



## **FALL 2018 SUMMARY REPORT**

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Denton County Homelessness Leadership Team (DCHLT) Shelter Planning Workgroup was to assess the current environment and determine direction for the future of Emergency Shelter services for people experiencing homelessness in Denton County. Denton City Council tasked the group with consideration of local needs and capacity to implement sustainable and safe housing solutions for sheltered and unsheltered populations in Denton County.

The workgroup held four meetings from September to December 2018. During this time, members participated in system mapping and data collection and assisted with the development and administration of a feedback survey of Denton County's sheltered and unsheltered homeless population. Throughout this time, workgroup members contributed to a [shared online drive to share resources and ideas \(linked\)](#).

The following organizations participated in the DCHLT Shelter planning workgroup:

- City of Lewisville
- City of Denton
- Crossroads of Hope
- Denton Basic Services Center
- Denton County Friends of the Family
- Denton County Homelessness Leadership Team (United Way of Denton County as backbone support)
- Denton PD
- Giving Hope, Inc.
- Grace Like Rain Ministries
- Monsignor King Outreach Center
- Our Daily Bread Meal & Resource Center
- Salvation Army Denton Shelter
- Salvation Army Lewisville
- Serve Denton
- University of North Texas
- Vision Ministries

In October of 2018, the DCHLT updated its Strategic Plan. The DCHLT Strategic Plan includes three strategic goals: to increase access to housing for Denton County residents by 10%, continuous improvement of homelessness data management, and to end Veteran homelessness in Denton County by 2020. The goals include strategies and metrics for the DCHLT Shelter Planning Workgroup including the assessment of the current environment and direction of Emergency Shelter services in the county, increased access to shelter, prioritization of client satisfaction and working towards predefined program metrics for outreach, engagement, shelter and temporary housing. Additional details can be found in the [DCHLT Strategic Plan \(linked\)](#).

The following report is a summary analysis of the data collected and agreed upon by the workgroup. These data will assist the workgroup in formulating recommendations for the Denton County Homelessness Leadership Team and Denton City Council. This report is intended as a 'living document' to which information will be added as it is made available.

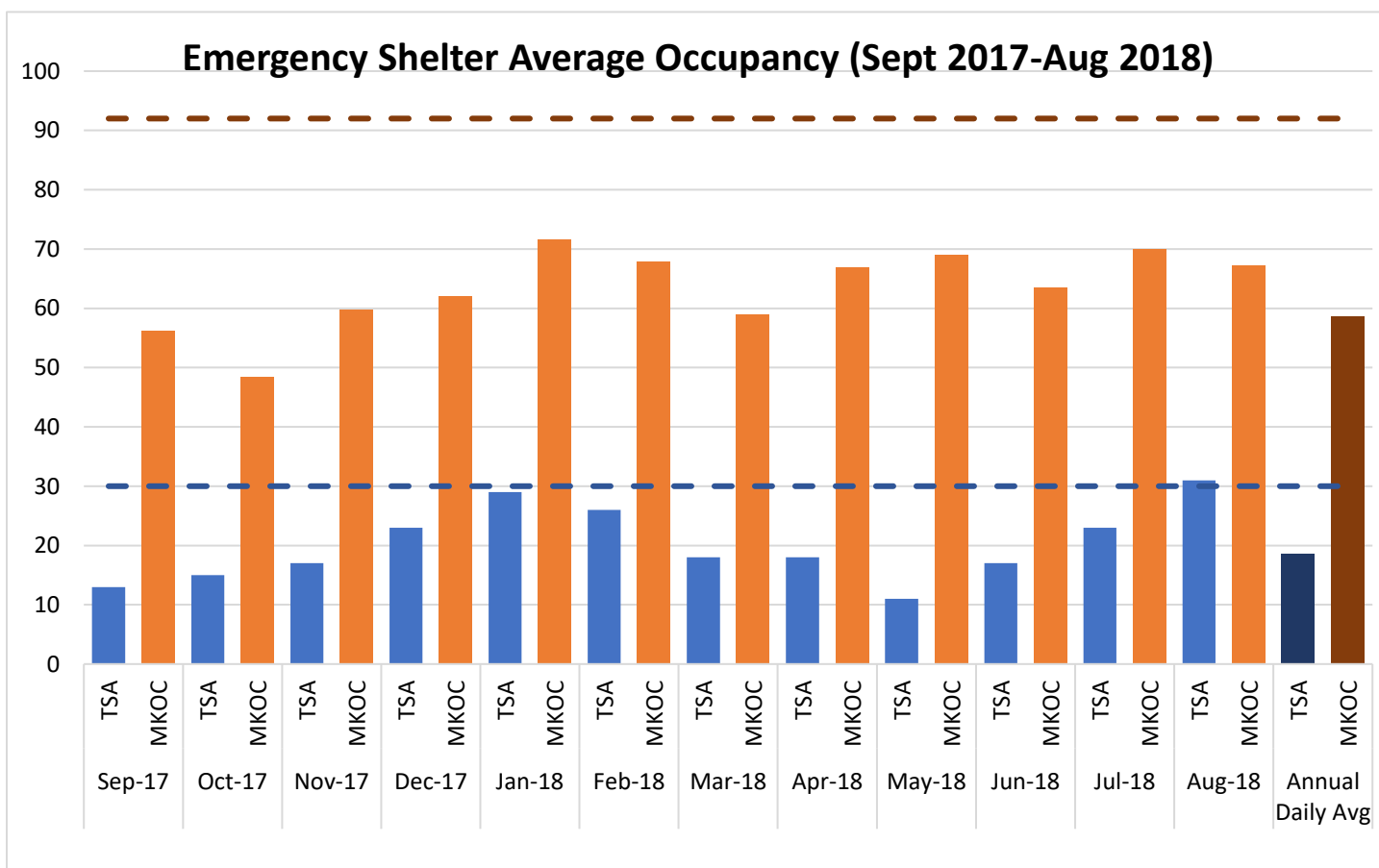
## SECTION 1: HOW DO WE DEFINE **EMERGENCY SHELTER** IN DENTON COUNTY?

During their first meeting in September, the DCHLT Shelter Planning Workgroup agreed on the following definition of *unsheltered*: people sleeping in places not meant for human habitation such as a car, tent, bench or other public place. The workgroup agreed on the below standards for adequate *Emergency Shelter*:

- Must be considered habitable
- Is considered a short-term solution
- Services and case management should be housing-focused
- Shelter access should low-barrier and have few conditions for entry

## SECTION 2: WHAT IS THE CURRENT **EMERGENCY SHELTER INVENTORY** IN DENTON COUNTY? WHAT IS OUR CURRENT **HOMELESS POPULATION**, AND ARE THERE **GAPS** IN AVAILABLE SHELTER SERVICES?

The DCHLT Shelter Planning workgroup developed a shelter inventory and collected shelter utilization data to identify gaps in shelter services in the county. The below graph illustrates daily average client counts by month for The Salvation Army Denton Shelter (TSA) and the Monsignor King Outreach Center (MKOC). *A comprehensive inventory of current Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing resources in Denton County in the APPENDIX.*



### Emergency Shelter Occupancy Rates by Month (September 2017 to August 2018)

Notes: TSA = The Salvation Army Denton Shelter; MKOC = Monsignor King Outreach Center; Dashed lines indicate maximum bed capacity at respective shelters; MKOC is open Mon-Wed nights and during inclement weather; 5 individuals were turned away from the MKOC in July 2018 due to all beds being full

### SECTION 3: WHAT ARE THE ***FUTURE PLANS*** OF DENTON COUNTY ORGANIZATIONS TO INCREASE ACCESS TO EMERGENCY SHELTER OR TEMPORARY HOUSING SOLUTIONS?

During the November meeting, the DCHLT Shelter Planning Workgroup received presentations from organizations regarding plans to expand emergency shelter and transitional housing capacity in Denton County in the future. Table 2 (below) summarizes the information presented and will change as agencies update their future plans. *See the APPENDIX for slide presentations.*

Organization	<u>Crossroads of Hope</u>	<u>Grace Like Rain Ministries</u>	<u>Denton Basic Services Center</u>	<u>Serve Denton</u>
Presenter	Chaplain Lee Stafki, Board President	Michelle Conner, Executive Director	Jane Piper-Lunt, Organizer	Carlie Kuban, Executive Director
Population Served	Veterans	Single women with children	Individuals or couples	Individuals and families
Type	Transitional Housing Stay of 2 years or less	Emergency Shelter 2-4 week stay	Emergency Stay/Transitional Living	Transitional Housing Stay of 1-2 years
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tiny homes in a community-based concept with cohorts of single and family units</li> <li>- Homes have plumbing and utilities</li> <li>- Single 390 sq. ft and Family 504 sq. ft</li> <li>- Plan to include case management and supportive services at front of campus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Renovations to Wheeler House to add 3 family rooms (will accommodate 3-4 families at a time)</li> <li>- Limited to single women with children (only boys 13 or younger allowed)</li> <li>- Will be staffed during the evening &amp; overnight; it will be closed during the day but belongings can be left at the shelter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Two concepts proposed: 1) sanctioned encampment with tents on platforms or 2) cedar dwellings (with no utilities)</li> <li>- Communal kitchen and bathrooms</li> <li>- Self-governing community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For Phase 5 of Serve Denton project looking to develop transitional housing</li> <li>- Very preliminary, but could be ~8 apartments, with up to 1-2 year stays, and occupants would contribute</li> </ul>
Land/Zoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Currently looking for land to purchase</li> <li>- Believe it can be a Planned Development if this is mechanism is adopted through a DDC update</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Renovation of existing building and have SUP already</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identified a piece of land owned by the City or looking for other land owned by the City</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Land already owned by Serve Denton</li> </ul>
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Looking at phased development with 28 single units and 6 family units in Phase 1; 10 single and 6 family in Phase 2</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plan to begin operating early 2019</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would like to begin as soon as possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Future (at least a couple years out)</li> <li>- Phase 5 of Serve Denton expansion</li> </ul>
Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preliminary budget developed, seeking funding through federal &amp; state grants, private angel funds, &amp; other sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have financing and project moving forward</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Requesting financial assistance from the City</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Est. \$5.9M cost to develop building (could have some other components besides residential)</li> <li>- Seeking funding partners and a partner to operate</li> </ul>
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Newly formed 501(c)3</li> <li>- May provide supportive services out of trailers to start until construction develops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grace Like Rain also has a larger project concept for a tiny-home community called LoveFirst with ~40 units; this is in the early stages for formation and are just beginning to look at land</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Seeking a partner to operate, Serve Denton would just be property owner</li> <li>- Plan to build 3-story building with childcare and office space on the 1st floor, and apartments on the 2nd and 3rd floors</li> </ul>

**Table 2: Plans for Expansion of Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing Solutions Capacity in Denton County**

In addition to the information included in the above table is the recent hiring (December 2018) of a shared case manager between the Monsignor King Outreach Center and Our Daily Bread to provide housing-focused case management to clients.

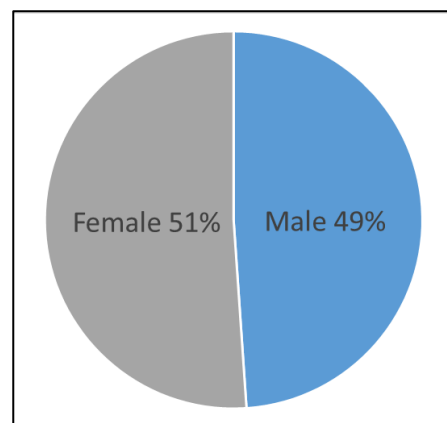
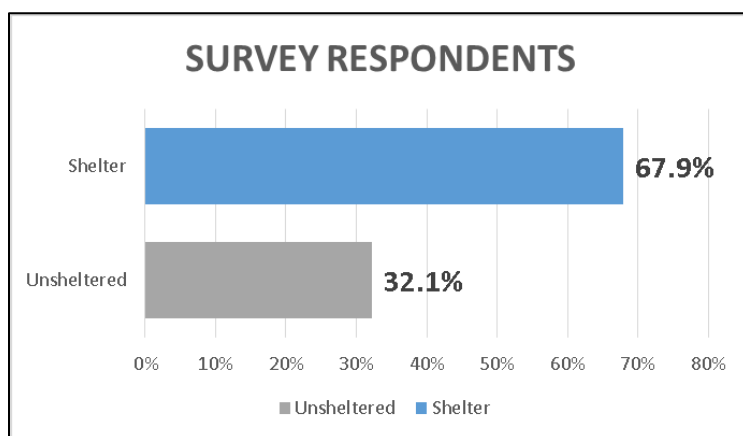
The Salvation Army Denton shelter has plans to expand their shelter in the future, but they were legally restricted from sharing details currently. Agency representation identified a potential partnership with Denton Bible Church to expand inclement weather access at a facility off University Drive in Denton. Additionally, the Salvation Army Denton is looking to implement programming at the shelter that would allow for extended stays and provide intensive, long-term case management to individuals working towards self sufficiency.

## SECTION 4: WHAT DOES DENTON COUNTY'S HOMELESS POPULATION HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THE ACCESSIBILITY AND QUALITY OF SHELTER SERVICES?

The DCHLT Shelter Planning Workgroup developed and implemented a survey of Denton County's sheltered and unsheltered homeless population. The primary purpose of the survey was to provide quantitative and qualitative data to support and inform decision making for the group. Volunteers distributed the survey over the course of one week at the following locations: Denton County Friends of the Family, the Monsignor King Outreach Center, Our Daily Bread, Salvation Army Denton Shelter, the Salvation Army Lewisville and at various unsheltered locations throughout the county. In all, **92 surveys were completed**. All graphs in this section illustrate the results of this survey. *Details about the survey methodology and limitations are included in the APPENDIX for this report.*

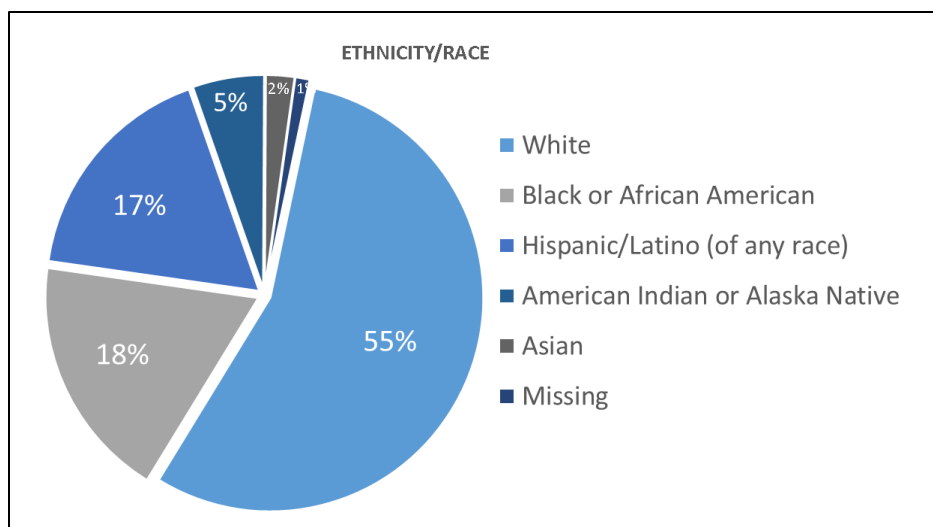
### SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

The majority of survey respondents (67.9%) reported staying in a shelter, while 32.1% reported living unsheltered. Additionally, the majority of survey respondents were white females aged 45-54 years. These results are similar to the [2018 Point-In Time census of people experiencing homelessness \(linked\)](#), during which the majority of respondents were white (76.3%) males (64.3%) aged 25-64 years (80.7%). (See below.)



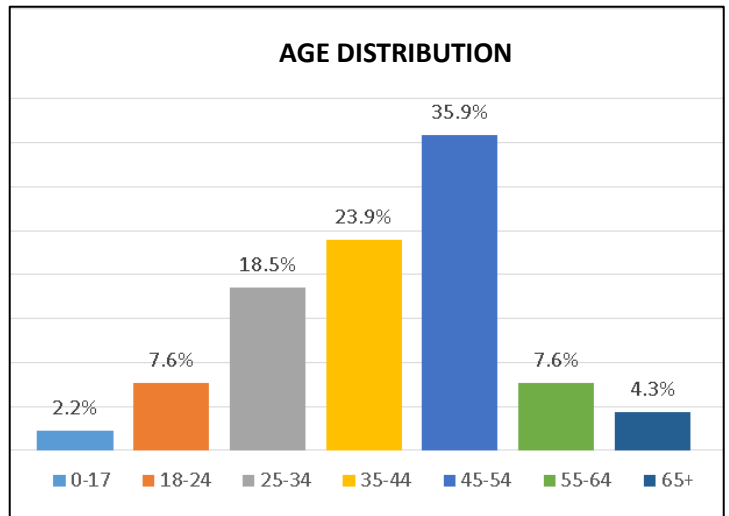
### THE DEMOGRAPHIC NUMBERS BY COMPARISON:

Sheltered and Unsheltered count has varied significantly from the 2018 Denton County Point in Time Count conducted in January 2018, and there is a slightly higher percentage of women in this survey compared to the PIT Count and other ongoing data. (See below.)

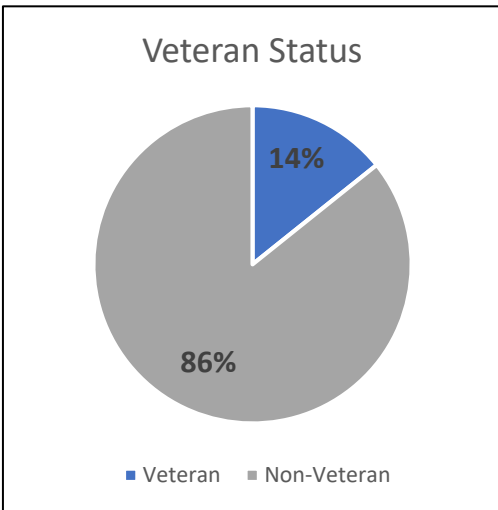


A higher percentage of Black or African Americans and American Indian or Alaska Natives were identified in this feedback survey compared to recent Point-In-Time Counts.

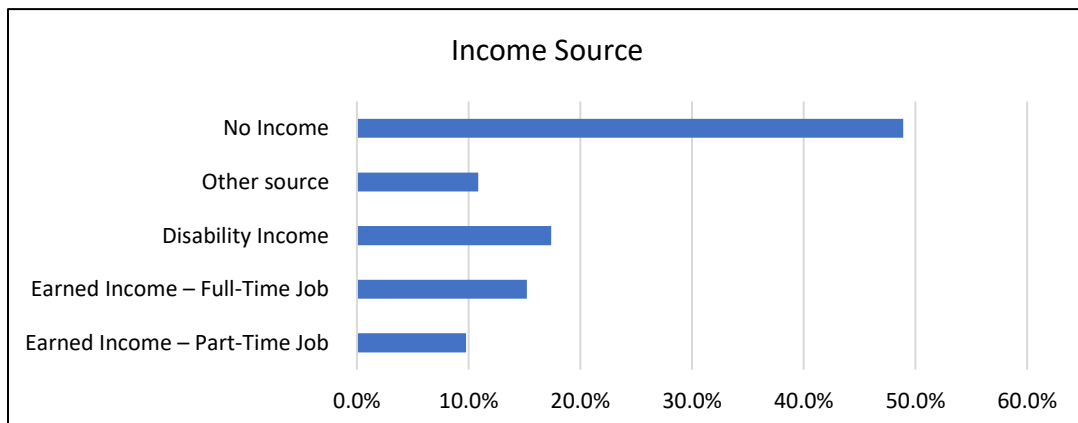
Children and youth are typically underreported in community surveys. This Feedback Survey report is consistent with previous Pit-In-Time Counts collected. This report focused primarily on feedback from an individual's experience accessing shelter.



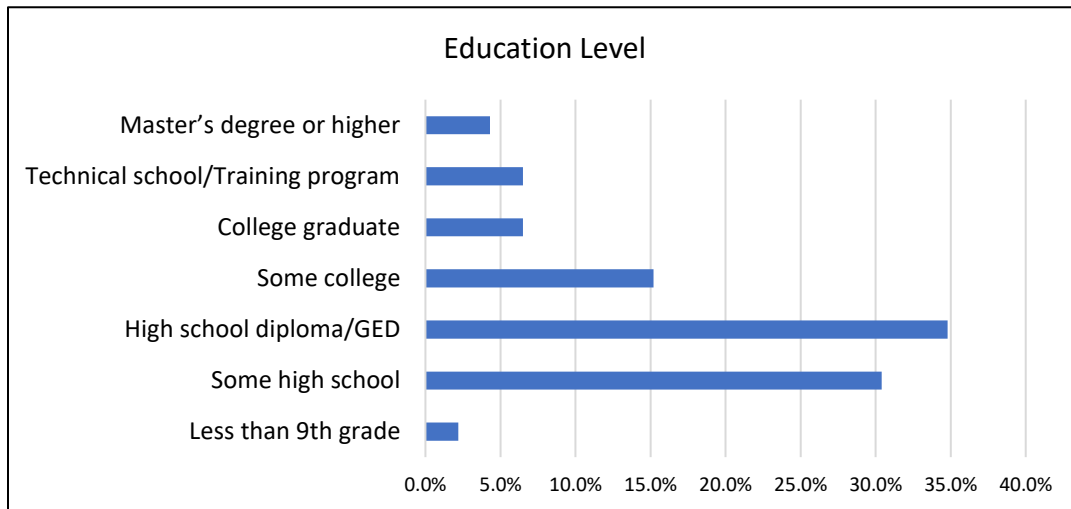
Fourteen percent of respondents identified themselves as Veterans. This question was included in the survey in anticipation of the City of Denton's commitment to the [Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness \(linked\)](#). The DCHLT's adopted the goal to [End Veteran Homelessness in Denton County by 2020 \(linked\)](#) into its strategic plan. (See below.)



Over half of respondents reported having some source of income, and one quarter of respondents reported having earned income from a full-time or part-time job. (See below.)



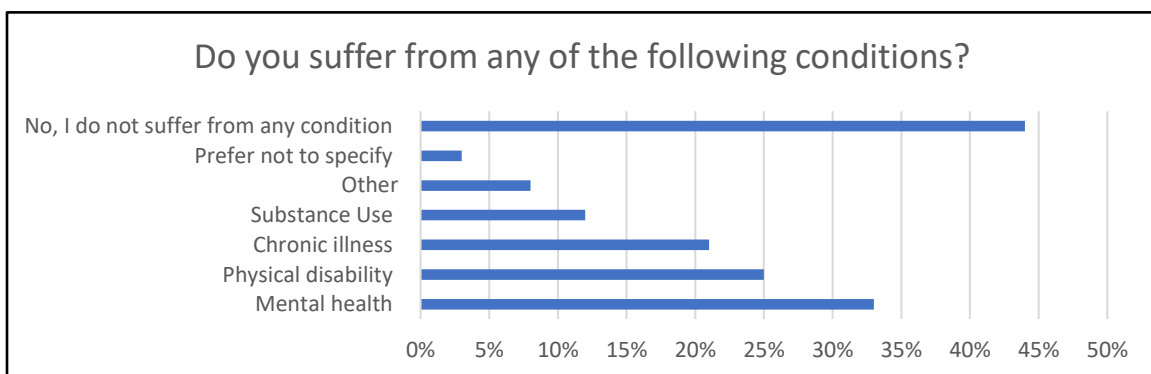
Most respondents reported either having completed some high school (30%) or having a high school diploma or GED (35%). (See below.)



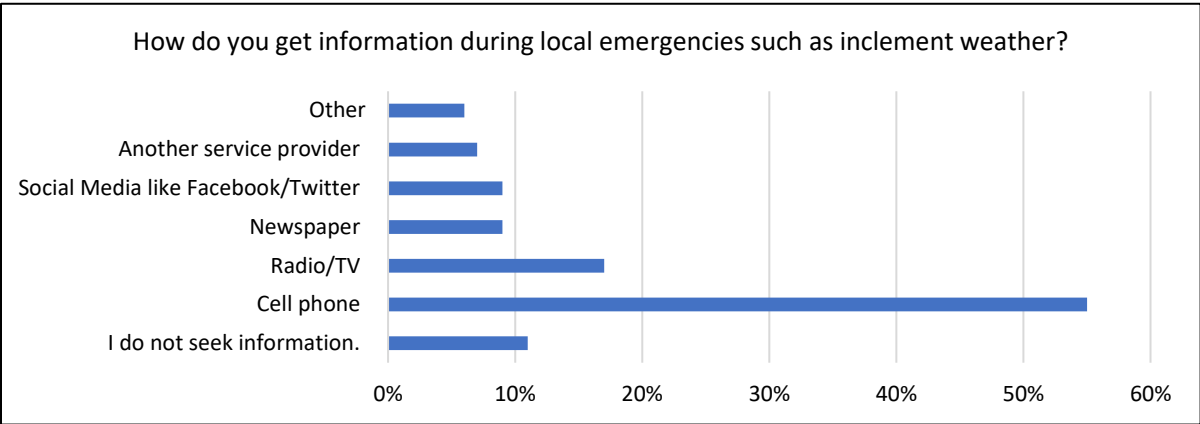
When asked about the last time they were stably housed (not staying in a tent, shelter, in a hotel or with a friend), nearly two-thirds of respondents reported having stable housing one year prior to participating in the survey. Similarly, most respondents (33%) reported their current episode of homelessness lasting twelve months or longer. (See below.)



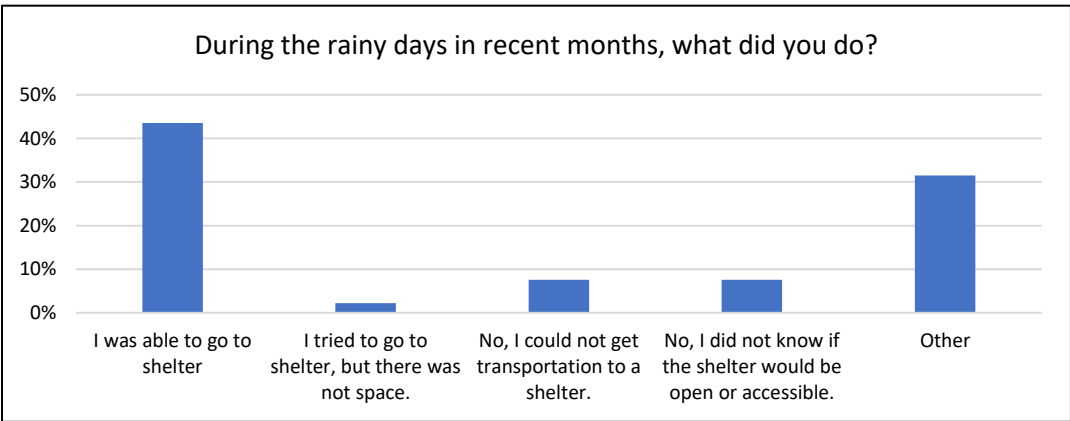
Respondents were asked to identify possible physical or mental health diagnoses and were given the option to select more than one condition. While 44% of respondents reported no condition, nearly 60% of respondents reported living with a physical (25%) or mental (33%) disability. Twenty-one percent of respondents reported suffering from two conditions, and a total of 10% of respondents reported suffering from three or more conditions. (See below.)



Respondents were asked to identify how they locate information about emergency shelter services during inclement weather. Over half (55%) of respondents reported using their cell phone to locate information. (See below.)



When asked what they did during a recent period of heavy rain, nearly half (44%) of respondents reported being able to get to shelter. Almost eighteen percent (18%) experienced a barrier where there was not enough space, transportation was not available, or they did not know if there was a shelter option open or accessible. (See below.)



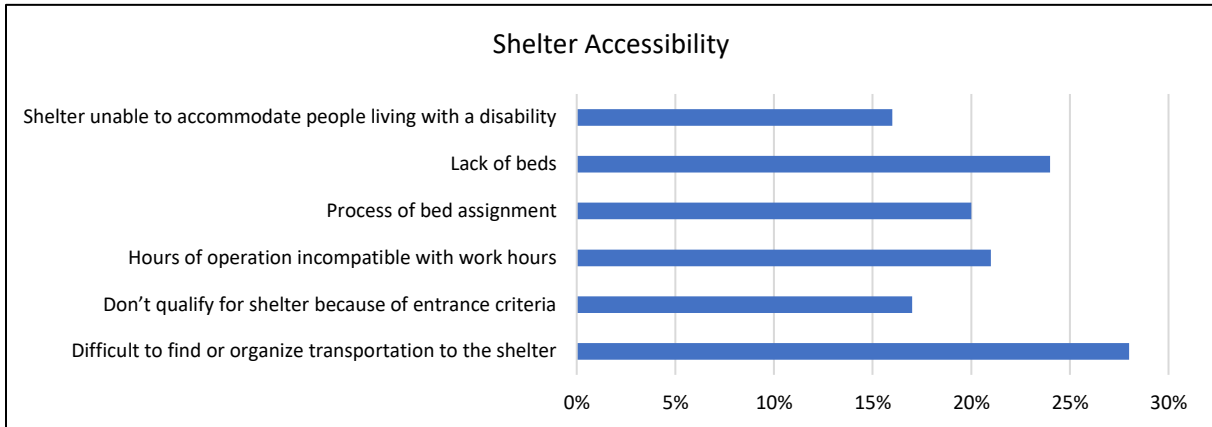
*SHELTER EXPERIENCE*

Survey respondents were asked to provide feedback regarding their experiences or fear of experiencing if accessing shelter. If they had accessed shelter in Denton County, they were asked to respond based on their experiences or fears of different scenarios. If they had not accessed shelter, they were asked to identify if any of the provided scenarios made them hesitant to seek shelter. Respondents were asked to select as many scenarios as applicable.

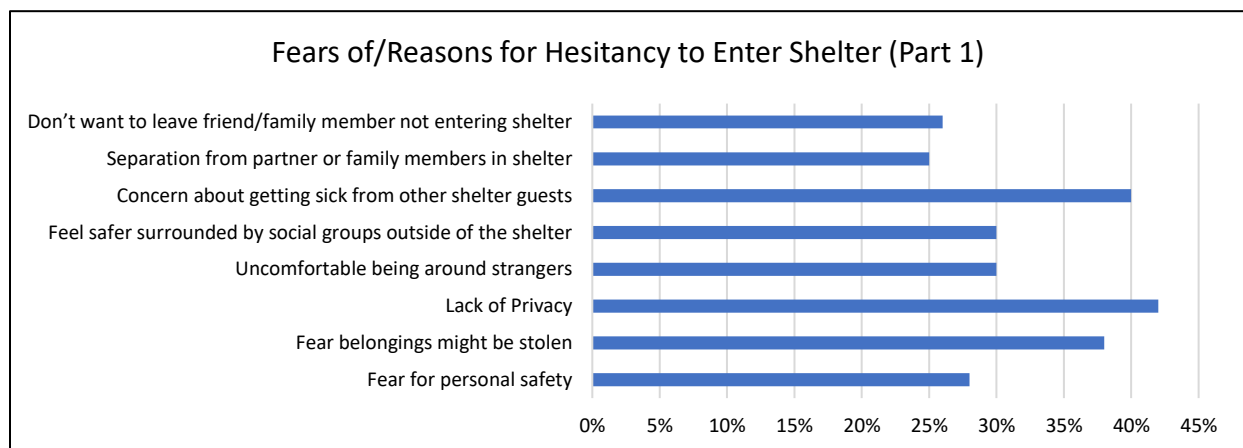
Seventeen percent of respondents did not express concern or experience of any of the scenarios presented, leaving 83% to selected between one and twenty-five scenarios. Thirteen respondents answered 'yes' to having experience or concern of only one scenario, while 50% answered 'yes' to between two and ten scenarios.



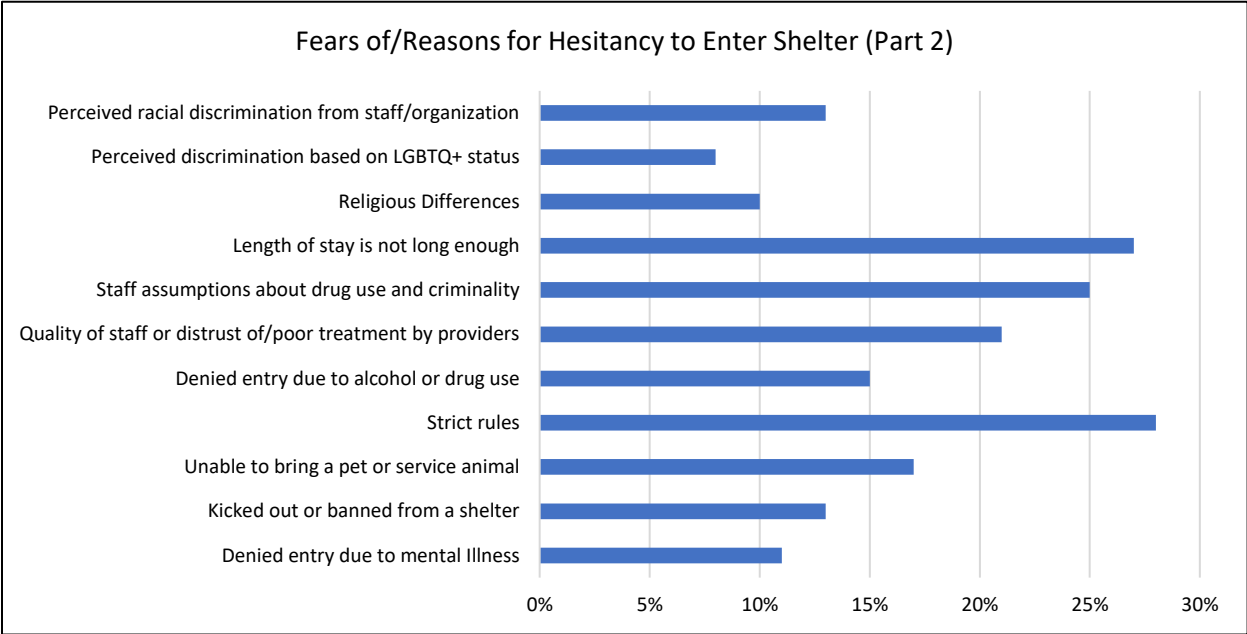
Twenty-eight percent (28%) of respondents identified lack of transportation as a barrier to accessing shelter. Lack of beds (24%) and incompatible shelter hours (21%) were also a concern for respondents. (See below.)



When asked to report on fears or experiences that might make them hesitant to enter shelter, respondents identified the following top five reasons: lack of privacy (42%), concern about getting sick from other shelter guests (40%), fear of belongings being stolen (38%), and a preference for being surrounded by their own social network (30% reported feeling uncomfortable around strangers and 30% reported feeling safer surrounded by social groups outside of shelter). (See below.)

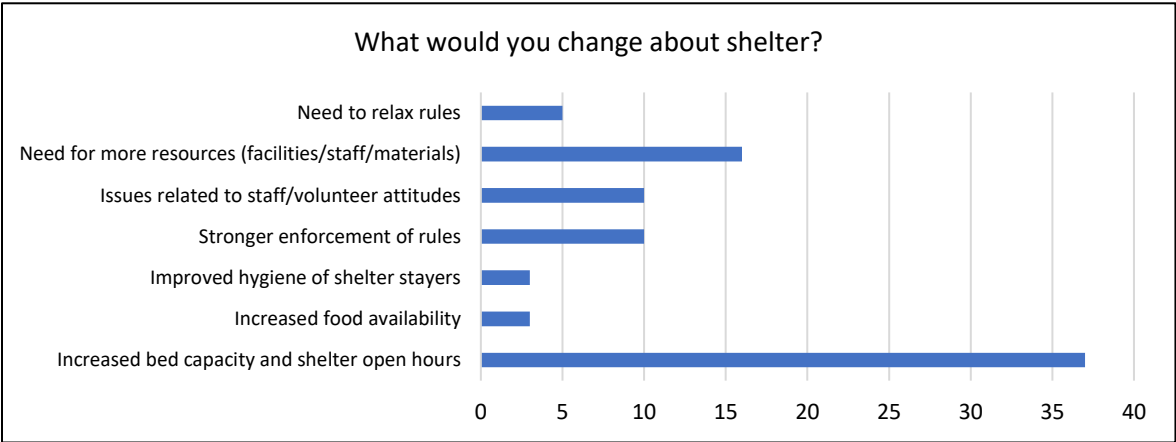


Additionally, respondents identified strict shelter rules (28%), short lengths of stay (27%), and perceived staff assumptions about criminal behavior (25%) as primary concerns. (See below.)



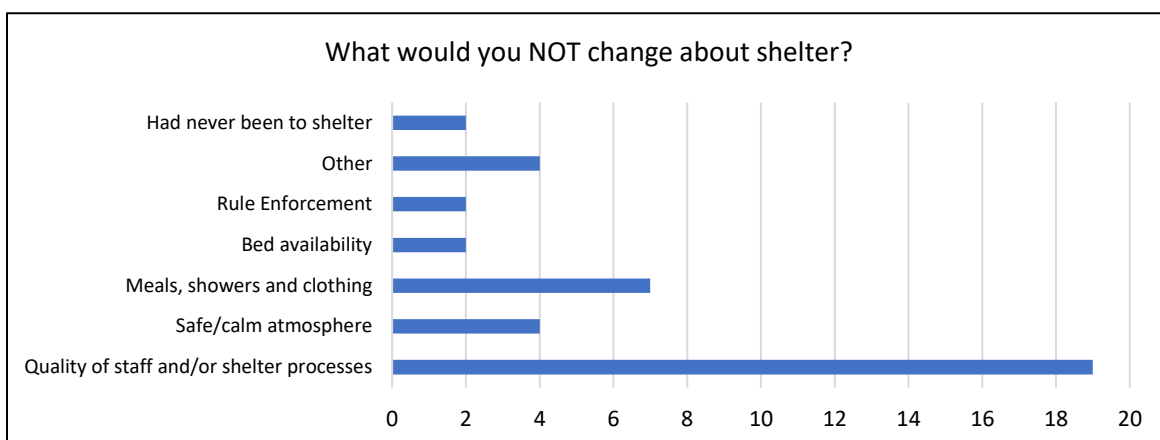
Respondents were asked two open-ended questions about what they would change about shelter so that more people would want to go, as well as things they liked and would not change about shelter.

The most common response when asked what they would change about shelter was increased bed capacity and shelter hours (37 people). In fact, 11 respondents stated a desire for shelter to be open more days of the week and to be open during the day. Sixteen respondents expressed a desire for increased resources, and 4 of those stated a need for more programs, activities or educational books. Ten respondents reported a desire to see a change in staff and volunteer attitudes, and another ten wanted a stronger enforcement of rules which included how to handle reports of harassment by other shelter stayers and stricter enforcement of rules, chores and group meetings. (See below.)



Could choose more than one –  
Dani’s note

When asked what they would not change about the shelters, 19 respondents expressed a satisfaction with shelter staff and processes. Other satisfactory items include access to meals/showers/clothing (7 people) and the safe and calm shelter atmosphere (4 people). (See below.)



## SECTION 5: IS SHELTER ACCESSIBLE DURING *INCLEMENT WEATHER*?

In the October meeting, City of Denton staff asked for provider feedback regarding an inclement weather shelter and communication policy. Agencies provided feedback which allowed for both the City of Denton and City of Lewisville to finalize plans for inclement weather shelter which are now linked on [the Denton County Homeless Coalition website \(linked\)](#) in addition to respective city websites. Copies of each of these plans can be found in the appendix at the end of this report.

## SECTION 6: CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

During the December meeting, the workgroup reviewed the data collected and provided their feedback. Workgroup members agreed on the below conclusions and recommendations to improve shelter access for Denton County's literal homeless population.

The conclusions and recommendations were placed into two broad categories: 1) improve the current environment to fully leverage resources that exist and 2) explore opportunities to expand the service level provided in Denton County.

### **IMPROVE THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT**

Workgroup members agreed on the following recommendations to improve and leverage the current emergency shelter environment in Denton County: reduce barriers to entry, increase transportation resources, and increase communication and training.

**Reducing barriers to entry** was a common theme among survey respondents (see Section 4). Seventeen percent of respondents cited not being qualified to enter shelter due to entrance criteria as a concern, and 15% cited a fear or concern of being denied entry due to drug or alcohol use. One quarter of respondents were concerned about staff assumptions about client drug use or criminality. Strict rules and the possibility of items being stolen were also concerns. Workgroup members proposed evaluation and revision of shelter entry requirements (such as required identification, sober policies and curfews).

Another recommendation was to **increase access to transportation**, including transportation to the shelters, but also to other service providers or to work opportunities. In the survey, 28% of respondents reported that it was difficult to find or organize transportation to shelter, which was highest barrier reported for the shelter accessibility question. To increase transportation resources, workgroup members noted the need to include all possible community partners (such as the Denton County Transit Authority, Span and faith-based organizations) to develop a comprehensive transportation plan that ensures equitable access to transportation to shelter throughout the county.

**Communication and training** were a priority for the workgroup. Members agreed on a need to focus on improved communication to people accessing shelter resources, providing shelter resources and the community at large. The envisioned goal of increased communication and training efforts would be to increase the number of volunteers regularly engaged with local organizations and ultimately improve accessibility and awareness of shelter for those in a crisis.

#### ***EXPAND EMERGENCY SHELTER SERVICE LEVEL***

In addition to improving and leveraging the current environment, workgroup members **acknowledged the need to increase access to shelter in the long-term through the expansion of shelter hours**. Members noted feedback from survey respondents expressing a need for increased access to shelter and supportive services during daytime hours, as well as access to the existing number of shelter beds more nights of the week (see Section 4).

Workgroup members agreed that shelter utilization numbers (see Section 2) did not warrant a need for a significant increase in shelter beds at this time and recommended that the Denton County Homelessness Leadership Team and Denton City Council prioritize opportunities to expand existing shelter hours to meet the needs of the local literal homeless population. The [DCHLT Standards of Excellence \(linked\)](#) include metrics and standards for outreach and shelter practices that correspond to the DCHLT Strategic Plan, and may be utilized as a guide for the workgroup moving forward.

To better understand and address the concerns of survey respondents, workgroup members **expressed a desire to continue their work through regular meetings**, and possibly even engage in a more in-depth study of the shelter experiences. The workgroup plans to reconvene in January after the Denton County Homelessness Leadership Team and Denton City Council have had the opportunity to review this report and provide feedback and direction. In addition, continued collaboration and work through a Shelter Planning workgroup could help to provide improved coordination and planning for future plans of agencies.