

# Homeless Conditions in Gainesville: 2008 Point-in-Time Census & Survey Results

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Cover photographs graciously donated  
by Bob Freeman and Emilio Arturo.

## 2008 Key Findings

- Advocates, agency staff, and volunteers – homeless and housed alike – counted **1,365 men, women and children without a safe, adequate place to call home** in the 24-hour period spanning January 24 & 25, 2008. Of these, 507 are children under the age of 18. The 2008 total represents an 18.7% increase in the number of homeless people found during the 2006 count, and a 43% increase from the number of homeless people found in 2007.
- The majority of (61.3%) respondents indicated they had lived in Alachua County when they became homeless; in raw numbers, **homelessness among local residents – those who lived and worked in the community prior to the loss of housing – increased 57% in the past year**, from 378 in 2007 to 593 in 2008.
- Only 8.6% of respondents chose to come to Alachua County because they thought or heard there were good shelters or services in the area, down from 18% in 2007. Veterans were three times more likely than non-veterans to report coming here for shelters or services.
- More than 10,800 housing units sit empty in the county; City officials project an additional 4,000 units will come online by the end of 2008. In all, **in 2009 there will be nearly 11 empty housing units for every homeless man, woman and child in Alachua County.**
- Homelessness among women – and particularly single women with children – continues to grow, with 233 women counted in 2008, up from 187 in 2007. The number of women found on the street or in the woods in the past five years has more than doubled, from 21 in 2003 to 47 in 2008. **The number of men found on streets and in woods in the past year nearly tripled**, from 124 to 348.
- **Family homelessness nearly doubled**, with 161 members of families with children found in 2008 – up from 83 in 2007. Over half of families remained homeless after a year, up from 27% last year.
- The most common causes of homelessness were economic (45.5%), followed by health reasons (24.2%), housing-related issues (14.8%) and family problems (9.9%). **Only 1.3% of respondents indicated being “homeless by choice.”**
- In all, **57.8% of the local homeless population is unsheltered** on any given night. The lack of shelter is most common among single men, and least prevalent among family members.
- This year marks the third in a row that **the Alachua County Jail housed more homeless individuals during the survey (115) than any single homeless housing program.**
- Men’s violence against women remains a significant contributing factor to the number of women without safe or affordable housing. Flight from an abusive situation prompted the current episode of homelessness for one in six (16.8%) homeless women.
- More than half of homeless adults (62.9%) are unemployed. People living on streets and in encampments were significantly more likely to be unemployed (71.8%) than those linked to housing programs (43.2%).
- More than 2/3 of homeless people reported having some form of disability. Of those who report a disability, 52.1% say that disability prevents them from working.
- **This episode of homelessness is the first for the majority of respondents.** However, for the first time since surveys began in 2003, slightly more than half the population has spent over a year without housing.

## **Executive Summary**

On January 24 and 25, 2008, homeless advocates, agency staff, and volunteers – homeless and housed alike – conducted a 24-hour point-in-time survey to provide a snapshot of local homeless conditions and the situations and experiences faced by Alachua County residents without housing. Within this 24-hour timeframe, surveyors counted 1,365 men, women and children without a safe, adequate place to call home. Of these, 507 are children under the age of 18.

Homelessness is, for most people, a temporary condition brought about by an economic or medical crisis that leads to a loss of housing. Alachua County residents with housing rarely see the true composition of the homeless population; rather, the relatively few, but highly visible, homeless people on sidewalks, in parks and soup kitchen lines dominate perceptions of “homelessness” while hundreds more remain unseen in emergency and transitional housing programs, day labor pools, service-sector employment and education and skills training programs.

For years, homeless agencies and programs have focused largely on the symptoms of homelessness and poverty, rather than root causes. Nationwide, more than 300 communities have undertaken the creation of 10-Year Plans to End Homelessness, but against a backdrop of stagnant wages and rising rents, such plans will at best minimize – and at worst, hide – the impact of a wide array of contributing factors. Homelessness is, at its core, a housing issue, but to view the issue as separate and distinct from broader national trends – wages too low to meet basic needs, decreased housing affordability, a lack of access to primary health care, deindustrialization, gentrification, and severe federal funding cuts to low-income affordable housing programs – is to overlook critical factors contributing to widespread homelessness in the United States.

Though federal support for subsidized housing itself has not decreased in the past three decades, a substantial shift in the prioritization of who receives housing assistance has left those most in need of such support without housing. Annual federal expenditures for homeowner subsidies have grown immensely since 1976, though the vast majority of this assistance is targeted to households earning more than \$34,000 annually.<sup>1</sup>

Florida’s minimum wage, in contrast, provides a full-time employee an annual gross income of \$14,123, assuming 40 hours of work a week, every week of the year, with no time off for personal or sick days.

The US Dept. of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) sets the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment in Alachua County at \$742, including utilities.<sup>2</sup> Generally, housing is considered “affordable” if it can be had for less than 30% of a household’s annual income – for a minimum wage earner, around \$353 a month.<sup>3</sup> Though minimum wage sits at \$6.79, and the county’s estimated mean income at \$9.17/hour, a worker must earn an hourly “housing wage” of

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<sup>1</sup> Western Regional Advocacy Project. *Without Housing*. Nov. 2006. <http://www.wraphome.org>.

<sup>2</sup> Fiscal Year 2008 Fair Market Rent (HUD). <http://www.huduser.org/datasets/fmr.html>. For a full explanation of HUD’s FMR standards, please see <http://www.huduser.org/periodicals/USHMC/winter98/summary-2.html>.

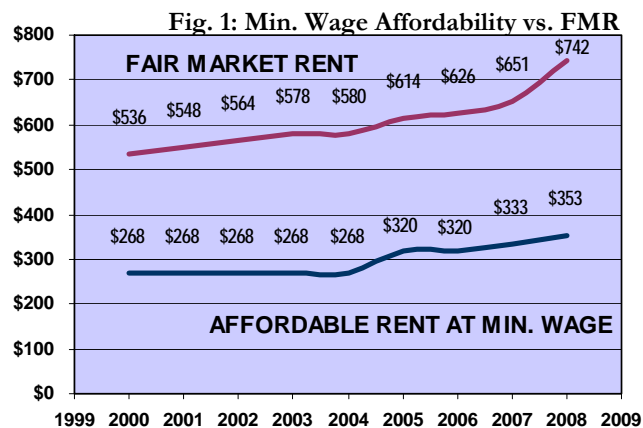
<sup>3</sup> U.S. Dept of Housing & Urban Development Office of Community Planning & Development. <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/affordablehousing/index.cfm>; accessed Aug. 5, 2008.

\$14.27 to afford the FMR for a two-bedroom apartment.<sup>4</sup> Alternately, a minimum wage-earner must work 84 hours per week, 52 weeks a year, in order to make the two-bedroom FMR affordable.<sup>5</sup>

The disparity between wages and housing costs continues to grow (Fig. 1).<sup>6</sup> Fair Market Rent for Alachua County has increased 40% since 2000; as of 2006, 57% of renter households are unable to afford housing without a cost burden.

There is no shortage of housing in the community; rather, the housing that is available is not affordable to people who work and live here.

More than 10,800 housing units sit empty in the county; City officials project an additional 4,000 units will come online by the end of 2008.<sup>7</sup> In all, by 2009 there will be nearly 11 times as many *empty* housing units as there are homeless people in our community.



**Fig. 2: Demographic Overview**

AGE – HUD & MCKINNEY DEFINITIONS (N=1,365)*		
	%	#
Under 18	37.1%	507
18 & Up	62.9%	858
FAMILY STATUS* (N=968)		
	%	#
Individuals	83.4%	807
Family w/ Children	16.6%	161
SEX (N=968)		
	%	#
Male	72.9%	625
Female	27.1%	233

RACE/ETHNICITY (N=968)		
	%	#
Black/African American	42.3%	409
Hispanic/Latino	2.6%	25
Native American	1.8%	17
White	52%	503
Other	1.3%	14
VETERAN STATUS* (N=858; EXCLUDES CHILDREN)		
	%	#
Military Veteran	33.2%	285

\*Age calculation includes doubled- & tripled-up schoolchildren considered homeless under McKinney-Vento; Family status calculation excludes these children, as their parents are not considered homeless. Veteran status calculation includes only adults 18 & over.

<sup>4</sup> Based on 2006 Bureau of Labor Statistics data, adjusted using the ratio of renter to total household income reported in Census 2000, and projected to April 1, 2008. As cited in NLIHC's *Out of Reach 2007-2008* (see below).

<sup>5</sup> National Low Income Housing Coalition. *Out of Reach 2007-2008* Alachua County data is available at <http://nlihc.org/oor/oor2008/data.cfm?getcounty=on&county=313&state=FL>

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> US Census Bureau 2006 American Community Survey, Alachua County, FL.

[http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFFacts?\\_event=Search&geo\\_id=&geoContext=&street=&county=alachua+count+y&cityTown=alachua+county&state=04000US12&zip=&lang=en&sse=on&pctxt=fph&pgsl=010](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFFacts?_event=Search&geo_id=&geoContext=&street=&county=alachua+count+y&cityTown=alachua+county&state=04000US12&zip=&lang=en&sse=on&pctxt=fph&pgsl=010)

## Overview of the 2008 Homeless Census

Advocates and volunteers counted 1,365 men, women and children without a safe, adequate place to call home in the 24-hour period spanning January 24 & 25, 2008. Of these, 352 (242 adults, 110 children) were sheltered through local emergency, transitional and permanent supportive housing programs. The count identified 616 individuals without any shelter, or those temporarily residing in area hospitals, jails, detoxification programs or cold night shelters. The School Board of Alachua County reported an additional 397 homeless children currently enrolled in local schools (Fig. 3). The 2008 total represents an 18.7% increase in the number of homeless people found during the 2006 count, and a 43% increase from the number of homeless people found in 2007.

**Fig. 3: Street & Agency County Results, January 2008**

	AGENCY/PROGRAM	CLIENTS SERVED	HOUSING TYPE	CAPACITY	2008	2007	KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS	
HOMELESS HOUSING PROGRAMS	Arbor House (2 programs)	FC	ES/TH	20	9	5		<b>Agencies:</b> MBH: Meridian Behavioral Healthcare; VAMC: Veterans Affairs Med. Center; HCHV: Health Care for Homeless Veterans; CSU: Crisis Stabilization Unit  <b>Clients Served:</b> (DV) Domestic Violence; (Y) Unaccompanied Youth; (FC) Families w/ Children; (SM/F): Single Male/Single Female; (SMI) Severe Mental Illness; (VET) Veterans  <b>Housing Type:</b> (ES) Emergency Shelter (0-90 days); (TH) Transitional Housing (60 days-2 years); (PSH) Permanent Supportive Housing (2+ years)  <b>Capacity:</b> Capacity is the total number of available beds, though this may overstate program capacity if, for example, a 3-person family is in a unit that may otherwise hold 5 individuals.
	Chrysalis Community	SF	TH	3	1	2		
	CDS Interface Youth Shelter	Y	ES	20	13	20		
	Fire of God Ministries	SF	TH	0	0	3		
	House of Hope (2 programs)	SMF	TH	13	13	14		
	Interfaith Hospitality Network	FC	ES	15	10	7		
	Interfaith Hospitality Network	FC	TH	24	15	N/A		
	Joshua's Journey	SM	TH	0	0	11		
	Lazarus Restoration Ministry	FC	TH	10	8	5		
	MBH - HOPE Program	SMI	TH	14	10	9		
	MBH - PATH Program	SMI	PSH	18	43	13		
	MBH - TBRA Program	SMI	PSH	15	24	N/A		
	Peaceful Paths (DV)	FC	ES	30	19	21		
	Peaceful Paths (DV)	FC	TH	7	4	6		
	Pleasant Place	Y	TH	20	16	9		
	The PRESERVE	Y	TH	5	4	N/A		
	St. Francis House	FC	ES	35	31	33		
	SFH - Homes & Jobs	FC	TH	16	10	4		
	SFH - Sunrise SRO	SMF	PSH	34	30	29		
	The Salvation Army	SM	ES	24	12	21		
VAMC - HCHV Program	VET	TH	12	10	12			
VETSPACE - TH programs	VET	TH	28	20	24			
VETSPACE - PSH	VET	PSH	21	18	12			
Volunteers of America	VET	TH	32	32	18			
	<b>SHELTERED SUBTOTAL:</b>				<b>352</b>	<b>278</b>		
UNSHELTERED	Streets, Camps				465	318		
	Alachua County Jail				115	51		
	Hospitals/VAMC/Detox/CSU				36	19		
	Other Municipalities				0	7		
	<b>UNSHELTERED SUBTOTAL:</b>				<b>616</b>	<b>395</b>		
	Homeless Schoolchildren				<b>SCHOOLS SUBTOTAL:</b>		<b>397</b>	<b>279</b>
	<b>TOTAL HOMELESS POPULATION, JANUARY 2008:</b>				<b>1,365</b>	<b>952</b>		

## Survey Methodology & Limitations

Point-in-time counts are designed to find the number of homeless people living on the streets and in abandoned buildings, in woods and campgrounds, and in vehicles, as well as those in emergency shelters, transitional housing programs and hospitals, jails and treatment facilities. They remain an imperfect science – homelessness is impossible to measure with 100% accuracy, and research on attempts to count homeless people finds that point-in-time surveys consistently undercount the population.<sup>8</sup> Surveyors venture into unfamiliar areas and attempt to locate sleeping locations that are, by design, hidden from sight and hard to find. Youth, the recently homeless, and people doubled up with family and friends are particularly difficult to find.<sup>9</sup>

Additionally, volunteers for the street count primarily focused their efforts within a 39-block radius of Gainesville’s downtown area, but not campgrounds, motels, or other locations in which people may have taken up temporary residence. Point-in-time counts notoriously will miss individuals who are staying inside or in vehicles on the night of the survey, even if they sleep on the street the other 364 days of the year. These “hidden homeless,” including children temporarily doubled- or tripled-up at a friend or relative’s place, are nearly impossible to find and count. A large national study of formerly homeless individuals found that people who had been literally homeless (and not doubled up) most often stayed in their cars (59.2%), and not on the streets.<sup>10</sup> Comparatively, volunteers only identified 17 people in a sample of 481 – 3.5% – who reported sleeping in vehicles on the previous night.

Per HUD requirements, the point-in-time survey is performed during the last week of January to minimize seasonal and monthly fluctuations in homelessness in a given area. Florida communities typically see an increase in homelessness in winter months when colder northern climates drive unsheltered homeless individuals to warmer areas. Further, the surveys are conducted in the last week of the month to attempt to reflect individuals whose monthly Social Security, Disability, Veterans or other entitlement

### DEFINING HOMELESSNESS

**Unless otherwise noted, responses and percentages used throughout this report apply exclusively to individuals 18 years of age and older, and do not take into account the 397 doubled- or tripled-up children reported as homeless by the Alachua County School Board.**

Due to inconsistencies between the two prevailing federal definitions of homelessness (Appendix II), children whose families lose their housing and live doubled- or tripled- up in homes of friends or relatives are considered homeless; their parents are not.

The McKinney-Vento definition includes more children than that of HUD, which makes no allowance for shared housing brought on by economic hardship. The McKinney definition, however, provides a more accurate glimpse into the magnitude of poverty, homelessness and near-homelessness in Alachua County.

This community, like most others, counts children deemed homeless by the McKinney Act, as well as adults and children meeting the more stringent HUD definition. This maintains consistency in data reporting across jurisdictions, and is widely accepted as the most appropriate way to measure homelessness.

Bills pending in the Florida legislature and across the country are part of a growing movement to make this the national standard.

<sup>8</sup> Urban Institute, The. *A New Look at Homelessness in America*. February 1, 2000. <http://www.urban.org>; Farrell, S.J., and E.D. Reissing. “Picking up the Challenge: Developing a Methodology to Enumerate and Assess the Needs of the Street Homeless Population.” *Evaluation Review*, Vol. 28, No. 2. April 2004, pp. 144-155.

<sup>9</sup> James, Franklin J. “Counting Homeless Persons with Surveys of Users of Services for the Homeless.” *Housing Policy Debate*, Vol. 2, Issue 3, 1991, pp. 733-753.

<sup>10</sup> National Coalition for the Homeless Fact Sheet #2. “How Many People Experience Homelessness.” June 2006. <http://www.nationalhomeless.org>. Accessed March 20, 2007.

checks run out prior to the end of the month and leave people without adequate access to temporary housing that was affordable earlier in the month.

## **Instances & Duration of Homelessness**

Homelessness is a housing condition, not a permanent identity. Homelessness remains a temporary situation remedied within a few years, though a wide variety of factors impacts that timeframe, particularly the ability to meet available program criteria and the ability to establish sufficient income for housing. As in years past, this is the first homeless episode for the majority of respondents (Fig. 4). However, for the first time since surveys began in 2003, slightly more than half the population has spent over a year without housing (Fig. 5).

**Fig. 4: Frequency of Homelessness**

	ALL	INDIVIDUAL	FAMILIES
1 time	53.9%	52.8%	58.1%
2-3 times	26.8%	25.7%	35.5%
4x or more	19.2%	21.5%	6.5%

**Fig. 5: Length of Homelessness**

	ALL	INDIVIDUAL	FAMILIES
1 month or less	6.5%	5.9%	9.4%
1 to 6 months	20.8%	21.7%	17.2%
6 months – 1 yr	22.6%	22%	21.9%
1 year or more	50.1%	50.3%	51.6%

Increases in the scope, length and frequency of family homelessness in Alachua County mirror national trends. The number of homeless family members jumped to 161 – up from 83 in 2007 – and more than half of families remained homeless after a year, up from 27% last year. Individuals remain more likely to become homeless multiple times.

Family status is a key factor in the ability to access services. Though only 16% of the homeless population is a member of a family with children, nearly half of available

homeless housing exists to serve families with children exclusively, and is unavailable to individuals. Homelessness historically has been a shorter-lived experience for families, in part due to the relative ease of access families have to local housing programs.

## **Availability of Shelter by Family Status & Sex**

As in years past, women and families remain more likely to find shelter through local homeless housing programs than their male or non-family counterparts; 58.1% of women and 64.1% of families found housing through local providers, compared to 27.5% of males, and 31.6% of individuals.

Homelessness among women – and particularly single women with children – continues to grow, with 233 women counted in 2008, up from 187 in 2007. While providers housed more women this year (135) than in 2007 (81), these programs cater almost exclusively to women with children. The number of women found on the street or in the woods in the past five years has more than doubled, from 21 in 2003 to 47 in 2008.

**Fig. 6: Place of Previous Night Stay**

	All	Male	Female	Individual	Families
Emergency Shelter	10%	6.1%	18.8%	9.3%	17.2%
Transitional Housing	22.2%	12.9%	33%	13.3%	45.3%
Perm. Supportive Housing	10%	8.5%	6.3%	9%	1.6%
Street/Woods	39.1%	55.7%	20.5%	55.4%	3.2%
Friend/Relative	6.2%	6.5%	9.8%	4.2%	17.2%
Hotel/Motel	2.3%	2.7%	2.7%	1.8%	4.7%
Vehicle	3.5%	3.4%	5.4%	3.3%	7.8%
Other	6.6%	4.1%	2.7%	3.6%	3.2%

None reported having children with them, though surveyors identified a small number of women with children who spent the previous night in a vehicle.

The number of men found on the street or in the woods in the past year nearly tripled, from 124 to 348.

Services for men primarily assist veterans and those in families; for men who do not meet these criteria, living outdoors remains the most prevalent alternative.

Though veteran housing options are expanding alongside a federal push to reduce homelessness among this subpopulation, 45% of those with prior military service remain unsheltered.

Although more people are housed through local emergency, transitional and permanent supportive housing programs than in years past, the local bed inventory has not kept up with the growing demand. In all, 57.8% of Alachua County’s homeless population is unsheltered on any given night. The lack of shelter is most common among single men, and least prevalent among family members.

This year marks the third in a row that the Alachua County Jail housed more homeless individuals during the survey (115) than any single homeless housing program, at a cost of nearly \$70 per day, per person. A 2006 Office on Homelessness analysis of 460 homeless arrests by the Gainesville Police Department found alcohol violations accounted for over 30% of these arrests; trespassing for 14%, and panhandling for less than 2%.

### **Community Ties and Places of Origin**

Alachua County’s homeless population is increasingly made up of people who lived and worked here prior to becoming homeless. The majority of (61.3%) respondents indicated they had lived in Alachua County when they became homeless; in raw numbers, the past year saw an increase of 57% in homelessness among local residents, from 378 in 2007 to 593 in 2008.

An additional 22.6% became homeless elsewhere in Florida and are now in Alachua County; less than 1 in 5 (16%) became homeless out of state.

**Fig. 7: Reasons for Coming to County**

Born or grew up here	19.6%
Family or friends are here	27.5%
Good weather	3.3%
Thought/heard there were good jobs	21.2%
Thought/heard there were good shelters/services here	8.6%
Visited & decided to stay	4.8%
Other*	15.1%

\* Other reasons for coming to Alachua County included “To start over,” “had work here,” “burn victim – was brought to hospital here,” “brought to trauma unit,” “to attend UF,” “released from jail,” and “legal reasons.”

Community ties were the most prevalent reason for homeless people's presence in Alachua County. One in 5 was born or grew up here; the presence of family or friends drew another 27.5%. More than a fifth (21.2%) came to Alachua County seeking employment.

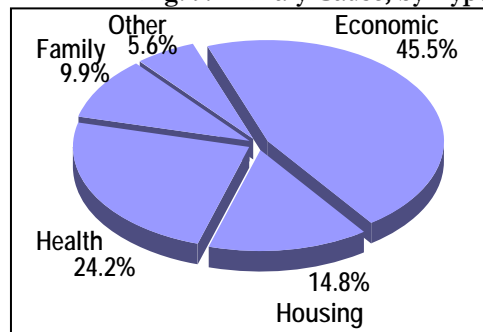
Only 8.6% of respondents chose to come to Alachua County because they thought or heard there were good shelters or services in the area, down from 18% in 2007. Veterans were three times more likely than non-veterans to report coming here for shelters or services, largely due to the presence of the Malcom J. Randall Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

## Reasons for Homelessness, and Experiences While Homeless

**Fig. 8: Self-Reported Cause of Homelessness**

	2008	2007	
ECONOMIC	Unemployed/lost job	33.1%	14.2%
	Income too little	7.4%	11.3%
	Welfare benefits ended	0%	0.3%
	Lack of training/education	1.6%	0.6%
	Money management problems	1.3%	0.9%
	No jobs available	2.1%	0.6%
	"I choose not to work"	0%	0.6%
HOUSING	Evicted/foreclosed upon	6.1%	8.3%
	Temporary arrangement ended	0%	3.3%
	Released from jail/prison/hospital	6.9%	6.5%
	Unsafe housing	0.5%	1.2%
HEALTH	Homeless by choice	1.3%	1.8%
	Physical/medical problems	6.1%	6.8%
	Mental health problems	3.2%	7.1%
	Substance abuse	14.6%	19.3%
FAMILY	HIV/AIDS	0.3%	0%
	Divorce/breakup	4.5%	3.3%
	Left to escape abuse	4.8%	7.1%
	Ordered out by police/court	0.3%	1.2%
	Ran away from home	0.3%	1.2%
	Other*	5.6%	4.4%
* Other reasons cited as causes included a lack of affordable housing, paying child support and college tuition, the closing of Kennedy Homes and the Anchor Lodge, car accident, and "alcohol, drugs and girls with no teeth."			

**Fig. 9: Primary Cause, by Type**



The primary reasons for homelessness in Alachua County are economic in nature, surpassing health problems for the first time since surveys began in 2003 (See Figs. 8 & 9).

The main causes of men's homelessness were unemployment or insufficient income (47.4%), substance abuse (14.6%), health problems (7.8%) and release from a jail, hospital or prison into homelessness (7.1%).

For the first time, economic causes surpassed domestic violence as the

leading cause of homelessness among women. One in four women (24.7%) cited unemployment or insufficient income as the main reason for their homelessness. Men's violence against women remains a significant contributing factor to the number of women without safe or affordable housing. Flight from an abusive situation prompted the current episode of homelessness for one in six (16.8%) homeless women. Among women, other key causes were substance abuse (15%) and release from a jail, hospital or prison. Women were twice as likely as men (9% vs. 4.5%) to report a loss of housing due to eviction or foreclosure.

Among families with children, 25% of respondents named unemployment or insufficient income as the cause of homelessness, followed by substance abuse (17.9%), domestic violence (12.5%) and eviction or foreclosure (10.7%). Nearly half (42.7%) of individual (non-family) respondents cited

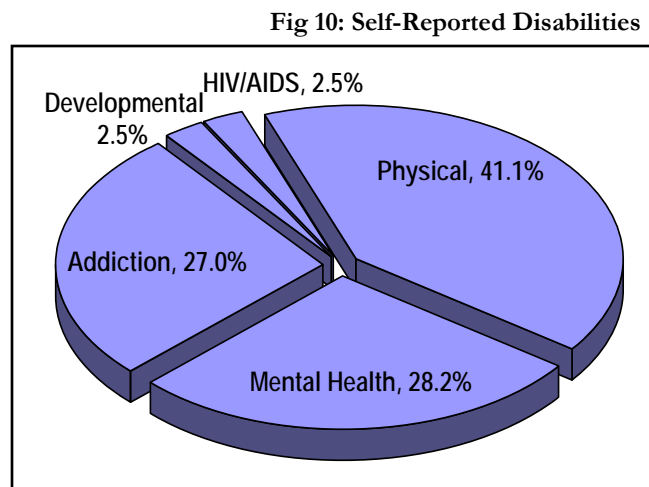
unemployment/insufficient income as the cause of homelessness, followed by substance abuse (14.6%); release from a jail, hospital or prison (7.6%); and health problems (7.6%).

Discharge planning – preventative planning to insure individuals released from jails, hospitals and prisons have access to housing and other resources to prevent them from becoming homeless – is a critical component of homelessness prevention. More than a third (36.9%) of homeless adults report being discharged from one of these institutions in the past year without adequate access to housing.

## **Health Care and Disabilities**

Homeless people are subject to a disproportionately high rate of physical, mental and addiction-related health problems. These present themselves both as causes and effects of homelessness; symptoms existing prior to the loss of housing often are exacerbated by the difficulties of living on the street.

More than 2/3 (67.7%) of homeless people self-reported having some form of disability. Physical disabilities were most prevalent (41.1%), followed by addiction (28.5%) and mental health issues, including depression (27.5%) (Fig. 10). These disabilities are self-reported, and likely to under-represent the prevalence of health problems in the homeless community, particularly mental health, substance abuse and HIV/AIDS.



Of those who report a disability, 52.1% say that disability prevents them from working. This response is more prevalent for men (54.1%) than women (45.6%).

Veterans were more likely to report physical (53.3%), mental health (34.6%), and addiction-related health issues (42%) than the general problems, and more likely (24.3%) to be dually diagnosed (mental health and substance abuse issues). Veterans were 2 ½ times as likely to report substance abuse (24%) as their primary cause of their homelessness as non-veterans (10.4%).

Many of the ailments for which homeless individuals seek medical attention in local emergency rooms – at an average cost of approximately \$700 per visit – could be mitigated or prevented altogether with improved access to primary health care, such as that provided at a fraction of the cost of an ER by volunteer health professionals at the Helping Hands Clinic.<sup>11</sup>

Lacking that preventative care, however, 44.5% of homeless men and women reported utilizing a hospital emergency room for basic medical care, down from 46.3% in 2007, but the raw number of people reporting ERs use for medical care increased from 296 to 388 in 2008. Men (46.9%) were more likely than women (38.1%) to report using an ER for basic medical care in 2008. Those in housing programs were 40% less likely to have used ERs for basic treatment than unsheltered individuals.

<sup>11</sup> Alachua County Housing Authority Public/Non-Profit Service Provider Survey & Cost Analysis; June 2005.

## Employment and Education

More than half of homeless adults (62.9%) are unemployed. Rates of employment are strongly correlated with access to emergency, transitional or permanent supportive housing. Educational attainment had little impact on employment rates among populations.

**Fig. 12: Education Levels**

Grade School	4.4%
Some High School	22%
HS Diploma/GED	45%
Some College	23.5%
College Degree	5.2%

Most housing programs require employment as a condition of residency, and give residents access to hygiene facilities and a means of keeping work-related clothing and other items clean and out of the elements. Unsheltered individuals lack the same level of access to these facilities and are more likely to be unemployed or work intermittent day labor jobs.

People living on streets and in encampments were significantly more likely to be unemployed (71.8%) than those linked to housing programs (43.2%). These program participants are 10 times more likely to hold full-time work (36%) as the unsheltered homeless (3.2%), and three times more likely to hold part-time positions (17.6%) than their unsheltered counterparts (5.1%). Conversely, unsheltered individuals are over six times more likely to work day labor (19.2%) than those in housing (3.2%).

## Sources of Income & Assistance

Figure 13 represents the income – through work and mainstream assistance programs (food stamps, entitlement and veteran payments, etc.) homeless people reported receiving. A critical first step upon program entry is to initiate the often years-long process of linking clients with all mainstream assistance programs for which they are eligible.

This both increases available resources and income and reduces the need for utilization of scarce agency resources. Those in shelter were more likely than the unsheltered homeless to reported income from SSI, SSDI, food stamps, veteran benefits, and state cash assistance programs.

**Fig. 11: Employment Status**

Unemployed	62.9%
Day Labor	14.7%
Part-time Employment	9%
Full-time Employment	13.4%

**Fig. 13: Sources of Income**

	ALL ADULTS	SHELTERED	UNSHELTERED
Work Income	28.7%	50.4%	18.6%
Social Security (SSI)	10.1%	14.4%	8.1%
Disability Payments (SSDI)	7.8%	8%	7.7%
Food Stamps	44.2%	56.8%	38.4%
Veterans Benefit	4.5%	8.8%	2.6%
Unemployment	0.5%	0.8%	0.4%
Help from Family	10.4%	13.6%	8.9%
Welfare	0.8%	2.4%	0%
Panhandling	10.6%	1.6%	14.8%
Other*	12.1%	27.2%	5.2%

\* Other income sources include plasma donation, can collection, prostitution, and federal student aid.

## Service Needs, by Shelter & Family Status

**Fig. 14: Service Needs, by Shelter & Family Status**

	ALL	INDIVIDUALS	FAMILIES	SHELTERED	UNSHELTERED
Emergency Shelter	42%	45.3%	19.7%	1.7%	59.3%
Transitional Housing	45.7%	48.6%	30.3%	12.6%	60%
Permanent Housing	80.1%	80.6%	80.3%	65.9%	86.6%
Education/ Job Training	45%	44%	50.8%	31.5%	51.1%
Health Care	50.9%	54.5%	34.8%	28.6%	60.6%
Dental Care	59.1%	61.8%	47%	43.1%	66.3%
Alcohol or Drug Treatment	20.5%	22.4%	12.1%	13.4%	23.6%
Mental Health Treatment	22.6%	24.4%	15.2%	13.4%	26.7%
Financial Help	67.8%	69.7%	59.1%	41.2%	79.1%
Food/Meals	50.8%	54.6%	31.8%	14.2%	66.8%
Day Center	45.4%	50.5%	21.2%	4.2%	63.1%
Other*	8.2%	6.9%	16.7%	11.2%	6.9%

\* The majority of those specifying other service needs cited access to employment and increased transportation options. Other needs included eyeglasses, tools, higher wages, childcare, and payment of, or relief from, child support obligations.