

# Insights into Housing Instability and Homelessness in Greater Richmond

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## Homeward's mission

Homeward's mission is to prevent, reduce, and end homelessness by facilitating creative solutions through the collaboration, coordination and cooperation of regional resources and services.



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**Homeward:** setting the table for regional collaboration to ensure that everyone has a safe place to live



Learn more: [www.homewardva.org](http://www.homewardva.org)

[info@homewardva.org](mailto:info@homewardva.org)



*Housing Stability:*

## Ensuring Everyone Has a Safe Place to Call Home

**Focus of The GRCoC's Coordinated Efforts:**



Unsheltered (staying outside)



Temporary Shelter



Have to leave



Fleeing domestic violence

**Related Housing Needs in The Community:**



Eviction



Paying too much



Overcrowding or substandard conditions



Use of hotels as permanent or temporary residence

[www.endhomelessnessva.org](http://www.endhomelessnessva.org)



# Homelessness and Housing Instability: a community crisis



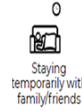
Unsheltered; nowhere safe to stay



Fleeing sexual or domestic violence



No longer able to stay where they are



“Doubled Up” or living with family or friends



Living in a hotel



Paying too much for rent; getting behind on bills



# Focus of our coordinated homeless services network



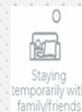
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# Housing Needs and Funding Eligibility

Households earning between 0 and 30% of Area Median Income and paying more than 30% of their income for housing

Youth in foster care

Living with others; "Doubled up"

Living in hotels:  
Self-pay

Youth aging out of foster care without stable housing

Living with others in an unsafe place

Living with others but need to leave

Staying in hotels: agency or community pays

Those fleeing domestic violence with no place to go

Those staying in emergency shelters and transitional housing programs

Those living on the streets, in cars, or other places not meant for habitation



GREEN REPRESENTS POPULATIONS ELIGIBLE FOR TARGETED HUD HOMELESSNESS RESOURCES. PATTERNS REPRESENT UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS.

## Who is counted during the PIT count?

-  People staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, or Safe Havens.
-  People staying in domestic violence shelters or fleeing domestic violence and/or human trafficking.
-  People living in places considered unfit for human habitation such as under a bridge, in a parking garage, in a car, or in a tent. (unsheltered)\*

## Homelessness in Greater Richmond July 2023 Point-in-Time Snapshot

On July 26, 2023

**486**

people in the Greater Richmond region were experiencing homelessness.

**SHELTERED**



**63%**

**UNSHELTERED**



**37%**



## Summary of the issues

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- Homelessness and the **inadequate supply of affordable housing** was a **crisis** before the pandemic and the needs of people experiencing or facing homelessness have been made worse by the public health & economic conditions.
- African-Americans are over-represented in homelessness due to historic and institutional **racial inequities** in housing and other systems.
- A majority of adults experiencing homelessness have been involved in the **criminal justice** system.



## Summary of the issues, cont'd

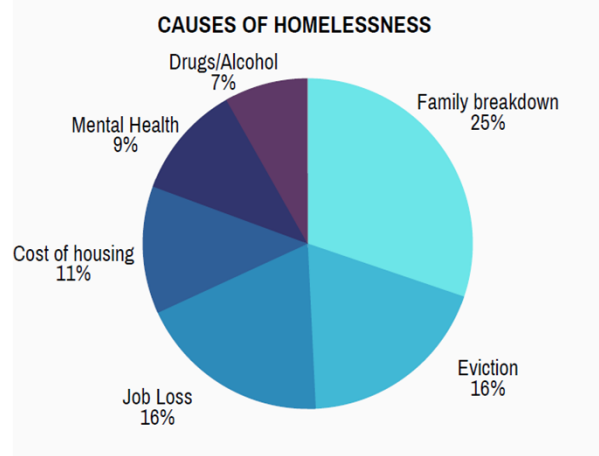
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- Thousands of households are threatened with **evictions**, housing instability, and homelessness.
- The needs of people experiencing homelessness are **complex** and may not be resolved quickly.
- The solutions to homelessness are also complex and require cross-sector and multi-agency **coordination**. No one agency can solve this complex human crisis.



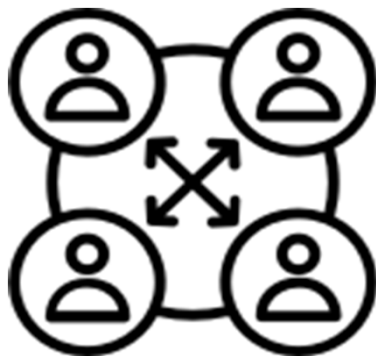
In January 2023, the top six reasons people gave as their main reason for homelessness were:

More than 40% of respondents experiencing homelessness indicated that an economic issue was the primary cause of their homelessness: eviction, cost of housing, and job loss.



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## Access to homeless assistance programs



- **There are not enough resources to serve everyone who is eligible.**
  - There is not a right to shelter or housing assistance.
- Access to programs with any public funding is coordinated.
- Referrals to shelter and housing programs are centralized and prioritized.
  - Say no a lot in order to strategically say yes.
- Individual choice.
  - People can turn down services—even housing.



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## Community Coalition: Greater Richmond Continuum of Care (GRCoC)



Map retrieved from <http://www.richmondregional.org/>

Established in 1997 by community stakeholders to fight homelessness in the region. Homeward was created to support this effort.

400 Continuums of Care around the country; 16 in Virginia

Numerous statutes and regulations guide and govern CoC's. The Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009 is the guiding legislation:

- <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2012/07/31/2012-17546/homeless-emergency-assistance-and-rapid-transition-to-housing-continuum-of-care-program>

The GRCoC develops policies and procedures locally to maximize services for each household and resources.

Learn more: [www.endhomelessnessva.org](http://www.endhomelessnessva.org)




## Doing more together



Through partnerships with the coordinated and compassionate members of the Greater Richmond Continuum of Care, we have found permanent housing for more than 11,410 unique individuals in the past 10 years.






## Homeless Services in the Richmond Region

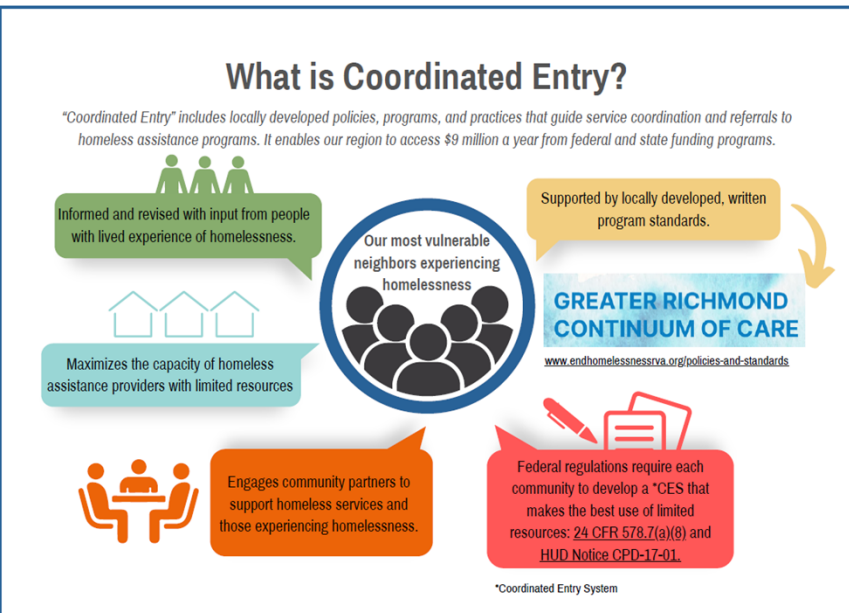
08/02/2022

<p><b>Access Points</b> Coordinated entry points into the region's network of homeless services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Homeless Connection Line</li> <li>EmpowerNet Hotline</li> <li>Coordinated Outreach: RBHA, Daily Planet Health Services, Commonwealth Catholic Charities, McGuire VA Homeless Outreach, Richmond DSS, St. Joseph's Villa (youth)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Pandemic Response Programs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Daily Planet (COVID-19 testing/vaccines)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Rapid Rehousing</b> Permanent housing for families/individuals who need assistance in securing and maintaining stable housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hanover Safe Place</li> <li>HomeAgain</li> <li>Housing Families First</li> <li>St. Joseph's Villa</li> <li>Virginia Supportive Housing (for veterans)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Connection Points</b> Light-touch assistance and connection to Access Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chesterfield DSS</li> <li>Commonwealth Catholic Charities, Youth Hub, Housing Resource Center</li> <li>Gochland CARES</li> <li>OAR</li> <li>Powhatan Free Clinic</li> <li>REAL Life Community Center</li> <li>Richmond Public Library, Main Branch</li> <li>RVA Light Cafe</li> <li>Virginia Career Works Centers</li> </ul>	<p><b>Shelter</b> Emergency shelter for families and individuals experiencing homelessness. Families and individuals are referred to emergency shelter through Access Points.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CARITAS (men, &amp; women)</li> <li>Daily Planet (Medical, Mental Health)</li> <li>Hanover Safe Place (domestic violence)</li> <li>HomeAgain (men, family, vets)</li> <li>Housing Families First (family)</li> <li>Gochland Cares</li> <li>Liberation Veteran Services</li> <li>Safe Harbor (domestic violence)</li> <li>RBHA Transitional Units</li> <li>Salvation Army (men, family)</li> <li>YWCA (domestic violence)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Permanent Supportive Housing</b> Permanent housing for families/individuals who need long-term housing that is connected to on-going supportive services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HomeAgain</li> <li>HUD-VASH (for veterans)</li> <li>Richmond Behavioral Health Authority</li> <li>Virginia Supportive Housing</li> <li>St. Joseph's Villa</li> </ul>
<p><b>Connected Agencies and Groups</b> Mainstream resources provided to community members including persons experiencing homelessness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Departments of Social Services</li> <li>Public School Systems</li> <li>Community Services Boards</li> <li>Police Departments/Sheriffs</li> <li>Community Meal Programs/Congregations</li> <li>Free Clinics</li> </ul>	<p><b>Homeward</b> Lead agency for Greater Richmond Continuum of Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborative applicant for federal &amp; state funding</li> <li>Provides technical support and best practices to CoC member organizations</li> <li>Manages Homeward Community Information System (HCIS)</li> <li>Coordinates bi-annual Point-in-Time Counts</li> <li>Hosts Best Practices Conference &amp; Project Homeless Connect</li> <li>Coordinates 15+ local workgroups and committees</li> <li>Cross-sector partnership development</li> </ul>	<p><b>Targeted Recovery Services</b> Substance Use Disorder recovery providers with an emphasis on persons experiencing homelessness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Healing Place</li> <li>Good Samaritan Ministries</li> <li>Daily Planet Health Services</li> <li>Salvation Army ARC</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community-based outreach &amp; services</b> Additional agencies providing homeless services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focused Outreach Richmond</li> <li>Veteran Affairs Medical Center</li> <li>VELINK</li> </ul>	<p><small>Agencies represented here participate in the GRCoC through the Point-in-Time Count, the Housing Inventory Count, or a committee. If your agency is not shown, please contact Michael Rogers at <a href="mailto:mrogers@homewardva.org">mrogers@homewardva.org</a>. If you are experiencing homelessness and need help, call the Homeless Connection Line at 804-972-0813.</small></p>	


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## What is Coordinated Entry?

*"Coordinated Entry" includes locally developed policies, programs, and practices that guide service coordination and referrals to homeless assistance programs. It enables our region to access \$9 million a year from federal and state funding programs.*



**GREATER RICHMOND CONTINUUM OF CARE**  
[www.endhomelessnessva.org/policies-and-standards](http://www.endhomelessnessva.org/policies-and-standards)

\*Coordinated Entry System

[www.endhomelessnessva.org](http://www.endhomelessnessva.org)





## Types of housing programs to address homelessness

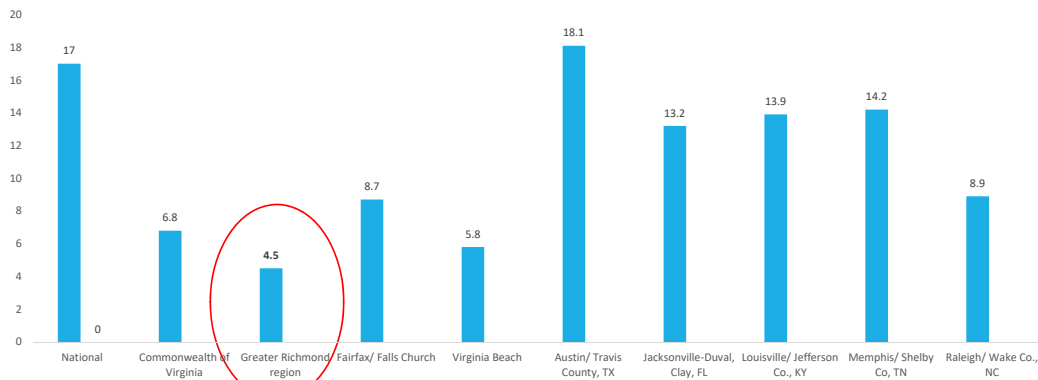
- Rapid re-housing
- Permanent supportive housing
- Private market housing (lease, zoning, and title requirements may apply)
- Subsidized and income-limited housing
- Assisted Living Facilities
- Roommates/ shared housing
- Recovery housing if desired
- Safely reuniting with family or friends
- Financial assistance or help accessing housing
- Housing navigation and search; assistance working with landlords to address barriers to housing

*Lack of housing that is affordable to people earning between 0 and 30% of area median income continues to be the primary cause of homelessness.*



## GRCoC is a national leader in fighting homelessness....

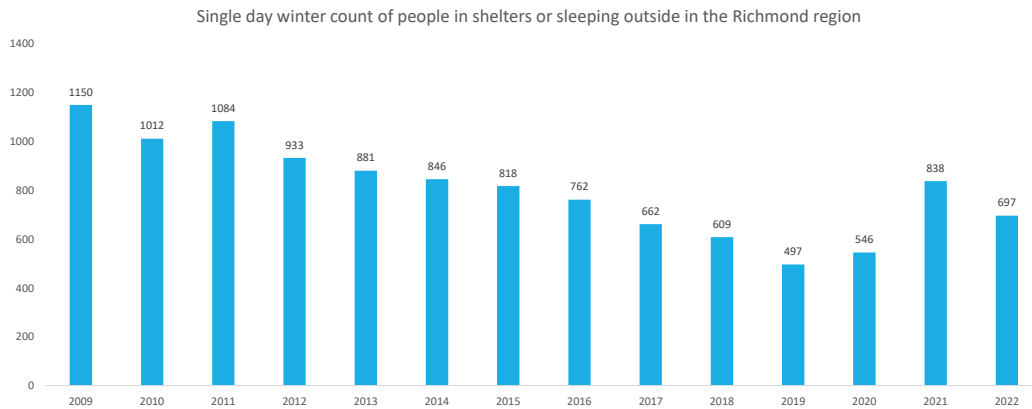
Per capita rates of homelessness per 10,000 residents; 2019 data



Comparable communities as identified by Chamber RVA community indicator project.



## Coordinated approach and focus on housing has led to reductions over time



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## What contributes to this?

- Housing market differences
  - Historically, higher vacancy rate in rental market [no longer true]
  - Relative cost of housing [likely also not true]
- Coordinated approach
  - Collaborative, public-private effort
  - Community infrastructure to make difficult decisions about funding and performance
  - Focus on solving homelessness and not just managing symptoms
- Dedicated planning agency (Homeward)
  - Sophistication in use of data
  - Ability to leverage technical expertise and local relationships for innovation
- High quality non-profit providers
- Funding is aligned: federal, state, local, philanthropic (foundation and corporate)



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## What the GRCoC (homeless coalition) does not do to address housing and service needs

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### HOUSING

- Replace the need to pay rent for most people
- Help people find better or more suitable housing
- Solve issues related to substandard housing
- Replace Assisted Living Facilities
- Replace the use of hotels as ad hoc rental housing

### SERVICES

- Provide intensive counseling or case management to most persons served
- Address behavioral health or other psychosocial needs comprehensively for most persons served
- Serve people who are unable to live independently due to significant medical or behavioral health needs
- End poverty



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## Emerging issues and trends

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### CHANGES IN POPULATION REQUIRING NEW PARTNERSHIPS

- Increase in older adults
  - New housing solutions
  - Connections to healthcare
- People with disabilities and complex service needs
  - Connections to Medicaid
  - Need for interventions that are accessible for those with limited mobility
- Youth and young adults
  - Connections to workforce
  - Youth-serving organizations
  - LGBTQ+

### STRATEGIC RESOURCES

- Increase in unsheltered population (staying outside)
  - Balance increase in shelters, supportive services, and housing programs
  - Mitigate spread of large encampments to ensure that people are connected to existing services
- Perception of increased visibility in downtown areas
- Will the connection between evictions and homelessness increase?



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## Predicting the need for homeless assistance

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- A report by the US GAO in August 2020 “found that a \$100 increase in median rent was associated with a 9% increase in the estimated homelessness rate—even after accounting for a variety of other relevant factors, such as wages, unemployment rate, and poverty, as well as other demographic and economic characteristics.” <https://www.gao.gov/blog/how-covid-19-could-aggravate-homelessness-crisis>
- Other factors that contribute to the rates of sheltered and/ or unsheltered homelessness include:
  - The availability of resources (some people can find alternative resources if there are no immediate service options available.)
  - Housing market; especially rental market vacancies
  - Social and support networks
  - Availability of emergency financial assistance or rent relief



## Strategic investment opportunities to reduce homelessness in the Richmond region

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- Increase support for existing programs and services to build capacity and to maintain and/ or expand operations
- Increase access to emergency shelter (and the key services needed to make shelters effective at helping shelter guests exit homelessness to stable housing.)
- Expand housing that is affordable to people exiting homelessness, especially permanent supportive housing.
- Develop permanent supportive housing to target those at greatest risk who are inadequately served by underfunded emergency shelters. Housing this cohort of people with more intensive service needs will likely increase the effectiveness of the coordinated homeless response system overall.
- Reduce inflow into the homeless services system



## Impact of long-term underinvestment in year-round emergency shelter programs

- Higher staff turnover; loss of institutional knowledge
- Focus on fund development activities by agency leadership; sometimes at the expense of digging into program performance and partnership development
- Gaps in shelter intakes (if staff are not available, shelter intakes cannot be done and beds remain empty overnight)
- Operational choices between staffing that provides required health and safety measures and expanding case management staff
- Little to no program expansion

Increased investments in existing shelter programs could be used to increase wages for shelter staff and increase retention; expand operational hours; add key positions to support exits to housing; and, increase the numbers of people served and the number who exit to permanent housing.



## Support people before they fall into homelessness

- Advocate for eviction diversion and prevention programs
- Support rent relief programs and protections for tenants
- Provide income supports to targeted households
- Support policies such as the child tax credit that increase household stability
- Advocate for increased wages and continued access to workforce programs



## Targeted housing strategies to reduce homelessness

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- Support housing programs that maintain “naturally occurring affordable housing.”
- Develop permanent supportive housing dedicated to people with intensive service needs and long histories of homelessness.
- Incentivize partnerships between developers and homeless service providers.
  - Additional points on applications for “Low Income Housing Tax Credits” for partnerships.
- Address zoning and density issues that prohibit the development of quality multifamily housing.
- Explore options for developing affordable and accessible housing units for older adults with significant medical needs who cannot be well-served in the homeless assistance system.
- Improve the attractiveness of vouchers to landlords through incentives and other process improvements.



## How you can help reduce homelessness in our community

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- Support one of the non-profit agencies with proven results working to address homelessness.
  - Volunteer.
  - Donate
  - Share their stories and information on social media and in your networks.
- Share information on how people can get connected to services.
- Advocate at the local, state, or federal level for **more** resources to provide shelter and, especially, **deeply affordable housing**.
  - Local zoning and land use policies could have the biggest impact on increasing the supply of deeply affordable housing.
  - State funding for an Affordable Housing Trust Fund can help to fill funding gaps to develop solutions so that every one has a safe place to call home.
  - Support federal budgets for homeless assistance and housing resources.
  - Support policies that help people get the services they need to become stable tenants. These policies can include:
    - Income supports for families with minor children
    - Health Insurance programs
    - Behavioral health resources (mental health and substance abuse)



## How to connect and learn more

### Need help?

Call the Homeless Connection Line at 804-972-0813.

### Want to learn more or request a speaker?

Email Homeward at [info@homewardva.org](mailto:info@homewardva.org)

Regional data: <http://www.homewardva.org/data>

GRCoC newsletter: Sign up here

<http://endhomelessnessrva.org/contact-us>

Homeward newsletter: Sign up here

<http://www.homewardva.org/news/e-newsletter>

Interested in providing services as part of our housing-focused collaborative effort?

Email Michael Rogers at [mrogers@homewardva.org](mailto:mrogers@homewardva.org).

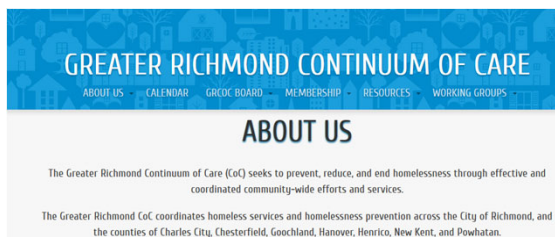
Interested in volunteering?

<https://www.handsonrva.org/>



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## Find out more at [www.endhomelessnessrva.org](http://www.endhomelessnessrva.org)



[www.homewardva.org](http://www.homewardva.org)  
[www.endhomelessnessrva.org](http://www.endhomelessnessrva.org)

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## Appendix: Resources for people who need homeless and housing assistance

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## Access for most people experiencing homelessness: Homeless Connection Line

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### Partners:

- ACTS
- HomeAgain
- Homeward
- Housing Families First
- Senior Connections

Monday – Friday, 8am to 9pm

Saturday and Sunday, 1pm to 9pm

Record needs for emergency shelter and provide problem-solving supports



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## Access for people sleeping outside: Coordinated Outreach



### Notification of individual or family sleeping outdoors

Are you concerned about someone sleeping outdoors? Outreach and support services are available for people living on the streets and in other public places.

Please help us to assist people who are sleeping in places not meant for human habitation (such as cars, parks, woods, sidewalks, abandoned buildings) by letting us know where they are located. Our regions outreach team will attempt to make contact with the individual or family.

Please note that the outreach team works to build a relationship with individuals who may be uncomfortable seeking services. Making these connections takes time. Other individuals may already have somewhere to stay. Therefore, you may still see the individual or family after completing this form.

<http://bit.ly/RVAOutreach>

### Partners

Commonwealth Catholic  
Charities

Daily Planet Health Services

McGuire VA Homeless Outreach  
(vets)

Richmond DSS

RBHA

St. Joseph's Villa (youth)



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# empower net HOTLINE

24/7 HOTLINE — 804-612-6126

Collaborating to serve survivors of sexual and domestic violence

A COLLABORATIVE OF · GOOCHLANDCARES · HANOVER SAFE PLACE · JAMES HOUSE · SAFE HARBOR · THRIVE VIRGINIA · YWCA RICHMOND



## Where to find additional resources?

Homeward: How to Get Help <https://www.homewardva.org/get-help>

- This includes a link to the “Street Sheet” with immediate resources people might need.

Help1 RVA: YMCA partnership with limited Navigation supports: <https://help1rva.org/>

Senior Connections: to support older adults <https://seniorconnections-va.org/>


211: statewide information service <https://www.211virginia.org/consite/index.php>



### Resource for households more than 3 days out from losing their housing

## Housing Resource Line

<https://pharva.com/housing-hotline/>



Centralized access point to help connect residents to programs & services for their unique needs

8:30am-4:30pm Monday-Friday

Spanish speaking option available

**804-422-5061**

Needs we serve:

- Financial assistance
- Rental options
- Homebuying support
- Lending support
- Home repairs
- Legal assistance
- Foreclosure prevention
- Ramps
- Financial education
- Housing discrimination

