

HOMELESSNESS POLICIES IN WATERLOO, IA

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May 6, 2021

This report examines homelessness data, best practices, and resources which informed our policy memo, “Homelessness in Waterloo,” which proposes various policies to address the ongoing crisis as the city structures its Housing Taskforce. Throughout this research process we discovered serious issues surrounding Waterloo’s homelessness services provisions, largely related to a lack of focus on permanent supportive housing, and coordination among stakeholders.

1.0 Iowa City FUSE System: Data driven problem solving

A highly informative study into practices at Shelter House, a homelessness resource center in Iowa City, helped drive our understanding of how homelessness could be addressed in Waterloo.

Briefly, not providing housing for homeless community members is far costlier in services

rendered than the cost of

providing stable housing.

While perhaps initially

counter-intuitive, this approach

adopted provides a

particularly evocative model for

how Waterloo should think

about it’s homelessness

resources.

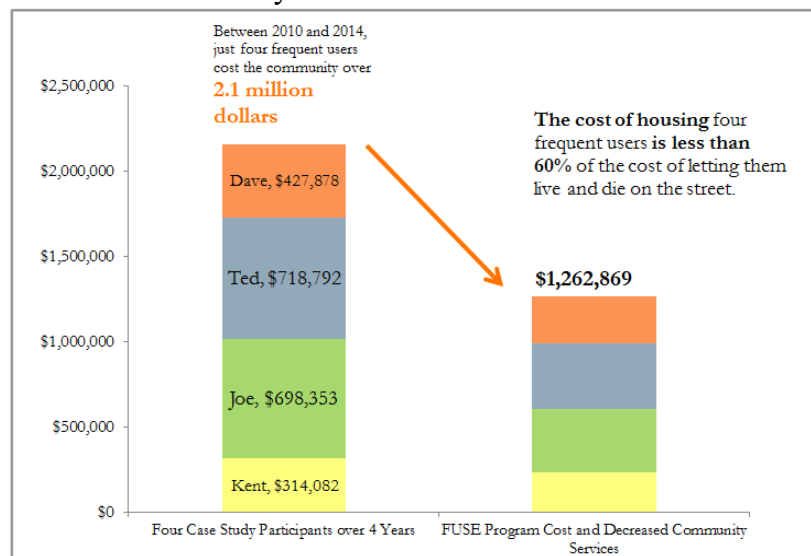


Figure 1 - (“Data-driven problem solving”)

In order to apply for federal and state grants, the Shelter House in Iowa City, under the direction of the Johnson County Homelessness Board, conducted research on chronically homeless individuals in Johnson County. The study first identified four chronically homeless individuals in the Iowa City area; Dave, Ted, Joe and Kent. The study tracked the services used by these individuals over the course of four years. Investigators then determined the total cost of providing these services to each of these people while they remained homeless. The study found that between the years 2010 and 2014, the Iowa City Community spent over \$2.1 million to provide services to the four frequent service users. These results were then compared to the potential cost to the Iowa City Community to provide housing solutions to these individuals through the FUSE system. Results showed that the Iowa City Community would save nearly \$1 million over the course of four years by providing permanent housing solutions. These economic benefits are consistent with findings on the implementation of the FUSE housing first initiative across the country. The FUSE case study was highly influential in our understanding for our recommendations to Waterloo.

2.0 Federally Funded Homeless Service Providers in Waterloo, Iowa

Organization Name	Beds HH w/ Children	Units HH w/ Children	Beds HH w/o Children	Veteran Beds HH w/o Children	CH Beds HH w/o Children	Year-Round Beds	HMIS Beds HH w/ Children	HMIS Beds HH w/o Children	% of HMIS Beds HH with Children	% of HMIS Beds HH without Children	PIT Count	Total Beds	Utilization Rate
Catholic Worker House - Waterloo	0	0	21	0		21	0	0			10	21	48%
Christian Community Development	36	15	0	0		36	36	0	100%		36	36	100%
Friends of the Family (FOFIA)	10	4	5	0		15	0	0			15	15	100%
Waterloo Housing Authority	0	0	4	4	4	4	0	0			4	4	100%
Americans For Independent Living (AFIL)	0	0	3	3		3	0	0			3	3	100%
Community Housing Initiatives (CHI)	0	0	13	0	13	13	0	13		100%	9	13	69%
The Salvation Army - Waterloo/Cedar Falls	0	0	50	0		50	0	50		100%	19	50	38%

- This chart shows each federally funded homeless service provider in Waterloo, how many beds they have, who those beds are for, and the point-in-time (PIT) count from 2019. Adapted from the source below, this chart contains data from our presentation and memo. Pieces of this information are displayed in the infographic below.
- “2019 HIC Chart - Balance of State.” 2019. Institute for Community Alliances.
<https://icalliances.org/s/Inventory-List-for-IA-501-Iowa-Balance-of-State-CoC15.xls>.
- Infographic:
https://www.canva.com/design/DAEc_IAfZBs/iSoNc9ZAUFgw9UNY4ayJIg/view?utm_content=DAEc_IAfZBs&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=sharebutton

3.0 Presentation

The findings from our research, and conversations with stakeholders in Waterloo, resulted in this presentation made on April 29, 2021. Below is the link to our presentation on Homelessness in Waterloo. Included in this presentation are brief overviews of the sections in our Memo.

- [Presentation:](#)

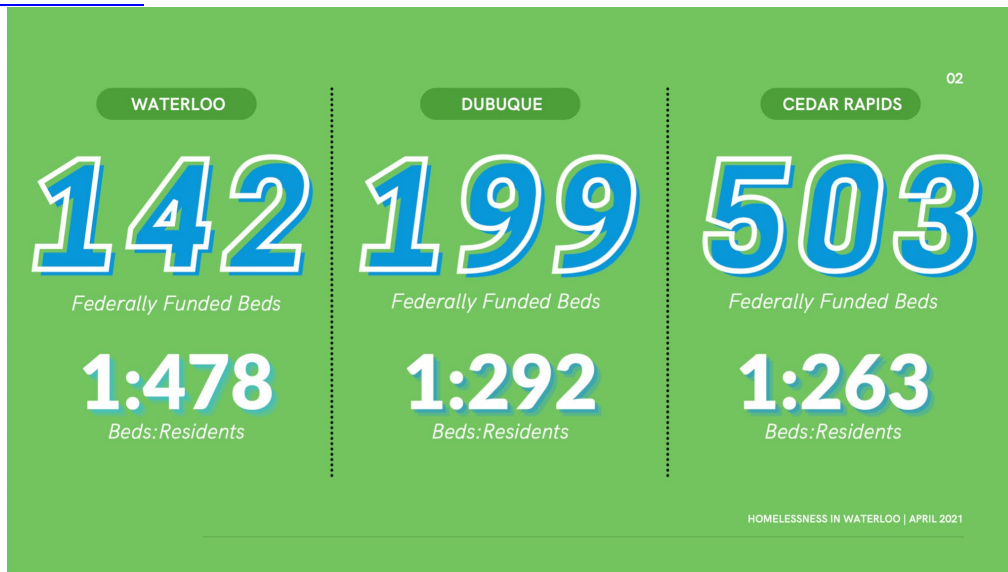


Figure 2 - Presentation Screenshot

One of our key findings was in comparing the number of beds to comparable cities in Iowa. This was accomplished by studying the Balance of State Continuum of Care data from 2019. Doing so revealed the stark disparity in homelessness resources in Waterloo.

4.0 Discussion

During the process of doing this research, we were interested to learn how the term “bed” is the ubiquitous descriptive word for a single unit of housing, no matter the quality of that housing. In the context of discussing permanent supported housing and rapid rehousing, this term does not necessarily seem to fit with the ideal situation that we would like to communicate, and is exemplative of how homelessness policy has treated the issue, as a matter of providing emergency shelter almost exclusively. While we see these problems, we decided to use the established terminology throughout this project to ensure ease of understanding, and consistency. However it’s important to note that “bed” is not a literal term and rather an expression of the number of people a service provider is capable of helping.

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