local government can help?
- 14 of 21 reported that local government has done little or nothing
- 2 reported that local government has helped with housing development
- 2 reported planning and coordination (ten year planning, support for local homeless coalition)
No suggestions for how local government can assist were reported.

8.b What has state government done to help develop housing for low income and homeless people? Is this sufficient? If not please describe how state government can assist?

- 11 reported that the state has done little or nothing (it should be noted that this study was administered at the beginning of the HIF program).
- 4 reported that they were unsure.
- 1 mentioned that the Department of Human Services, the North Dakota Housing Finance Agency and the North Dakota Interagency on Homelessness were working on the problem.
- Suggestions for what the state could do include:
  - Development of affordable housing
  - Creation of emergency shelter
  - Creation of a Housing Trust Fund
  - Balancing housing development with energy industry development

8.c What has the federal government done to help develop housing for low income and homeless people? Is this sufficient? If not, please describe how the federal government can assist?

- 4 of 19 report that the federal government has done nothing.
- Others cite Section 8, HUD Continuum of Care programs, and other low income housing programs administered by HUD.
- The consensus was that federal efforts are insufficient
- No suggestions on how the federal government can assist were mentioned.

9.a What has the private sector done to help develop housing for low income and homeless people? Is this sufficient? If not, please describe how the private sector can assist?

- 8 report the private sector has done nothing.
- 4 report donations to nonprofits or coordination with nonprofits.
- 3 reported the private sector exacerbates the problem with price gouging.
- Churches and service clubs were mentioned as the most frequent entities from the private sector to work to mitigate homelessness.
- No suggestions for how the private sector can assist were provided.

10.a Does your agency have staffing challenges? If so what are they?

- 11 of 21 report yes. Challenges identified include:
  - Low wages
  - Lack of qualified personnel
  - Lack of housing for staff
    - Some staff are homeless
  - Rural geography (long commutes)
  - Lack of funding for staff
11.a Tell me about the last client you served? What was their situation? What did you do to help them? What was the outcome?

- “They didn’t have housing but had a job. They were living in a tent. We referred them to every option and idea we could think of.”
- “It was a husband and wife and kids who came here looking for work. We helped them get food stamps and Medicaid.”
- “We are working with a couple, one is homeless. They got evicted out of an apartment and moved back because of family. Now they can’t stay with family, so they are sleeping between friends’ houses and their car. Another was in a domestic violence situation. She and her kids are homeless and she doesn’t have a big network because she is not from here.”
- “They came here from the Belcourt area because they lost their home there. They are currently living in their car because there is no housing in Minot. I offered a tank of gas to go to the shelter in Grand Forks, but she didn’t want to live in a shelter, she declined the help. She was going to look for a place in Carrington.”

12.a Additional comments:

- “It’s just so hard right now to help anyone. They used to be able to find housing. Now we have a lot of people living in substandard housing.”
- “It’s really bad, we are just wondering what the future will hold. For a while we heard about people moving to other towns. Now they are coming here. I’m concerned that long time residents and low income people will be priced out of their homes.”

Community Development Housing Organizations (CHDOs), Community Action Agencies, and Nonprofit Organizations

1. How many units of Affordable Housing does the organization own and manage?

- Those organizations that own and manage own between 12-27 units.
- Those organizations that manage units, manage between 16-38 units

Most organizations that responded to this question do not own or manager units. A select number of CAPs and nonprofit organizations own and or manage units.

2. Is there a development pipeline? Is so, how many, where are they located and when will they be in service?

- Those organizations surveyed that engage in affordable housing development develop one project at a time and did not have established pipelines.

Of those organizations surveyed that develop affordable housing, the majority take on projects in a reactive fashion, answering rising needs. Most communities do not have a housing plan that outlines projected needs and housing options for residents.
3. Does the organization own or manage units that are at risk or loss of affordability? If so, when and where are they located?

- Most organizations were unaware of properties at loss of affordability.
- One organization stated that one of their projects in Watford City was sold and was no longer affordable due to expiration of the affordability period (10 years).

4. How often does the organization receive requests for housing assistance?

Interviewee responses include;

- We get a lot of referrals from other agencies.
- We get referrals every day, from individuals looking for rent / rental assistance, 15 times a day if not more. We are bombarded with walk-ins and calls.
- Many single males call for housing.
- Many single parent households, some elderly.

5. Describe client / family composition?

Interviewee responses include;

- Low income
- Most are working families. Oil rig wages have recently been raised and a lot of those families don’t fall into their income range. These families are about to fall through the cracks. Senior citizens and disabled rents are going up and they are unable to afford their rent.
- Many organizations get calls from people wanting to relocate to ND- some organizations get an average of 30 calls per week. One organization tells them, ‘not to come because there is no housing and you can’t live in a car, this is ND you will die’.

6 a. Approximately what percent of clients are new arrivals to North Dakota?

- Most requests are from out of state
- One organization reported that 75% of their clients are from out of state

6 b. From what states are they coming and why?

- One organization reported that, “most people coming to ND have been unemployed for 2-3 years and have lost everything, its’ their last chance to save everything”.

7. What are the major reasons clients /prospective clients are in need of housing assistance?

- Landlords are raising rent and clients cannot afford increases
- Security deposits and first month’s rent. Many individuals do not have enough money to get started.
8 a. Approximately what percent of the clients are in need of additional services?

- Responses included between 30-75% of clients need additional services

8 b. Are those services readily available? Are they accessible?

- Responses included: Yes for availability of services.
- Responses for services needed include: food stamps, social services, salvation army, food pantry and clothes, transportation.

9. Are individuals/families seeking housing assistance and services employed? If so, what are the industries of employment?

Interviewee responses include;

- A lot of them are, retail, customer service
- One problem we face here is that wages are higher and people do not meet guidelines for federal programs. They have needs but they don’t qualify.

10 a. Are there significant trends in needs or demographics?

Interviewee responses include;

- A lot of clients are low income, they are at poverty level or lower.
- We are seeing more out of state people.
- Need for financial counseling.
- No trends

10 b. Can you identify trends that have emerged in the last 6 months vs. the last 12 months, 24 months?

Interviewee responses include;

- In the last year those looking for housing have changed - more seniors. Anyone on limited income cannot keep up with increasing rents.

11 a. What percent of your prospective clients are homeless?

- All organizations responded between 25-90% of clients are homeless.
- 60% of those homeless are in a camp or car, couch surfing now and seeking services.
- 80% are homeless if we count those living with others.

11 b. Are those homeless clients currently working?

- 70% are employed

11 c. What are their reasons for homelessness?
Interviewee responses include;

➤ No housing available
➤ No housing available in Minot

12 a. What has the local government done to help develop housing for low income and homeless people? Is this sufficient? If not, please describe how local government can assist?

Interviewee responses include;

➤ “I think they are trying”
➤ “They’ve given CDBG funding, tax breaks, our city has been helpful but they have limitations and can only do so much. Cities and counties don’t want to be in the housing business."

12 b. What has the state government done to help develop housing for low income and homeless people? Is this sufficient? If not, please describe how the state government can assist?

Interviewee responses include;

➤ They are just looking to get housing developed. By building homes and apartments that are more expensive, it could open up the older buildings which could be used for affordable housing development.
➤ It takes time to get infrastructure, water, sewer.
➤ North Dakota Housing Finance Agency has helped initiate the tax credit buildings in Williston

12 c. What has the federal government done to help develop housing for low income and homeless people? Is this sufficient? If not, please describe how the federal government can assist?

Interviewee responses include;

➤ There are a lot of rural development housing loans.
➤ Provided tax credit, raised tax credit limit, gave infrastructure money but it is not enough.
➤ Income guidelines are unrealistic for our areas; maximum rents are unrealistic for our area.
➤ If they could give more vouchers that would work, but they have to raise the income guidelines so higher rents and incomes would work.

13. What has the private sector done to ensure that homeless and low income people are housed? Is this sufficient? If not, please describe how the private sector can assist?

Interviewee responses include;

➤ Private sector doing as much as they can- Salvation Army, local churches, community action, shelter rooms for homeless.
➤ We have 3 tax credit properties coming here through private developers.

14. Tell me about the last client you dealt with; What was their situation? What did you do to assist them? What was the outcome?
Interviewee’s response:

“We sent a man from the west coast back home because he was here during the coldest part of our winter. He would have died out there. When people call, we discourage them from coming. He came out here for a job and found he couldn’t land a job without a permanent address. It’s pretty hard to be stably employed with brutal hours when you don’t have a warm house, no food, etc. you can’t have one without the other.”

15. Do you have any additional comments?

Interviewee’s response:

“Our roads are a real need, the roads are just a huge issue, number of trucks traveling, we want our bypass, we have 8,000 trucks a day going through communities because there is not a bypass. Creates noise, death, look at Watford City, we serve that area and they are totally overwhelmed and Stanley they are trying to get by with even less resources and people. We have long term residents selling their homes and moving because of traffic.”

Across the Board Trends

- Lack of available and affordable housing is an issue.
- High percentage of folks coming in from out of state that need housing and other services.
- Main areas of employment for those seeking services are service industries: fast food, retail...
- Significant waiting list for housing and vouchers. Vouchers are difficult to use
- Low vacancy rates
- Increasing percentage of families with children
- Longer stays in shelters and shelters at or beyond capacity
- Need for more vouchers and a disconnect between vouchers and FMR’s due to rapidly changing market
- Need for family shelters
- Dynamic between East and West: East – traditional reasons for homelessness, Chemical Dependency, Domestic Violence, Mental Health; West- need more than affordable housing, but still a need for services and supportive housing
- Overwhelming “yes” to need for additional services
Lack of creative responses to - what can the local, state and federal government do

Large percentage of those seeking services are employed

Large percentage of homeless employed

Lack of clear understanding of definition of homeless; overcrowding, living in car, w/ relatives, couch surfing, etc...

Nonprofits are facing staffing challenges in the face of rising demand.

Policy Recommendations

1. Balanced Statewide Housing Plan:
   Never before has the connection between the different housing sectors been more evident. The demand for workforce housing in the west is affecting the shelter populations of the east. People with special needs are competing for housing with the workforce and seniors and others on fixed incomes are struggling with rising costs. NDCHP encourages the Governor to appoint a task force to create a balanced housing plan that assures that North Dakota’s most vulnerable people are not left behind in the race to develop workforce housing.

2. Renewal of the Housing Incentive Fund (HIF) with Increased Emphasis on Supportive Housing:
   The HIF (created by the legislature in 2011) has more than doubled the pace of affordable housing production in North Dakota according to the North Dakota Housing Finance Agency (NDHFA). The Governor has requested that the legislature reauthorize the HIF with an increase of the tax credit limit to $20 million and adding an additional $30 million in general appropriation. NDCHP recommends that the legislature approve the Governor’s request incorporating the administrative changes suggested by NDHFA (the administering agency) and keeping all homeless provisions in the original legislation intact. NDHFA should include additional points for supportive housing in the allocation plan.

3. Establishment of a State Funded Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program Similar to Minnesota’s Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program:
   The American Reinvestment and Recovery Act created the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP). North Dakota received approximately $2.6 million over three years to implement the program. The program was successful in diverting many households from shelter and in re-housing others who had become homeless. Program statistics from the YWCA Cass/Clay indicate that 78.4% of prevention clients were able to maintain permanent housing without further subsidy, and that 59.1% of their re-housing clients were able to maintain permanent housing without receiving further subsidy. The federal program was based on state programs like Minnesota’s Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program. Minnesota’s plan better fits
North Dakota because of a greater emphasis on prevention. This program could be funded by the HIF or through separate legislation and could be administered by the North Dakota Department of Commerce Division of Community Services (who administered HPRP) or the North Dakota Housing Finance Agency. In Minnesota, the program is administered by their housing finance agency.

4. **Replication of Fargo/Moorhead’s Church Sheltering Program throughout ND:**

   Homeless shelters are not the solution to homelessness; they are a symptom. Homeless mitigation efforts should always focus on the production of appropriate housing and the services needed to maintain that housing. That being said, because of the growing numbers of unsheltered in North Dakota and the harsh climate, the creation of additional shelter beds has become a humanitarian necessity. In Fargo/Moorhead a group of churches worked with the local homeless coalition worked together to create a church sheltering program that provides temporary shelter for the overflow from the area’s homeless shelters. The plan requires people to go through existing shelters and to be entered into the states’ Homeless Management Information Systems. Transportation from emergency shelters to the church location is provided by the YMCA, and volunteer training is supplied by the local homeless coalitions and the area shelters. In other communities churches are stepping up to provide shelter as well. In order to provide the best quality of service and avoid potential liabilities, the Fargo/Moorhead model should be replicated when possible. NDCHP and several local coalitions are actively promoting this idea.

5. **Increased Availability of Supportive Services:**

   The development of supportive housing by definition requires the development of supportive services designed to help households maintain housing and to work towards self-sufficiency if possible. North Dakota’s Department of Human Services should dedicate resources to the provision of supportive services to supportive housing projects as they are developed. The HIF contains provisions for supportive services and those should be maintained, even though they have not yet been actualized in the allocation plan. Supportive housing programs should also look to other available resources such as the Veteran’s Administration and social service agencies for available supportive services.

6. **Development of Temporary Emergency Shelter with the Expectation that Emergency Shelter Needs will Diminish over Time:**

   If North Dakota develops adequate affordable and supportive housing the demand for emergency shelter should diminish over time. Communities should strive to develop emergency shelter, but to mitigate the costs, communities should consider how the shelters could eventually be repurposed for supportive housing or for other needs as the need for emergency shelter is replaced by housing opportunities.

7. **Increased Support for Nonprofit Capacity Building:**

   North Dakota nonprofits that serve the homeless are clearly stressed by limited resources, rising demand and staffing challenges. This report recommends that the Governor recommend legislation that provides capacity building for North Dakota nonprofits. North Dakota is a small government state that relies on nonprofits to work toward the public good, thereby reducing the demand on state government. Nonprofits need to be strengthened so that they are able to respond to the increasing needs of the state’s homeless.
8. **Increased Partnership between Federal, State, Local and Private Entities:**
   The problem of homelessness is complex and is caused by a combination of personal and systemic barriers. As such, no entity is able to offer a complete solution to homeless on neither a personal or societal basis. Therefore, partnerships become an integral part of any effort to end or mitigate homelessness. Different organizations and societal sectors offer different perspectives, resources and skill sets that can be powerful in the fight to end homelessness. Those involved in serving the homeless will be most effective if they communicate, cooperate and collaborate with others, including those who are not usually at the table. This philosophy is evident in the federal strategic plan to end homelessness which is a partnership between 19 federal agencies. North Dakota’s extraordinary problem with homelessness demands extraordinary partnerships.

9. **Update the State’s 10 Year Plan:**
   NDCHP encourages the Governor to direct the North Dakota Interagency Council on Homeless to update its ten year plan to end long-term homelessness. While the strategies identified in the plan remain valid, the numbers and dynamics of homelessness have changed considerably.