HELPLINE CENTER
NETWORK OF CARE

HOMELESSNESS DATA REVIEW

SEPTEMBER 2026

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SIOUX FALLS, SD

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This analysis was made possible through the generous support of the Sioux Falls Area Community Foundation.

Executive Summary

This report evaluates patterns of shelter utilization, returns to homelessness, duration of homelessness, and service pathways across more than 7,000 clients within the Helpline Center Network of Care. The objective is to provide actionable insights for service providers, case managers, and policymakers to optimize intervention timing, resource allocation, and prevention strategies.

For the majority of clients, homelessness is a brief and non-recurring experience. But for those who return to homelessness, the risk is highest in the first year after exiting homelessness. While 57% of first-time clients experience only a single episode of homelessness, the risk of return is front-loaded: 28% return within 6 months and 36% within one year (median time to return: 42.5 months). Further, the two-to-three-year window after exiting homelessness marks the highest-risk period for crossing into chronic homelessness (experiencing four or more episodes of homelessness).

Interventions make a difference. Permanent housing and case management can help resolve homelessness and promote housing stability. Exiting a first episode into permanent housing reduces the risk of return by 54% and the risk of chronic homelessness by 71% (controlling for client characteristics). However, only 9% of initial exits achieve permanent housing.

Case management is associated with long-term housing stability, reducing the risk of return to homelessness by 14% overall (with a cumulative 2% reduction per session). The association is especially strong for certain subgroups: high utilizers of services receiving case management see a 45% lower risk of returning to homelessness.

The risk of experiencing multiple episodes of homelessness varies across subgroups of clients. Higher risk or more vulnerable subgroups include high service utilizers (178% higher return risk; median return in 4.7 months), justice-impacted individuals (38% higher return risk), older adults aged 45–64, and those reliant on SSDI or day labor. Lower risk subgroups include families and households with children (29–40% lower return risk), students, married clients, and younger cohorts.

The duration of homelessness is also associated with future risk. Most episodes of homelessness are short (median one month; 75% under two months), but each additional month of initial homelessness increases the risk of return by 5% and chronic homelessness by 7%. Older adults, SSDI recipients, and clients with disabling conditions have significantly higher odds of long-duration episodes of homelessness (six months or more).

Findings suggest implications for policy and practice:

- Front-load post-exit support: Focus intensive case management, rental/utility subsidies, and check-ins within the first 90 to 180 days post-exit. This is the highest risk period for clients to return to homelessness; additional support could help firm up the path to stability.
- Scale permanent housing exits: Pave the way to long-term stability by expanding the availability of affordable, accessible, and in some cases supportive permanent housing. Devoting additional resources to rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing, and

vouchers could increase the proportion of clients exiting to permanent housing above the current 9% rate.

- Target upstream prevention and communitywide awareness of prevention services. Because 93% of first-time homeless clients had no prior Network of Care record within 90 days, developing community-wide outreach and early diversion outside emergency shelters could help address housing instability before it leads to homelessness.

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Introduction

This report presents results from an analysis and review of data from the Helpline Center Network of Care. It builds on findings from a prior report completed in December of 2024, which described client demographics, patterns of service utilization, and the prevalence of homelessness among key subgroups. Here, analysis goes further, estimating the risk of returning to homelessness after an initial episode and identifying characteristics associated with increased risk or stability.

Like the prior study, this report focuses exclusively on data from the Helpline Center Network of Care, a program of the Helpline Center. The Helpline Center is the system administrator for the Helpline Center Network of Care, a coordinated social service system to connect social service agencies in order to better serve individuals and families. The Network of Care includes agencies primarily based in Sioux Falls and Watertown, South Dakota, but is available to agencies and users statewide. The Helpline Center also operates across South Dakota to provide a suite of services, including the 211 Helpline, 988 Lifeline, Volunteer Connections, and Suicide Grief Support, though data from these programs are not included in this study.

The following section provides additional detail about the data extract used for this report, as well as a summary of client characteristics. The analysis section begins with an investigation of returns to homelessness: After experiencing homelessness, how often do clients maintain housing stability or return to homelessness? What client characteristics are associated with an increased risk of returning to homelessness after a first episode of homelessness resolves? And what characteristics of an initial shelter stay might likewise be associated with a subsequent return?

Next, analysis turns to an examination of successful exits. Do clients whose first episode of homelessness ends with an exit to permanent housing have a decreased risk of returning to homelessness?

From there, study turns to the types of services clients receive before, during, or after their first episode of homelessness. This part of the study explores whether rental assistance services are associated with the risk of experiencing an initial episode of homelessness or returning to homelessness, or whether other services can be identified that are associated with risk.

A section on client subgroups revisits subgroups of interest that were considered in the 2024 report, including families with children, high utilizers of services, and justice-impacted clients. This piece of the analysis explores whether these subgroups have an elevated risk of returning to homelessness.

The analysis concludes by looking at clients' place of origin and at the duration of homelessness episodes.

Data

The data for this report are an extract from the Helpline Center Network of Care database. The Helpline Center provided two data sets for analysis: a file of client characteristics and a file of service interactions. Both data sets were extracted on June 12, 2026.

The client data extract includes all clients with a Network of Care record (n = 34,516). Fields include client characteristics and demographics as well as some service information recorded at the client level.

The provider extract includes details of services (n = 157,884) provided to clients by agencies within the Network of Care. The number of agencies in the Network of Care is dynamic, with new agencies joining the network over time. Notable changes to the service records since the 2024 report include the addition of South Dakota Urban Indian Health and Midwest Street Medicine in 2023; both of these organizations provide street outreach services. Additionally, since the prior report, an API integration with Minnehaha County Human Services was established to bring in service history records that include rent, utility, and other financial assistance provided by the county.

The Helpline Center provided a third data set encompassing night-by-night check-in data for Bishop Dudley Hospitality House.[1] Although Bishop Dudley's check-in system is integrated with the Network of Care by API, not all fields are included in the API transfer. This third data set was provided in order to assess the usefulness of the additional fields.

The Bishop Dudley data set was used minimally in this report due to a limited ability to connect Bishop Dudley check-in records to Network of Care client records. Bishop Dudley records have a guest record ID that can be used as a crosswalk to identify corresponding Network of Care client IDs; however, the guest record ID is only available in both data sources starting from January 1, 2025, when the data integration with the Network of Care launched. As a result, only about one in four Bishop Dudley guest records can be matched to a Network of Care client record.

Data Cleaning

All data sets were reviewed and filtered to include only service records dating from January 1, 2021 through June 12, 2026. Prior to 2021, service data was incomplete, available for fewer agencies, and subject to more severe irregularities from the COVID-19 pandemic. June 12, 2026 is the date when data were extracted.

Since the 2024 report, the Helpline Center made a few adjustments to how data were recorded. First, race and ethnicity fields were updated to comply with new federal standards (including for past client data). Second, the checkbox used to record whether a client was homeless was programmatically unchecked for anyone who has not had a service in more than two years.

[1] Bishop Dudley Hospitality House is a night-by-night emergency shelter. Daily check-ins are recorded for each night that a guest stays in the shelter. By contrast, the Union Gospel Mission, which also operates an emergency shelter, records a check-in date and a check-out date, which can span periods of various duration.

This second change has minimal impact on the current analysis, which focuses on shelter use rather than the homelessness checkbox. Shelter records are used here because clients identified as homeless solely by the checkbox might not fit the HUD definition of homelessness. The checkbox can be based on self-report, and checkbox-only records could include a range of experiences, from couch surfing to unsheltered homelessness. This yielded two new variables:

For this study, separate agency fields were combined into a single field. In the original service data set, a separate field recorded the name of a providing agency if the agency was in Watertown. This field was combined with the regular agency field.

Description of the Data

The client data set consists of records for 34,516 distinct clients, of whom 26,854 had at least one service record during the study time frame (January 1, 2021 through June 12, 2026). After cleaning and removing records from outside of the study time frame, the service data set comprises 133,503 distinct service interactions from 35 agencies. The following table shows the 15 agencies with the most associated service records (agencies not shown had less than 720 records each).

Table 1. Agencies with the most service records

Agency	Service Records
Bishop Dudley Hospitality House	26,175
Center of Hope	26,162
Union Gospel Mission	18,893
The Community Outreach	13,155
Furniture Mission	12,275
Minnehaha County Human Services	9,491
Helpline Center - Support Programs	7,955
Codington County Community Services	3,318
Brothers & Sisters Behind Bars	2,423
Sioux Falls Hope Coalition	2,337
Embe Women - Dress for Success	2,236
Urban Indian Health	2,195
Midwest Street Medicine	1,852
St Francis House	1,232
Health Connect of SD	1,076

As the following figure demonstrates, the data shows a clear trend of an increasing number of services recorded each year. This trend is due, at least in part, to the addition of more agencies (and their services) to the Network of Care.

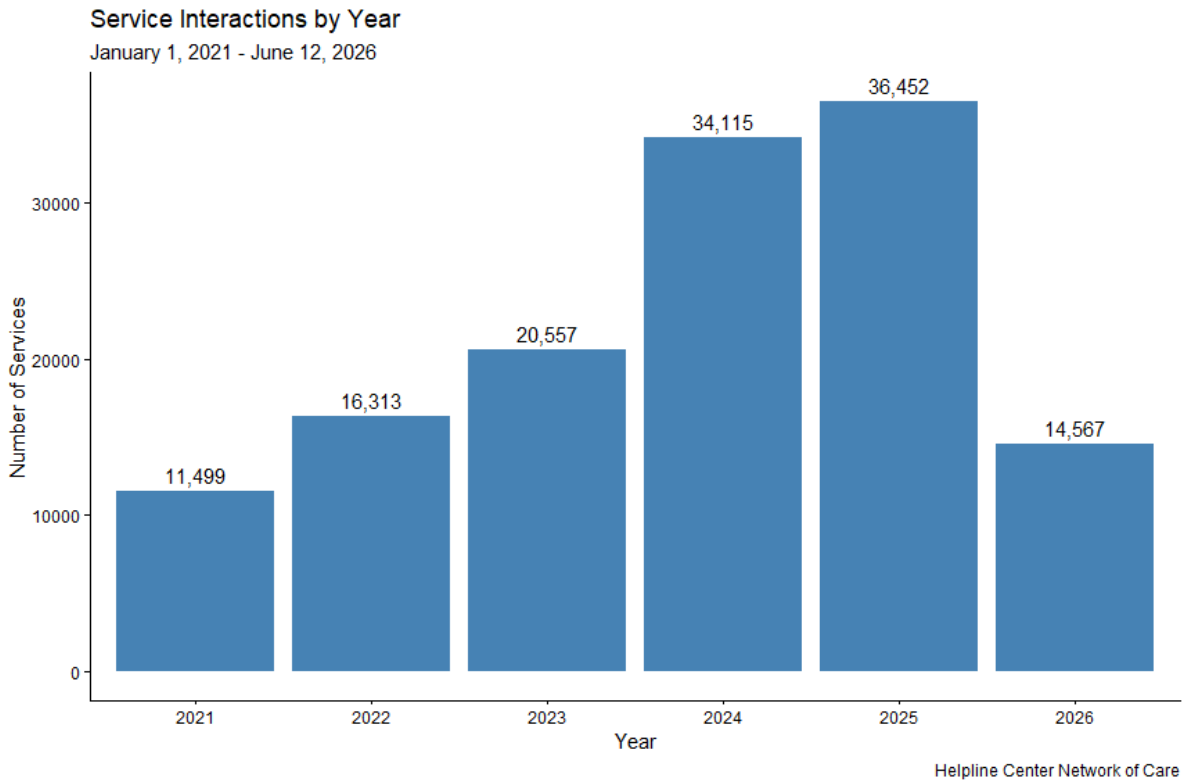


Figure 1. Service interactions recorded in the Network of Care by year, 2021 - June 2026

Homelessness

Client and service data were reviewed in order to identify clients who experienced homelessness at some point during the study time frame. Two methods were considered for identifying homelessness: (1) a checkbox indicator of homeless status and (2) a service record for a shelter stay. Ultimately, the checkbox indicator was rejected in favor of using service records to identify episodes of homelessness.

Of the 34,516 clients in the data, 4,910 had a homeless checkbox marked as TRUE, and 3,721 had a flag marked FALSE, indicating it had been checked in the past. (Remaining clients had no recorded value for the checkbox.) However, not all of those clients had a service (of any type) recorded during the date range of the study. Narrowing to only clients who had a service interaction during the 2021 – June 2026 date range, 3,206 had a homeless flag marked TRUE, and 4,515 had a flag marked FALSE. Based on an understanding of Network of Care business practices, the checkbox was deemed an imprecise indicator of homelessness for this study: the checkbox is based on self-report and does not conform to any specific definition of homelessness, so could include a wide range of experiences. Because no additional detail accompanies the checkbox, the dates, duration, and nature of homelessness reflected by the checkbox cannot be determined.

Alternatively, service records include information about date and duration and some information about the experience of homelessness. Shelter stays were identified from among services when the need met fell in one of the following categories:

- Homeless Shelter - BH-1800.8500
- Transitional Housing/Shelter - BH-8600
- Homeless Motel Vouchers - BH-1800.5000

Of the clients in the file, 7,187 had a shelter stay recorded during the study period—amounting to 20.8% of the 34,516 clients in the file and 26.8% of the 26,854 clients with a service interaction during the study period.[2]

The following figure shows the number of shelter stays recoded during each year of the study time frame.

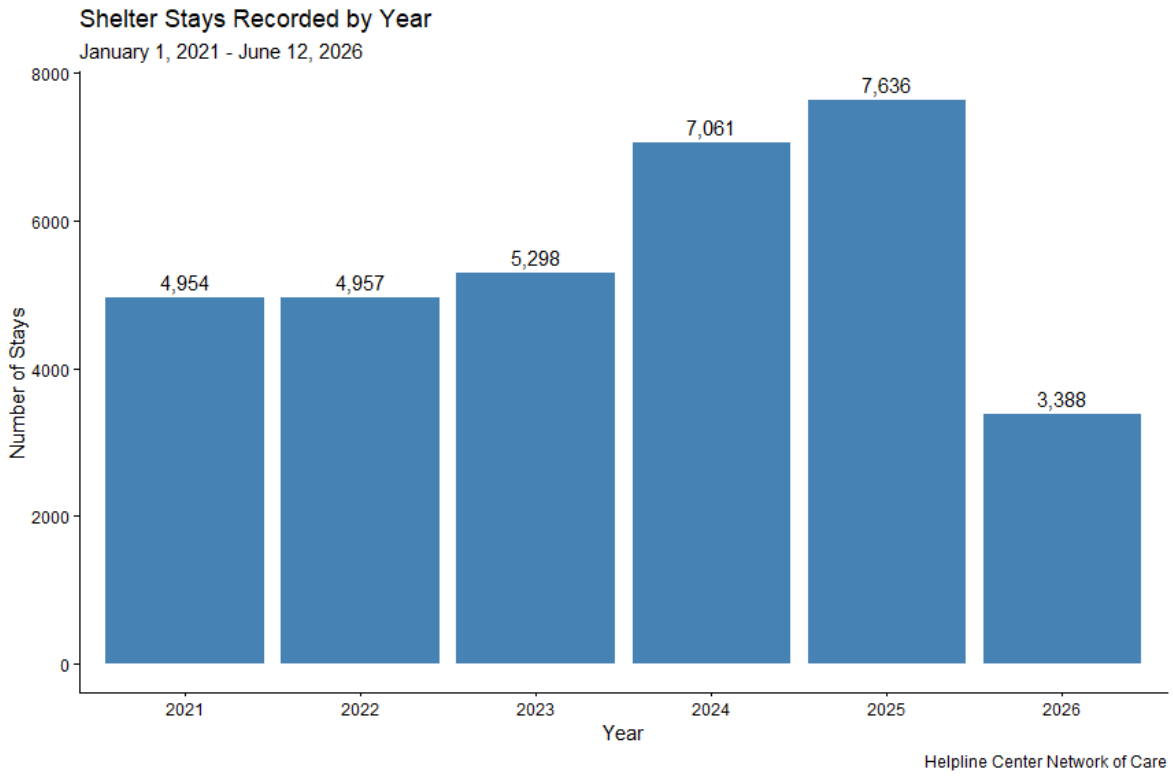


Figure 2. Total shelter stays recorded by year, 2021 through June 2026

The rest of this report focuses on clients with at least one recorded shelter stay, regardless of their homeless checkbox status.

[2] Of clients with a shelter stay, 4,830 (67.2%) had a homeless checkbox with data recorded (marked TRUE or FALSE).

Client Characteristics

The client data set contains information about client characteristics. The following table describes the fields from the client data used in the following analysis, along with any modifications made to each field.

Table 2. Client characteristics data available

Characteristic	Distribution		Description
Gender	Male	15,442 (45%)	The categories trans men, trans women, and gender non-conforming and two spirit were grouped. The categories declined and did not ask were grouped as unknown. Missing data for 425 clients.
	Female	17,943 (53%)	
	Trans or gender non-conforming	109 (0.3%)	
	Unknown	597 (2%)	
Age	Under 18	958 (3%)	Age was bucketed into categories. Missing data for 622 clients.
	18 to 24	2,147 (6%)	
	25 to 44	17,645 (52%)	
	45 to 64	10,080 (30%)	
	65+	3,064 (9%)	
Race	Asian	466 (1%)	The race field allows multiple values per client. Anyone with a single race was coded using that race; anyone with two or more was coded as multiracial. Missing data for 1,114 clients.
	Black or African American	4,671 (14%)	
	Hispanic or Latino	2,439 (7%)	
	Middle Eastern or North African	*	
	Native American or Alaska Native	6,853 (21%)	
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	213 (1%)	
	White or Caucasian	13,421 (40%)	
	Multiracial	2,440 (7%)	
	Other	498 (1%)	
	Did not ask	2,291 (7%)	
	Declined	108 (0.3%)	
Income	$0 or less	2,683 (39%)	Income values ranged from negative $5,000 to positive 53,000 with a median of $922. To deal with extreme outliers and for ease of interpretation, income was binned into categories. Missing data for 25,540 clients.
	$1 to $499	557 (6%)	
	$500 to $999	1,519 (17%)	
	$1,000 to $1,499	1,373 (16%)	
	$1,500 to $1,999	884 (10%)	
	$2,000 to $2,499	863 (10%)	
	$2,500 to $2,999	445 (5%)	
	$3,000 to $3,499	328 (4%)	
	$3,500 to $3,999	118 (1%)	
	$4,000 or more	206 (2%)	

Characteristic	Distribution		Description
Education	Less than high school	5,156 (20%)	Missing data for 8,413 clients.
	High school diploma/GED	11,385 (44%)	
	Some college	3,730 (14%)	
	Technical school certification	952 (4%)	
	College degree	2,195 (8%)	
	Graduate degree	469 (2%)	
	Unknown	2,216 (8%)	
Employment	Employed	10,700 (44%)	The employment field allows multiple values for client. For clients with multiple values checked, the following hierarchy was used to recode: the highest ranked status in the hierarchy that was recorded for the client was kept, discarding lower ranked statuses (e.g., someone who marked both employed and retired was recoded as employed): employed (full or part time), student, SSDI, retired, temporary or day labor, unemployed. The unemployed category includes those marked searching for work. Missing data for 10,168 clients.
	Student	410 (2%)	
	SSDI	2,440 (10%)	
	Retired	590 (2%)	
	Temporary or day labor	552 (2%)	
	Unemployed	9,656 (40%)	
Disabling condition	True	6,693 (33%)	Missing data for 14,241 clients.
	False	13,582 (67%)	
Insurance status	Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)	14 (0.1%)	Some analyses in this report group insurance data into insured (n = 7,568, or 53%), not insured (n = 4,574, or 32%), and unknown (n = 2,070, or 15%). Missing data for 20,304 clients.
	Employer Provided	393 (3%)	
	Healthcare.gov	58 (0.4%)	
	Indian Health Service (IHS)	216 (2%)	
	Medicaid	4,459 (31%)	
	Medicare & Medicaid	550 (4%)	
	Medicare	726 (5%)	
	No Health Insurance	4,574 (32%)	
	Private Pay Insurance	986 (7%)	

Characteristic	Distribution		Description
	TRICARE (Military Health System)	22 (0.2%)	
	Veterans Health Administration (VHA)	144 (1%)	
	Unknown	2,070 (15%)	
Military status	None	23,007 (89%)	Missing for 8,626 clients.
	Veteran	1,320 (5%)	
	Active Duty	8 (0.03%)	
	Declined	74 (0.3%)	
	Did Not Ask	1,481 (6%)	
Marital status	Divorced	3,178 (12%)	Missing for 7,857 clients.
	Married	3,962 (15%)	
	Separated	1,502 (6%)	
	Single	16,318 (61%)	
	Widowed	739 (3%)	
	Unknown	960 (4%)	
Households with children	True	10,571 (62%)	True if either the number of children in the household or children in care is greater than zero. Missing for 17,415 clients.
	False	6,530 (38%)	
Single parent	True	6,971 (40%)	Missing for 17,121 clients.
	False	10,424 (60%)	

* Suppressed due to small count.

Analysis and Findings

Returns to Homelessness

This section explores patterns of returns to homelessness and factors that are associated with returns. In other words, it looks at the likelihood that someone who has stayed in and left an emergency shelter or transitional housing program will return to shelter or transitional housing in the future. Because the Network of Care data makes it possible to track client journeys across providers, a return to homelessness may occur when a client enters the *same* shelter or transitional housing program as their first stay *or a different one* within the Network of Care.

Returns to homelessness are common in the data but not ubiquitous. Of the 7,187 clients with a shelter stay, 43% (3,096) had only one shelter stay during the study period. Another 16% (1,173) had two shelter stays. The remaining 41% (2,918) had three or more shelter stays.

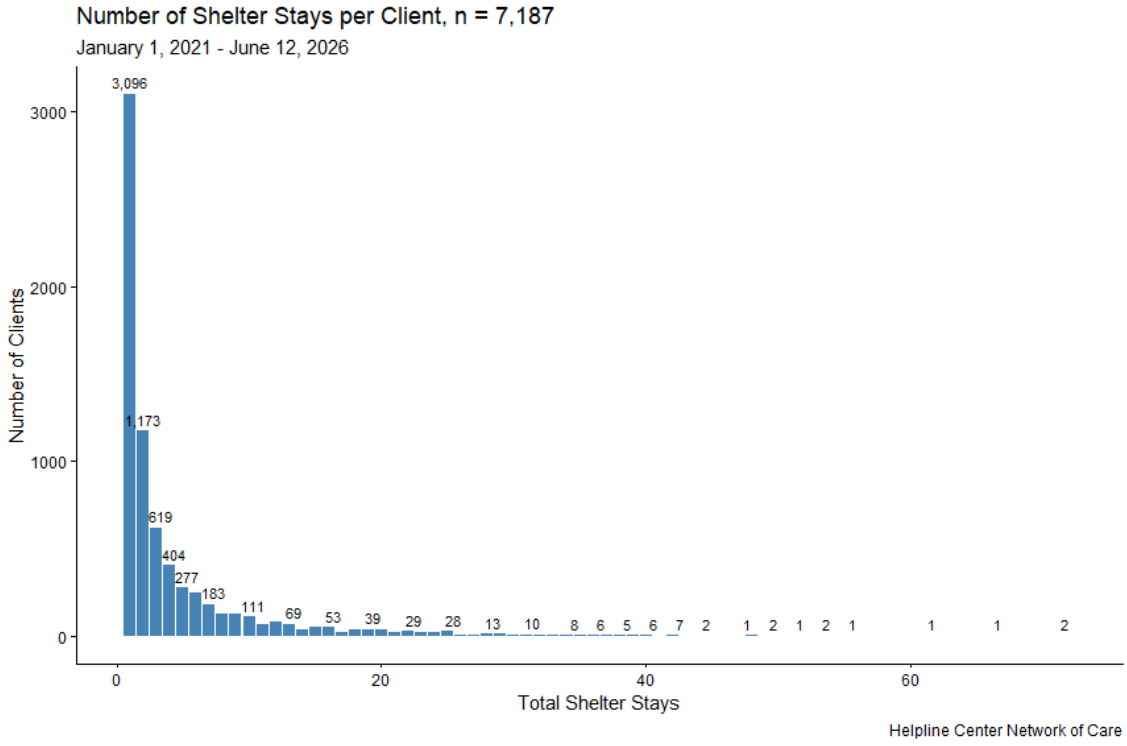


Figure 3. Total Number of Shelter Stays per Client, 2021 through June 2026

Because of the way data is logged in the Network of Care, multiple shelter stays may be recorded during a single period of homelessness. That is, some people with multiple shelter stays may have only had one episode of homelessness that resulted in multiple shelter check-ins. For example, someone who stayed at the Union Gospel Mission for a time then spent a night at Bishop Dudley Hospitality House would have two shelter stays recorded even if those stays occurred on consecutive dates—or even if the Bishop Dudley stay occurred during a longer, multi-night stay with the Union Gospel Mission. Someone staying at Bishop Dudley for two or more months would likewise have multiple stays recorded, since the shelter enters a new shelter stay service in the Network of Care each month of multi-month stays.

Defining Episodes of Homelessness

To account for this situation, this study looks at *episodes of homelessness* rather than shelter stays. Shelter stays are consolidated into episodes of homelessness using the following logic:

- The start date for an episode of homelessness is the start date (service date) of the first shelter stay service date recorded for that client.
- The episode's end date is either (a) the recorded check-out date for a Union Gospel Mission stay, or (b) for other shelters (which do not record check-out dates), the end date is calculated as 31 days after the start date.
- Then, the client's service history is checked for any subsequent shelter stays that began within seven days following the end date of the first stay. If a shelter stay occurs within seven days, it is considered part of the initial episode of homelessness. This process is iterated until all shelter stays beginning within seven days of the last recorded end date are consolidated into a single episode of homelessness.
- Shelter stays are consolidated regardless of providing agency. In other words, if someone stays at Bishop Dudley, then the Union Gospel Mission, then receives a motel voucher, as long as those services are provided in succession without more than a seven-day break, they are considered part of a single episode of homelessness.

Using this logic, of the 7,187 clients with a shelter stay during the study period, 57% (4,121) had only one episode of homelessness, while 18% (1,266) had two episodes, 9% (628) had three episodes, and the remaining 16% (1,172) had four or more.

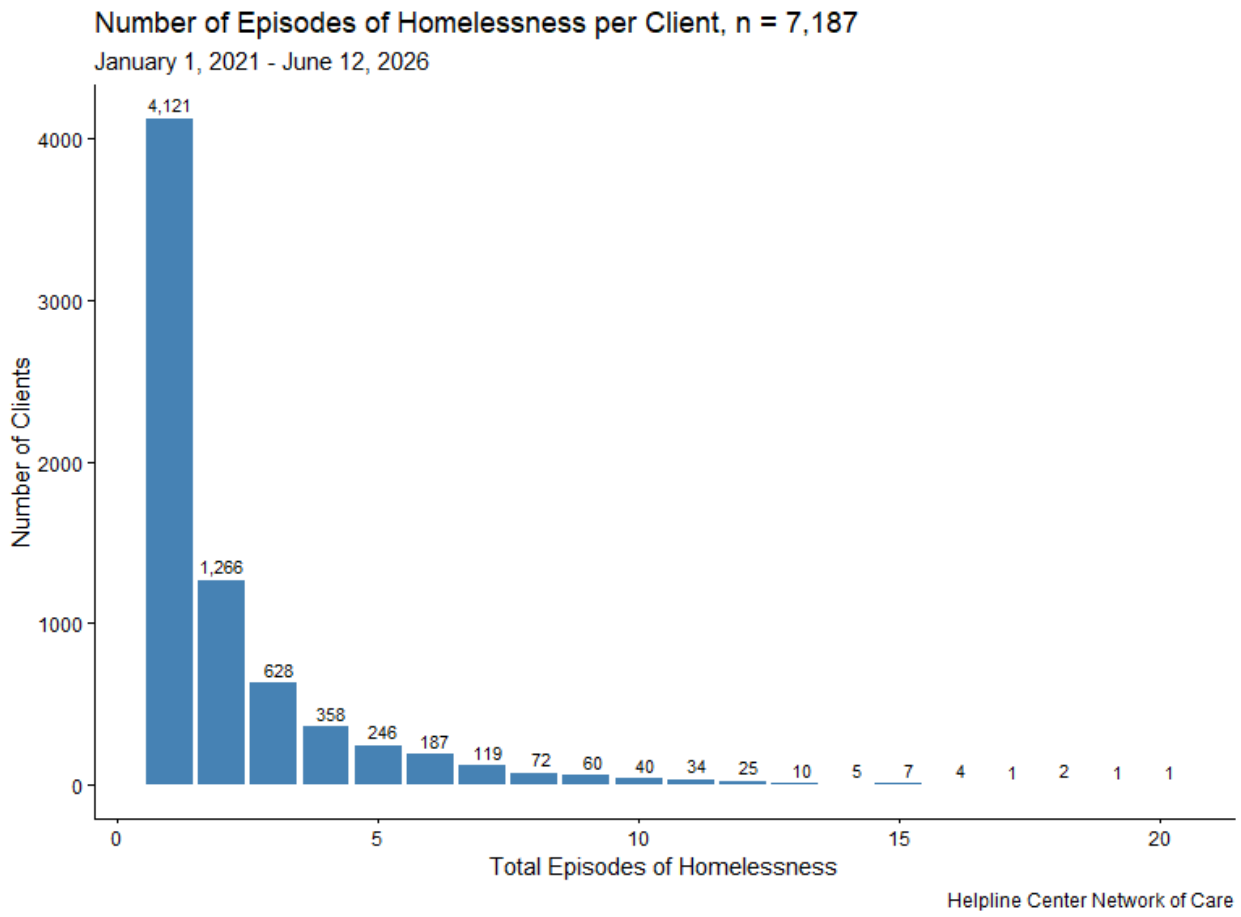


Figure 4. Total Episodes of Homelessness per Client, 2021 through June 2026

A preliminary glance at the data shows that, with each additional episode of homelessness, the likelihood that a client will again return to homelessness increases. Less than half (43%) of first-time episodes of homelessness lead to a subsequent return to homelessness. In other words, more than half—57%—of people who experience homelessness for the first time will not return. However, those who return to homelessness for a second or third time are much more likely to experience subsequent episodes of homelessness as well.

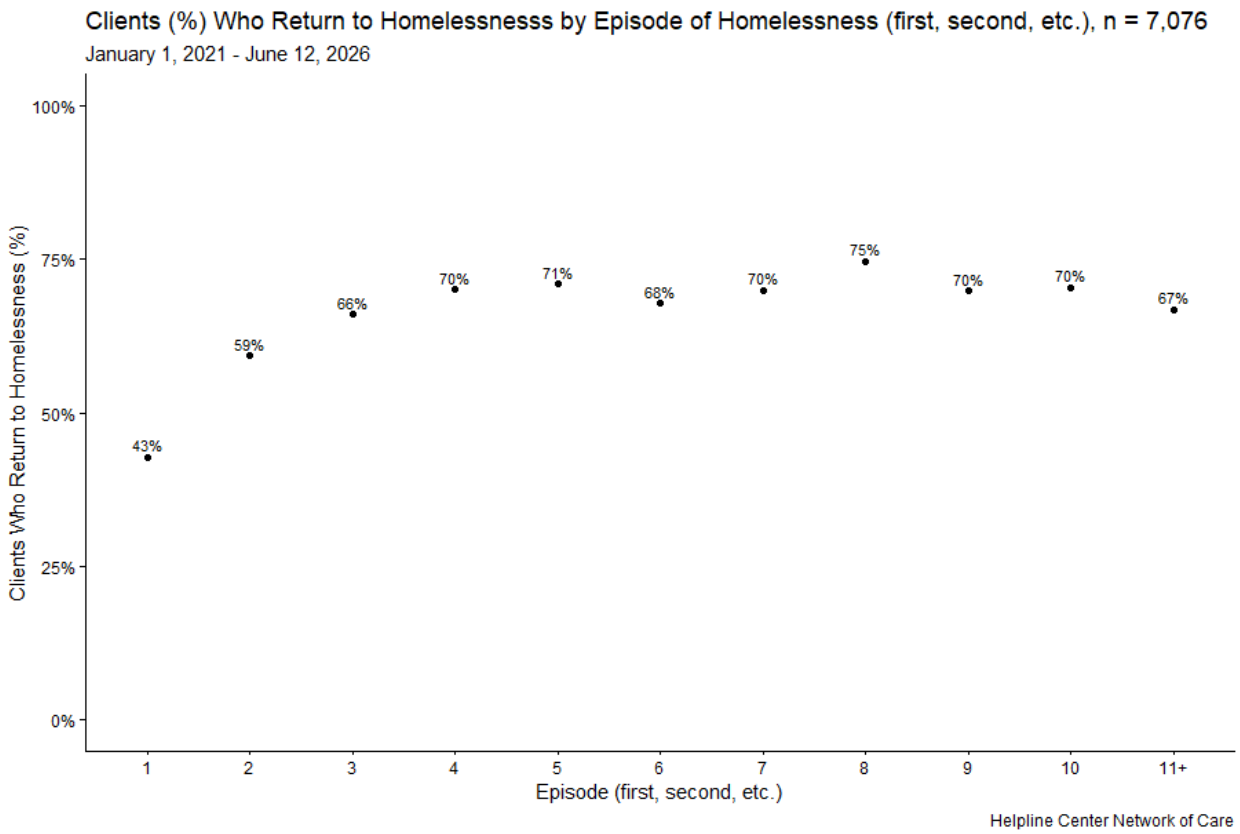


Figure 5. Clients (%) who return to homelessness by episode of homelessness (first, second, etc.), n = 7,076

However, this is a naïve estimate that may be biased by the limited timeframe of the available data: some of the first-time episodes of homelessness may have happened without time to follow up and see whether people will return to homelessness or not. To account for this limited follow-up time for more recent episodes, this study uses survival analysis.

Survival Analysis

Survival analysis is a statistical technique to account for censoring of data—that is, cases where an individual has not been observed long enough to know whether or not they will experience a given event. In this case, the event of interest is a return to homelessness after a first episode.

Network of Care data are available from January 1, 2021, through June 12, 2026. Someone with an initial episode of homelessness in January of 2021 will be observed for five years, but someone whose initial episode was in January of 2026 would only be observed in the data for six months. Someone who has not had a second episode of homelessness *yet* might in the future, if more data were available.

Defining Events: Returns to Homelessness and Chronic Homelessness

For this analysis, returns to homelessness are defined as two types of events: whether someone has (a) a second episode of homelessness (regardless of how many total episodes they have) or (b) three or more additional episodes of homelessness after their first (four total, roughly

corresponding to HUD's definition of chronic homelessness).[3] In other words, the analysis answers two separate questions:

- **Returns to homelessness:** What differentiates people with one and only one episode of homelessness from those who have two or more?
- **Chronic homelessness:** What differentiates people with one, two or three episodes of homelessness from those who have four or more?

The survival analysis that follows answers these questions by estimating the probability of "survival" after a client experiences a first episode of homelessness. In this study, survival refers to the probability that a client in the Network of Care avoids a return to homelessness (or avoids a third return to homelessness, in the case of the chronic homelessness analysis).

Survival Probability: Returns to Homelessness

The following table and chart show survival probability for returns to homelessness. Survival probabilities are estimated using Kaplan-Meier curves, accounting for censoring of the data. Survival probability refers to the probability that a study subject "survives"—i.e., avoids an event—for a given period of time. That is, the analysis looks at each client's *first* episode of homelessness recorded in the Network of Care, then asks whether that client experienced a subsequent episode of homelessness.

The event of interest here is a second episode of homelessness following a first episode (regardless of whether a client might go on to experience additional episodes of homelessness after the second).

After exiting a first episode of homelessness, clients have about a 10% chance of returning to homelessness within one month, a 21% chance of returning within three months, and 28% within six months. Over a longer time period, clients have a 36% chance of returning to homelessness within a year, 43% within two years, 48% within three years, and 54% within 5 years.

The median survival time (i.e., the time at which half of the starting population will experience the event, or in other words in which half of clients will experience a second episode of homelessness) is 42.5 months (94% CI: 37.5, 49.4). After about three and a half years (42.5 months), half of the clients who first experienced homelessness will have had a second episode, while the other half will not.

[3] In 2015, HUD published a final rule defining "chronically homeless" as a homeless individual with a disability who has been homeless for at least 12 months or on at least four separate occasions in the last three years, as long as the combined occasions equal at least 12 months and each break in homelessness separating the occasions included at least 7 consecutive nights of not living as described. See U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2015, December 4). Homeless emergency assistance and rapid transition to housing: Defining "chronically homeless": Final rule. Federal Register, 80(233), 75792–75824.

Table 3. Survival Probability by Month after Exiting First Episode of Homelessness (Return to Homelessness)

Months since Exiting First Episode of Homelessness	At Risk (N)	Returns to Shelter (N)	Survival Rate	SE	95% CI
1	6,210	720	0.897	0.00365	(0.889, 0.904)
2	5,638	475	0.827	0.00454	(0.819, 0.836)
3	5,293	258	0.789	0.00492	(0.780, 0.799)
6	4,573	471	0.717	0.00547	(0.707, 0.728)
12	3,624	458	0.642	0.00593	(0.630, 0.654)
18	2,959	206	0.603	0.00616	(0.591, 0.615)
24	2,309	150	0.570	0.00639	(0.557, 0.583)
36	1,386	167	0.519	0.00696	(0.505, 0.532)
60	213	99	0.462	0.00863	(0.446, 0.479)

The following chart shows how the survival probability falls rapidly in the first few months after a client's first episode of homelessness. This convex shape suggests that there is a high early risk of returning to homelessness: many clients who experience a second episode of homelessness do so soon after their first episode. Those clients who do not return to homelessness in the first few months after exiting an episode of homelessness are more likely to avoid a return.

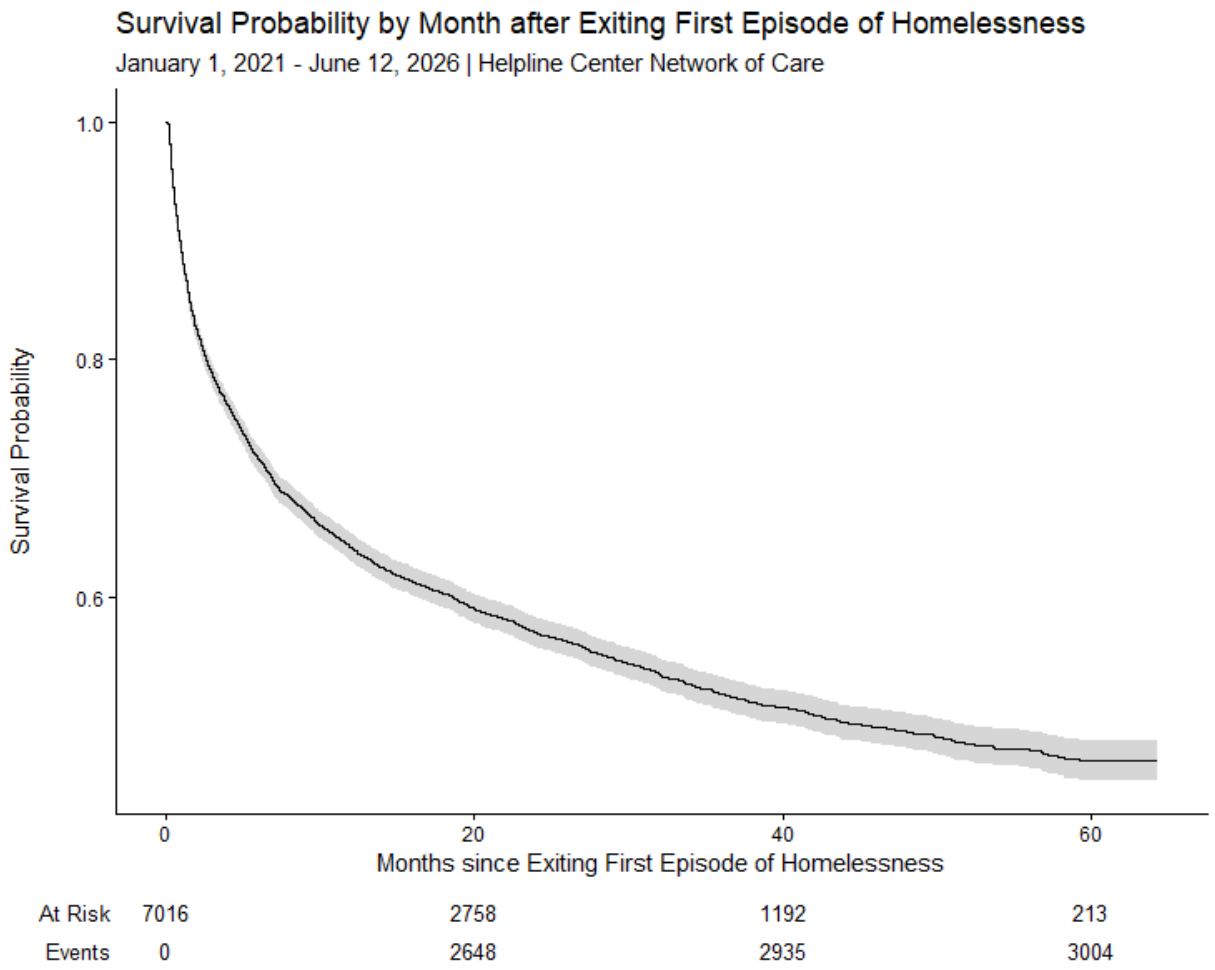


Figure 6. Survival Probability by Month after First Episode of Homelessness

Survival Probability: Chronic Homelessness

The following table and chart show survival probability for chronic homelessness. They look at each client's *first* episode of homelessness recorded in the Network of Care, then ask whether that client went on to experience at least three additional episodes of homelessness. The event of interest here is a third episode of homelessness following a first episode—that is, a fourth episode (regardless of whether a client might go on to experience additional episodes of homelessness after the fourth).

After exiting a first episode of homelessness, clients have about a 1% chance of reaching the chronic (four-or-more episode) threshold within six months, a 7% chance within a year, 15% within two years, 20% within three years, and 27% within five years.

The median survival time is undefined for this group because by the end of the observation period (June 12, 2026, when data were extracted), 72% of the starting population had not reached the chronic threshold.

Table 4. Survival Probability by Month after Exiting First Episode of Homelessness (Chronic Homelessness)

Months since Exit from First Episode	At Risk (N)	Total of 4+ Episodes (N)	Survival Rate	SE	95% CI
6	6,378	76	0.988	0.00132	(0.986, 0.991)
12	5,394	327	0.935	0.00315	(0.929, 0.941)
18	4,543	249	0.889	0.00412	(0.881, 0.897)
24	3,679	186	0.850	0.00484	(0.840, 0.859)
36	2,366	190	0.797	0.00588	(0.786, 0.809)
60	473	142	0.730	0.00796	(0.714, 0.745)

The chart indicates that survival probability remains very high for the first year or so after a first episode of homelessness. In other words, very few clients have four or more separate episodes of homelessness within the first year after their first episode. However, the survival probability falls rapidly over the following two years, suggesting that the period of two to three years after a first episode of homelessness may be the riskiest period for becoming chronically homeless.

After three or four years, the curve begins to level off. This suggests that clients who avoid becoming chronically homeless in the first two or three years after their first episode of homelessness will be more likely to avoid this outcome for a long period of time. However, given the timeframe of the dataset used in this study, it remains unknown what survival patterns might look like after the five-year mark.

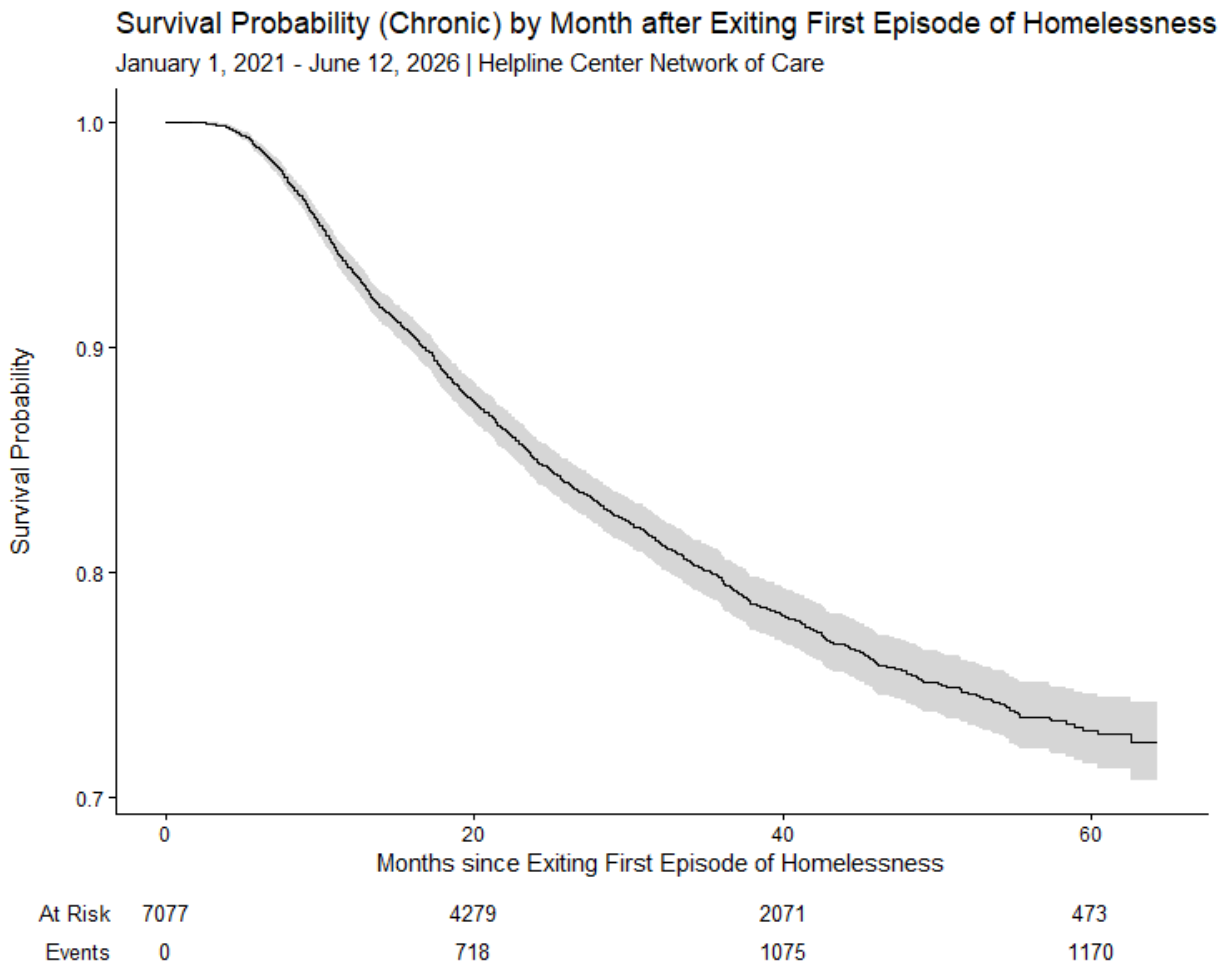


Figure 7. Survival Probability (Chronic) by Month after First Episode of Homelessness

Client Characteristics Associated with Returns to Homelessness and Chronic Homelessness

This section explores bivariate associations between client characteristics and returns to homelessness or chronic homelessness after a first episode of homelessness. The statistical test used in this section is the Cox proportional hazards model, which compares the risk of an event across covariates or risk factors. Hazard ratios have a lower limit of zero and no upper limit. A hazard ratio of 1.00 indicates equal risk with a reference group; a value lower than 1 represents a decreased risk, while a value higher than 1 represents an increased risk. For example, a hazard ratio of 0.70 indicates a 30% reduction in the instantaneous risk at any given time, while a hazard ratio of 1.50 means a 50% increase in risk at a given time.

Gender

Compared to male clients (the reference group), female clients have a lower risk of returning to homelessness after a first episode. At any given point in time, female clients have a 29% lower risk of returning to homelessness compared to male clients.

There is no statistically significant difference in risk between male clients and trans or gender non-conforming clients or between male clients and those whose gender is unknown (which may be due in part to the small sample size for both of these groups).

Table 5. Gender Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), n = 7,012

Gender	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
Male	*1.00*	—	—
Female	0.71	(0.65, 0.77)	<0.001
Trans or Gender Non-conforming	0.73	(0.41, 1.29)	0.30
Unknown	1.68	(0.84, 3.36)	0.14

The same association with gender was evident when considering the risk of chronic homelessness: compared to male clients, female clients have a 25% lower risk of experiencing three or more subsequent episodes of homelessness after their first.

Table 6. Gender Hazard Ratio (Chronic Homelessness), n = 7,073

Gender	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
Male	*1.00*	—	—
Female	0.75	(0.65, 0.86)	<0.001
Trans or Gender Non-conforming	1.29	(0.61, 2.72)	0.50
Unknown	0.00	(0.00, Inf)	>0.90

Age

Compared to people aged 25 to 44 years, those who are younger are less likely to return to homelessness, but those who are 45 to 64 are *more* likely. Clients who are under 18 have an 81% lower risk, and those aged 18 to 24 have a 30% lower risk compared to the reference group. Clients who are aged 45 to 64 have an 18% higher risk.

No statistically significant difference was observed between people aged 25 to 44 and those aged 65 or older (which may be due in part to the small number of people aged 65 or older in the study).

Table 7. Age Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), n = 6,993

Age	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
25 to 44	*1.00*	—	—
Under 18	0.19	(0.12, 0.29)	<0.001
18 to 24	0.70	(0.58, 0.84)	<0.001
45 to 64	1.18	(1.10, 1.28)	<0.001
65+	1.00	(0.86, 1.17)	>0.90

When it comes to chronic homelessness, the same patterns are evident with one exception: there is no statistically significant difference observed between those aged 25 to 44 and clients under 18 years old (likely due in part to small sample size). Clients aged 18 to 24 have a 30% lower risk compared to the reference group; those aged 45 to 64 have a 27% higher risk.

Table 8. Age Hazard Ration (Chronic Homelessness), n = 7,054

Age	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
25 to 44	*1.00*	—	—
Under 18	0.00	(0.00, Inf)	>0.9
18 to 24	0.70	(0.50, 0.98)	0.040
45 to 64	1.27	(1.13, 1.43)	<0.001
65+	0.89	(0.68, 1.16)	0.4

Race

Compared to clients who are white, those who are Black or Native American have an increased risk of returning to homelessness (13% and 30% higher risk, respectively). No statistically significant difference was observed between the reference group (white clients) and other groups.

Table 9. Race Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), n = 6,997

Race	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
White or Caucasian	*1.00*	—	—
Asian	1.16	(0.78, 1.72)	0.50
Black or African American	1.13	(1.01, 1.27)	0.030
Hispanic or Latino	0.81	(0.63, 1.03)	0.089
Middle Eastern or North African	—	—	—
Native American or Alaska Native	1.30	(1.19, 1.41)	<0.001
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.74	(0.47, 1.17)	0.20
Multiracial	1.14	(0.99, 1.31)	0.061
Other	1.07	(0.62, 1.86)	0.80
Did Not Ask	0.86	(0.64, 1.15)	0.30
Declined	0.66	(0.40, 1.10)	0.11

Patterns are similar for chronic homelessness: at a given moment in time, Black and Native American clients have an increased risk (compared to white clients) of experiencing a fourth episode of homelessness: Black clients have a 39% higher risk, and Native American clients have a 66% higher risk. Additionally, multiracial clients also have a 52% higher risk of meeting the chronic homelessness threshold compared to the reference group.

No statistically significant difference was observed between the reference group (white clients) and other groups.

Table 10. Race Hazard Ratio (Chronic Homelessness), n = 7,058

Race	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
White or Caucasian	*1.00*	—	—
Asian	1.20	(0.62, 2.32)	0.60
Black or African American	1.39	(1.16, 1.66)	<0.001
Hispanic or Latino	0.80	(0.52, 1.25)	0.30
Middle Eastern or North African	—	—	—
Native American or Alaska Native	1.66	(1.44, 1.90)	<0.001
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.71	(0.32, 1.60)	0.40
Multiracial	1.52	(1.22, 1.90)	<0.001
Other	0.21	(0.03, 1.48)	0.12
Did Not Ask	0.60	(0.34, 1.06)	0.080
Declined	0.25	(0.06, 1.02)	0.053

Income

The association between income and returns to homelessness is not entirely clear. This may be due to the small sample size across different income bands. It may also be due to the way in which income information is recorded for clients: the client-level data point is not timestamped, so it may have been recorded at the beginning of a client's first experience of homelessness or at the end of their most recent service interaction.

When considering returns to homelessness, only the income band of $3,000 to $3,499 shows a statistically significant difference in hazard from clients with zero or negative income: clients with incomes in this range had a 43% lower risk of returning to homelessness compared to the reference group.

Table 11. Income Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), n = 1,676

Income	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
Zero or negative income	*1.00*	—	—
$1 to $499	0.94	(0.67, 1.31)	0.70
$500 to $999	1.15	(0.96, 1.37)	0.14
$1,000 to $1,499	1.12	(0.92, 1.38)	0.30
$1,500 to $1,999	0.90	(0.70, 1.15)	0.40
$2,000 to $2,499	0.76	(0.58, 1.00)	0.052
$2,500 to $2,999	0.86	(0.60, 1.22)	0.40
$3,000 to $3,499	0.57	(0.35, 0.95)	0.030
$3,500 to $3,999	1.87	(0.93, 3.77)	0.081
$4,000 or more	0.96	(0.49, 1.85)	0.90

When looking at the risk of chronic homelessness, income appears associated with a lower risk. A statistically significant difference in hazard was observed for clients with incomes of $1,500 to $3,499, as compared to the refence group (clients with zero or negative income). The reduction in risk ranged from 67% to 38% lower for these income bands.

Table 12. Income Hazard Ratio (Chronic Homelessness), n = 1,691

Income	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
Zero or negative income	*1.00*	—	—
$1 to $499	1.04	(0.65, 1.66)	0.90
$500 to $999	1.08	(0.83, 1.41)	0.60
$1,000 to $1,499	0.98	(0.73, 1.33)	>0.90
$1,500 to $1,999	0.62	(0.41, 0.94)	0.024
$2,000 to $2,499	0.60	(0.39, 0.94)	0.025
$2,500 to $2,999	0.47	(0.24, 0.92)	0.027
$3,000 to $3,499	0.33	(0.12, 0.90)	0.030
$3,500 to $3,999	0.66	(0.16, 2.66)	0.60
$4,000 or more	1.01	(0.38, 2.74)	>0.90

Education

Compared to people with a high school diploma or GED, those with less than a high school education are *less* likely to return to homelessness, as are those with a college degree (and those with unknown education levels); other associations are not statistically significant. Clients with less than a high school education had an 11% lower risk of returning to homelessness, while those with a college degree had a 25% lower risk.

Table 13. Education Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), n = 6,770

Education	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
High School Diploma / GED	*1.00*	—	—
Less than High School	0.89	(0.81, 0.98)	0.013
Some College	0.93	(0.84, 1.04)	0.20
Technical School Certification	1.11	(0.90, 1.38)	0.30
College Degree	0.75	(0.64, 0.89)	<0.001
Graduate Degree	1.31	(0.93, 1.84)	0.12
Unknown	0.73	(0.59, 0.90)	0.003

For chronic homelessness, a college degree appears protective: clients with a college degree have a 34% lower risk of experiencing chronic homelessness (four or more episodes of homelessness) as compared to the reference group (clients with a high school diploma or GED). An "Unknown" education level was also associated with lower risk of chronic homelessness. Other education levels do not show a statistically significant difference.

Table 14. Education Hazard Ratio (Chronic Homelessness), n = 6,831

Education	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
High School Diploma / GED	*1.00*	—	—
Less than High School	1.02	(0.88, 1.17)	0.80
Some College	0.94	(0.79, 1.11)	0.50
Technical School Certification	1.17	(0.84, 1.62)	0.40
College Degree	0.66	(0.49, 0.88)	0.005
Graduate Degree	0.98	(0.52, 1.82)	>0.9
Unknown	0.65	(0.46, 0.94)	0.022

Employment

Compared to people who are employed, those who receive SSDI or whose only known employment is temporary or day labor are at higher risk of returning to homelessness (34% and 69% higher risk, respectively). At any given point in time, students have a 71% lower risk of returning to homelessness than the reference group, suggesting that homelessness is often a temporary and one-time circumstance for students. No significant difference in risk was observed for people who are unemployed or retired, compared to the reference group.

Like income, employment status is a client-level data point without a time stamp. It may be recorded early in a client's interaction with the Network of Care or later, so it is difficult to draw conclusions from the data about causal order (i.e., whether the instability of homelessness affects employment or whether employment is a means to exit homelessness toward stability).

Table 15. Employment Status Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), n = 4,754

Employment Status	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
Employed	*1.00*	—	—
Unemployed	1.10	(1.00, 1.22)	0.055
SSDI	1.34	(1.15, 1.56)	<0.001
Retired	1.05	(0.73, 1.49)	0.80
Temporary or Day Labor	1.69	(1.39, 2.05)	<0.001
Student	0.29	(0.18, 0.45)	<0.001

Patterns are similar when looking at the risk of chronic homelessness, with one notable difference: clients who are unemployed have a 32% higher risk of chronic homelessness, compared to the reference group.

Table 16. Employment Status Hazard Ratio (Chronic Homelessness), n = 4,815

Employment Status	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
Employed	*1.00*	—	—
Unemployed	1.32	(1.13, 1.53)	<0.001
SSDI	1.42	(1.14, 1.78)	0.002
Retired	1.09	(0.59, 1.99)	0.80
Temporary or Day Labor	1.87	(1.43, 2.44)	<0.001
Student	0.13	(0.03, 0.52)	0.004

Disabling Condition

The presence or absence of a disabling conditions was tested for association with returns to homelessness or chronic homelessness, but no statistically significant association was found.

Insurance Status

Insurance status is analyzed two ways: The first table below tests for an association with binary insurance status (i.e., insured or uninsured). The second table considers various types of insurance in detail.

Looking simply at whether a client is insured or not, clients who are insured have an 11% lower risk of returning to homelessness.

Considering more detail, the following types of insurance are associated with reduced risk of returning to homelessness: employer provided, Healthcare.gov, Medicare, private pay, and Veterans Health Administration. Insurance from Healthcare.gov may signal that a client has worked with a case manager to gain access to insurance, and that case manager may be a path to resolve homelessness as well. Veterans Health Administration insurance may likewise signal work with a case manager and/or access to Veteran-specific case management and housing programs. Some types of insurance may have no statistically significant association with returns to homelessness due to small sample size.

Like income and employment, insurance is a client-level data point that is not time stamped and may have been input early or later in a particular client's engagement with Network of Care agencies.

Table 17. Insurance Status Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), n = 5,707

Insurance Status	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
Not insured	*1.00*	—	—
Insured	0.89	(0.81, 0.98)	0.016
Unknown	0.51	(0.45, 0.57)	<0.001

Table 18. Detailed Insurance Status Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), n = 5,707

Insurance Status	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
No Health Insurance	*1.00*	—	—
Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)	0.34	(0.05, 2.39)	0.30
Employer Provided	0.54	(0.36, 0.82)	0.004
Healthcare.gov	0.33	(0.12, 0.89)	0.028
Indian Health Service (HIS)	0.80	(0.61, 1.06)	0.12
Medicaid	0.99	(0.90, 1.10)	0.90
Medicare & Medicaid	1.13	(0.89, 1.43)	0.30
Medicare	0.77	(0.63, 0.94)	0.010
Private Pay Insurance	0.51	(0.38, 0.69)	<0.001
TRICARE (Military Health System)	0.46	(0.06, 3.26)	0.40
Unknown	0.51	(0.45, 0.57)	<0.001
Veterans Health Administration (VHA)	0.46	(0.28, 0.74)	0.001

The following two tables show the results of tests for association between insurance status (and detailed insurance type) and the risk of chronic homelessness. Here too, insured clients have a reduced risk of chronic homelessness (15% lower risk). Results are also similar for detailed insurance type. The following types are associated with reduced risk of chronic homelessness: employer provided, Medicare, private pay, and Veterans Health Administration.

Table 19. Insurance Status Hazard Ratio (Chronic Homelessness), n = 5,768

Insurance Status	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
Not insured	*1.00*	—	—
Insured	0.85	0.74, 0.98	0.027
Unknown	0.22	0.18, 0.27	<0.001

Table 20. Detailed Insurance Status Hazard Ratio (Chronic Homelessness), n = 5,768

Insurance Status	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
No Health Insurance	*1.00*	—	—
Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)	1.29	0.18, 9.19	0.80
Employer Provided	0.50	0.27, 0.94	0.032
Healthcare.gov	0.24	0.03, 1.68	0.15
Indian Health Service (HIS)	0.67	0.44, 1.04	0.072
Medicaid	0.99	0.85, 1.15	>0.90
Medicare & Medicaid	0.95	0.66, 1.37	0.80
Medicare	0.70	0.52, 0.94	0.018
Private Pay Insurance	0.41	0.25, 0.68	<0.001
TRICARE (Military Health System)	1.80	0.25, 12.8	0.60
Unknown	0.22	0.17, 0.27	<0.001
Veterans Health Administration (VHA)	0.29	0.12, 0.71	0.007

For both returns to homelessness generally and chronic homelessness, an insurance status of "Unknown" is associated with reduced risk. This may reflect data collection practices: clients who interact only briefly with the Network of Care (i.e., a single one-night shelter stay) may not have their insurance status recorded, for example.

Military Status

Military status was tested for association with risk of returns to homelessness or chronic homelessness, but neither association was statistically significant.

Marital Status

Compared to those who are single, people who are married or separated are *less* likely to return to homelessness (23% lower risk). No significant difference was observed for other marital statuses.

Only the married effect is robust to chronic homelessness: other marital statuses were not significantly associated with the risk of chronic homelessness.

Table 21. Marital Status Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), n = 6,290

Marital Status	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
Single	*1.00*	—	—
Married	0.77	(0.64, 0.91)	0.003
Separated	0.77	(0.63, 0.95)	0.014
Divorced	1.02	(0.91, 1.15)	0.70
Widowed	1.12	(0.87, 1.43)	0.40
Unknown	0.75	(0.55, 1.02)	0.063

Table 22. Marital Status Hazard Ratio (Chronic Homelessness), n = 6,347

Marital Status	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
Single	*1.00*	—	—
Married	0.74	(0.55, 0.99)	0.040
Separated	0.89	(0.66, 1.22)	0.50
Divorced	0.98	(0.81, 1.19)	0.80
Widowed	1.35	(0.95, 1.92)	0.094
Unknown	0.55	(0.32, 0.95)	0.032

Households with Children

Households with children present have a 40% lower risk of returning to homelessness, compared to households with no children present. A similar relationship was observed with the risk of chronic homelessness.

Table 23. Households with Children Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), n = 1,925

Household with Children?	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
False (no children)	*1.00*	—	—
True (children present)	0.60	(0.53, 0.68)	<0.001

Table 24. Households with Children Hazard Ratio (Chronic Homelessness), n = 1,935

Household with Children?	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
False (no children)	*1.00*	—	—
True (children present)	0.51	(0.42, 0.62)	<0.001

Single Parents

Single parents have a 26% lower risk of returning to homelessness compared with people who are not single parents.

Table 25. Single Parents Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), n = 2,120

Single Parent?	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
False (not a single parent)	*1.00*	—	—
True (single parent)	0.74	(0.66, 0.84)	<0.001

A similar relationship is evident when considering the risk of chronic homelessness.

Table 26. Single Parents Hazard Ratio (Chronic Homelessness), n = 2,130

Single Parent?	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
False (not a single parent)	*1.00*	—	—
True (single parent)	0.65	(0.54, 0.78)	<0.001

Shelter Stay Characteristics Associated with Returns to Homelessness and Chronic Homelessness

In addition to client characteristics, aspects of a person's first episode of homelessness and encounter with shelter providers may be predictive of the risk of returning to homelessness. This section tests for an association between the duration of a client's first episode of homelessness and their subsequent risk of returning to homelessness or chronic homelessness.

The duration of someone's first episode of homelessness is positively associated with the risk of returning to homelessness. Each additional month in duration of a first episode of homelessness is associated with a 5% increase in risk of return to homelessness.

Table 27. Duration of First Episode Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), n = 7,016

	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
Duration of First Episode	1.05	(1.04, 1.06)	<0.001

Longer first episodes of homelessness are also associated with an increased risk of chronic homelessness. An additional month of first episode duration is associated with a 7% increase in risk of chronic homelessness.

Table 28. Duration of First Episode Hazard Ratio (Chronic Homelessness), n = 7,077

	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
Duration of First Episode	1.07	(1.05, 1.08)	<0.001

Successful Exits (Exit to Permanent Housing)

Past research has shown that, in terms of housing stability, permanent housing destinations promote long-term housing stability for people experiencing homelessness: people who resolve episodes of homelessness by entering permanent housing are more likely to remain housed and avoid a return to homelessness.[4] This section identifies clients in the Network of Care who had a

[4] See, for example, Aubry T, Bloch G, Brcic V, Saad A, Magwood O, Abdalla T, Alkhateeb Q, Xie E, Mathew C, Hannigan T, Costello C, Thavorn K, Stergiopoulos V, Tugwell P, Pottie K. Effectiveness of permanent supportive housing and income assistance interventions for homeless individuals in high-income countries: a systematic review. Lancet Public Health. 2020 Jun;5(6):e342-e360. doi: 10.1016/S2468-2667(20)30055-4. PMID: 32504587.

"successful exit"—that is, an exit to a permanent housing destination. Then it tests whether successful exits are associated with a lower risk of returning to homelessness.

Identifying Successful Exits

In the Network of Care, exit destinations are not consistently tracked or recorded. In order to identify clients with a successful exit to permanent housing, episodes of homelessness were flagged as successful exits if the last shelter or transitional housing service received during the episode of homelessness met any of the following criteria:

- When Union Gospel Mission is the last service provider for an episode of homelessness, the episode is flagged as a successful exit if the checkout destination is "Owned by client with no ongoing subsidy," "Owned by client with ongoing subsidy," "Permanent housing for formerly homeless persons (ie: SHP,S+C,SRO)," "Rental by client in a public housing unit," "Rental by client with HCV voucher," "Rental by client with no ongoing subsidy," "Rental by client with other ongoing subsidy," "Rental by client with RRH or equivalent subsidy," or "Rental by client, VASH subsidy," or if the checkout reason is "Completed program" or "Left for housing before completing program." However, other shelter and transitional housing providers do not report these fields. And, as the table below shows, Union Gospel Mission is the last service provider for only about 25% of clients' first episode of homelessness.
- The client has a rental deposit service within 31 days of the end date of an episode of homelessness. Rental deposit services are those where the need associated with the service is "Rental Deposit Assistance - BH-3800.7250." Deposit assistance is understood as an indicator that a client is moving into permanent hosing that they are renting. Rental deposit services are included regardless of the service's outcome, since even unsuccessful or incomplete service outcomes could indicate a client was able to move into permanent housing, either without deposit assistance or with assistance from another source.
- The client has a service from the Furniture Mission within 31 days of the end date of an episode of homelessness. Furniture Mission service is understood as an indicator that a client has permanent housing they are seeking to furnish. As with rental deposit assistance, Furniture Mission services are included regardless of the service outcome.

Table 29. Last Provider Agency for First Episodes of Homelessness

Agency	First Episodes of Homelessness where Agency is Last Provider	
Bishop Dudley Hospitality House	4,539	65%
Union Gospel Mission	1,719	25%
St Francis House	556	8%
Minnehaha County Human Services	112	2%
Codington County Community Services	38	1%
NA	17	0%
The Community Outreach	15	0%
NOT ACTIVE - Watertown Cares	8	0%
Brothers & Sisters Behind Bars	5	0%
Central Church	3	0%
Center of Hope	1	0%
Helpline Center - Support Programs	1	0%
NOT ACTIVE - Watertown Salvation Army	1	0%
Ransom Church	1	0%

Using these criteria, the percentage of clients whose first episode of homelessness ended with a successful exit to permanent housing was 9%. Specifically, of 7,016 cases in the general return to homelessness data set, 602 (9%) recorded a successful exit. Of 7,077 cases in the chronic homelessness data set, 607 (9%) recorded a successful exit.

Successful Exits and Returns to Homelessness

Next, a Cox proportional hazards model was used to test for an association between clients' successful exit to permanent housing and subsequent returns to homelessness or chronic homelessness (using the same definitions of each as in the previous section).

A successful exit to permanent housing was associated with a lower risk of returning to homelessness *and* a lower risk of becoming chronically homelessness (i.e., having three or more additional episodes of homelessness). That is, at a given point in time, clients who exited to permanent housing had a 38% lower risk of returning to homelessness. They had a 49% lower risk of experiencing chronic homelessness.

Table 30. Successful Exits to Permanent Housing Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), n = 7,016

Exit to Permanent Housing?	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
False	*1.00*	—	—
True (successful exit)	0.62	(0.53, 0.73)	<0.001

Table 31. Successful Exits to Permanent Housing Hazard Ratio (Chronic Homelessness), n = 7,077

Exit to Permanent Housing?	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
False	*1.00*	—	—
True (successful exit)	0.51	(0.36, 0.71)	<0.001

Further, even after controlling for client characteristics associated with the risk of returning to homelessness, a successful exit to permanent housing was still associated with reduced risk. The following table shows the results of a Cox proportional hazards regression model, testing the effect of a successful exit to permanent housing and controlling for client gender, age, income, race, employment, presence of children, single parenthood, education, marital status, and insurance status. At a given point in time, a successful exit to permanent housing is associated with a 54% lower risk of returning to homelessness.

Table 32. Successful Exit Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), Controlling for Client Characteristics, n = 488

Characteristic	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
Successful exit			
False	—	—	
True	0.48	(0.33, 0.69)	<0.001
Gender			
Male	—	—	
Female	0.81	(0.62, 1.06)	0.13
Trans or Gender Non-conforming	1.59	(0.21, 12.2)	0.70
Unknown	-	-	-
Age			
Under 18	—	—	
18 to 24	3.75	(0.35, 40.2)	0.30
25 to 44	1.96	(0.23, 16.6)	0.50
45 to 64	2.92	(0.34, 24.9)	0.30
65+	1.52	(0.17, 13.7)	0.70
Income			
Zero or less	—	—	
$1 to $499	0.95	(0.53, 1.72)	0.90
$500 to $999	1.20	(0.81, 1.79)	0.40
$1,000 to $1,499	1.32	(0.88, 1.99)	0.20
$1,500 to $1,999	0.71	(0.44, 1.15)	0.20
$2,000 to $2,499	0.72	(0.43, 1.21)	0.20

Characteristic	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
$2,500 to $2,999	0.90	(0.45, 1.79)	0.80
$3,000 to $3,499	0.89	(0.29, 2.68)	0.80
$3,500 to $3,999	0.80	(0.24, 2.73)	0.70
$4,000 or more	3.47	(0.40, 30.1)	0.30
Race			
Asian	—	—	
Black or African American	0.30	(0.03, 2.62)	0.30
Hispanic or Latino	0.24	(0.02, 3.30)	0.30
Middle Eastern or North African	-	-	-
Native American or Alaska Native	0.51	(0.06, 4.47)	0.50
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.63	(0.03, 12.0)	0.80
White or Caucasian	0.52	(0.06, 4.45)	0.50
Multiracial	0.73	(0.08, 6.52)	0.80
Other	0.71	(0.03, 15.1)	0.80
Did Not Ask	-	-	-
Declined	-	-	-
Employment			
Employed	—	—	
Unemployed	1.59	(1.13, 2.25)	0.008
SSDI	1.42	(0.93, 2.16)	0.11
Retired	1.58	(0.64, 3.90)	0.30
Temporary or Day Labor	1.61	(0.83, 3.12)	0.20
Student	0.70	(0.16, 3.01)	0.60
Children present			
False	—	—	
True	0.91	(0.64, 1.30)	0.60
Single parent			
False	—	—	
True	0.82	(0.59, 1.15)	0.30
Education			
College Degree	—	—	
Graduate Degree	1.83	(0.60, 5.60)	0.30
High School Diploma / GED	1.60	(0.77, 3.35)	0.20
Less Than High School	1.65	(0.76, 3.60)	0.20
Some College	1.54	(0.70, 3.36)	0.30
Technical School Certification	2.72	(1.04, 7.09)	0.041
Unknown	5.01	(1.74, 14.4)	0.003
Marital status			
Divorced	—	—	
Married	0.80	(0.45, 1.40)	0.40
Separated	0.74	(0.41, 1.32)	0.30
Single	0.73	(0.51, 1.05)	0.088
Unknown	0.92	(0.21, 3.98)	>0.90
Widowed	0.91	(0.50, 1.65)	0.80
Insurance			
Employer Provided	—	—	

Characteristic	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
Healthcare.gov	5.62	(0.48, 65.3)	0.20
Indian Health Service (IHS)	3.02	(0.55, 16.7)	0.20
Medicaid	1.75	(0.50, 6.08)	0.40
Medicare & Medicaid	2.33	(0.63, 8.60)	0.20
Medicare	2.13	(0.56, 8.05)	0.30
No Health Insurance	2.26	(0.66, 7.74)	0.20
Private Pay Insurance	2.17	(0.45, 10.6)	0.30
TRICARE (Military Health System)	30.0	(1.55, 578)	0.024
Unknown	2.82	(0.67, 11.8)	0.20
Veterans Health Administration (VHA)	1.43	(0.27, 7.56)	0.70

The same was true when looking at the risk of chronic homelessness: after controlling for client characteristics, successful exit to permanent housing was associated with a 71% lower risk of becoming chronically homeless (i.e., of having three or more additional episodes of homelessness).

Table 33. Successful Exit Hazard Ratio (Chronic Homelessness), Controlling for Client Characteristics, n = 490

Characteristic	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
Successful exit			
False	—	—	
True	0.29	(0.14, 0.61)	0.001
Gender			
Male	—	—	
Female	0.99	(0.67, 1.47)	>0.90
Trans or Gender Non-conforming	1.94	(0.23, 16.1)	0.50
Unknown			
Age			
Under 18	—	—	
18 to 24	9,133,452	(0.00, Inf)	>0.90
25 to 44	3,708,855	(0.00, Inf)	>0.90
45 to 64	6,354,942	(0.00, Inf)	>0.90
65+	6,195,689	(0.00, Inf)	>0.90
Income			
Zero or less	—	—	
$1 to $499	0.74	(0.34, 1.63)	0.50
$500 to $999	1.08	(0.60, 1.93)	0.80
$1,000 to $1,499	0.76	(0.43, 1.35)	0.40
$1,500 to $1,999	0.53	(0.26, 1.09)	0.085
$2,000 to $2,499	0.35	(0.15, 0.84)	0.019
$2,500 to $2,999	0.52	(0.17, 1.59)	0.20
$3,000 to $3,499	0.65	(0.12, 3.46)	0.60
$3,500 to $3,999	0.00	(0.00, Inf)	>0.90
$4,000 or more	0.00	(0.00, Inf)	>0.90

Characteristic	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
Race			
Asian	—	—	
Black or African American	1,274,840	(0.00, Inf)	>0.90
Hispanic or Latino	3,729,760	(0.00, Inf)	>0.90
Middle Eastern or North African	-	-	-
Native American or Alaska Native	2,750,986	(0.00, Inf)	>0.90
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	5,527,489	(0.00, Inf)	>0.90
White or Caucasian	2,049,858	(0.00, Inf)	>0.90
Multiracial	4,264,472	(0.00, Inf)	>0.90
Other	0.04	(0.00, Inf)	>0.90
Did Not Ask	-	-	-
Declined	-	-	-
Employment			
Employed	—	—	
Unemployed	1.63	(1.00, 2.67)	0.050
SSDI	1.38	(0.75, 2.55)	0.30
Retired	0.27	(0.03, 2.20)	0.20
Temporary or Day Labor	1.49	(0.62, 3.59)	0.40
Student	0.00	(0.00, Inf)	>0.90
Children present			
False	—	—	
True	0.84	(0.50, 1.43)	0.50
Single parent			
false	—	—	
true	0.67	(0.40, 1.13)	0.14
Education			
College Degree	—	—	
Graduate Degree	4.43	(0.37, 53.2)	0.20
High School Diploma / GED	5.80	(0.78, 43.4)	0.087
Less Than High School	7.76	(1.02, 58.8)	0.047
Some College	7.88	(1.02, 61.0)	0.048
Technical School Certification	4.59	(0.48, 44.2)	0.20
Unknown	11.0	(0.94, 128)	0.056
Marital status			
Divorced	—	—	
Married	1.43	(0.61, 3.36)	0.40
Separated	1.05	(0.48, 2.32)	>0.90
Single	0.75	(0.45, 1.24)	0.30
Unknown	0.69	(0.08, 5.79)	0.70
Widowed	0.98	(0.45, 2.16)	>0.90
Insurance			
Employer Provided	—	—	
Healthcare.gov	0.00	(0.00, Inf)	>0.90
Indian Health Service (IHS)	0.71	(0.05, 9.82)	0.80
Medicaid	0.76	(0.09, 6.32)	0.80
Medicare & Medicaid	0.56	(0.06, 5.19)	0.60

Characteristic	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
Medicare	1.21	(0.13, 10.8)	0.90
No Health Insurance	1.09	(0.13, 8.86)	>0.90
Private Pay Insurance	1.34	(0.12, 15.2)	0.80
TRICARE (Military Health System)	20.1	(0.37, 1,077)	0.140
Unknown	0.68	(0.06, 7.40)	0.70
Veterans Health Administration (VHA)	0.74	(0.05, 10.4)	0.80

Rental Assistance

Because the Network of Care records a variety of services, it offers a unique window into how clients' service pathways may be associated with their living situation or experience with homelessness. One service of particular interest is rental assistance. Rental assistance services could be an indicator of housing instability and early warning of an elevated risk of homelessness, or they might be a service that helps clients remain housed and delay or avoid homelessness. This section examines rental assistance services and their association with episodes of homelessness.

Rental Assistance and Shelter Entry

Seeking rental assistance could be an early warning of housing instability or homelessness. This section looks at rental assistance services recorded within 90 days before the start of an episode of homelessness. It asks: what proportion of people who attempt to get rental assistance will enter shelter within the subsequent 90 days?

Throughout this section, rental assistance is defined to include services with either of the following associated needs. The term "rental assistance" is used to refer to both rent payment assistance and utility service payment assistance:

- Rent Payment Assistance - BH-3800.7000
- Utility Service Payment Assistance - BV-8900.9300

Services are included regardless of the outcome (whether or not the client actually received rental or utility assistance). The question is whether they *sought* rental assistance.

Of 12,546 requests for rental assistance in the study dataset, 238 (1.9%) fell within the 90-day window before an episode of homelessness.

The following table shows the total requests for rental or utility assistance and the number and percentage that preceded an episode of homelessness, broken down by year.

Table 34. Requests for Rental or Utility Assistance that Preceded an Episode of Homelessness by Year

Year	Requests for Rental or Utility Assistance	Requests that Preceded an Episode of Homelessness	(%)
2021	840	19	2.26%
2022	975	18	1.85%
2023	1,277	17	1.33%
2024	2,309	36	1.56%
2025	5,002	108	2.16%
2026 (through June)	2,143	40	1.87%

Rental Assistance Outcomes and Shelter Entry

Logically, clients who actually receive rental or utility assistance may be less likely to experience homelessness than those who seek out assistance but do not receive it. This section asks: of people who attempt to get rental or utility assistance, are those who are deemed ineligible or denied more likely than those who are successful to enter shelter within the subsequent 90 days?

Indeed, requests with a "Completed" outcome preceded homelessness 1.14% of the time, compared to 2.32% among all other outcomes, a statistically significant difference.[5] Though the percentages are low, this is a potentially meaningful difference: the rate of experiencing homelessness among clients with completed rental assistance requests is half that of those whose service was not completed.

The following table shows the total requests for rental or utility assistance and the number and percentage that preceded an episode of homelessness, broken down by the service outcome. For instance, 5.16% of "No Show" requests preceded an episode of homelessness, as did 1.14% of "Completed" requests. Note that a single client could have multiple requests for assistance with different outcomes; the table shows number of requests, not number of clients.

[5] An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the percentage of clients who began an episode of homelessness within 90 days after a rental or deposit assistance service. There was a significant difference in percentages for clients whose service had a "Completed" outcome (M = 1.14%) versus those who did not (M = 2.32%), $t(11{,}864) = 5.12$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.18\%$).

Table 35. Requests for Rental or Utility Assistance that Preceded an Episode of Homelessness by Outcome

Outcome	Requests for Rental or Utility Assistance	Requests that Preceded an Episode of Homelessness	(%)
Ineligible - Does Not Fit Program Criteria	4,821	116	2.41%
Completed	4,482	51	1.14%
Client Abandoned - Did Not Follow Through	1,596	23	1.44%
Pending	663	11	1.66%
No Show	465	24	5.16%
Ineligible - Already Served	214	3	1.40%
Client Cancelled	211	7	3.32%
Enrolled	31	2	6.45%
Rescheduled	22	1	4.55%
Waitlisted	15	0	0%
Referral Accepted	9	0	0%
Client Cannot Afford Service	8	0	0%
Program Out of Funds	3	0	0%
Unable to Reach Client	3	0	0%
Not Accepting New Applicants	2	0	0%
Referred	1	0	0%

The same question could be asked in reverse: instead of asking how many rental assistance requests preceded episodes of homelessness, one could ask how many episodes of homelessness followed a request for rental or utility assistance. In other words, what proportion of people who experienced homelessness had attempted to get rental assistance within the 90 days before the start of an episode of homelessness?

In the study dataset, of all episodes of homelessness, 165 out of 15,805 (1.0%) were preceded by a request for rental assistance within the prior 90 days before the episode began. Of those 165 requests, only 51 had an outcome of “Completed.”

The following table shows the number and percentage of episodes of homelessness that were preceded by (a) a request for rental assistance and (b) a completed request. Consistently, whether looking at clients’ first episode of homelessness or subsequent episodes, about 1% of clients tried to get rental assistance in the 90 days before entering shelter or transitional housing.

Table 36. Episodes of Homelessness Preceded by a Rental or Utility Assistance Service

Episode of Homelessness	Episodes (Total)	Episodes that Followed a Request for Rental or Utility Assistance (%)		Episodes that Followed a *Completed* Request for Rental or Utility Assistance (%)	
1st	7,187	68	0.946%	27	0.376%
2nd	3,066	34	1.11%	12	0.391%
3rd	1,800	25	1.39%	4	0.222%
4th	1,172	11	0.939%	3	0.256%
5th or more	2,580	27	1.05%	5	0.194%

The following table presents the same data broken down by year, again showing the number and percentage of episodes of homelessness that were preceded by (a) a request for rental assistance and (b) a completed request. There appears to be a slight uptick in the percentage of clients seeking rental assistance before an episode of homelessness in recent years, though given the small numbers, it is difficult to draw strong conclusions.

Table 37. Episodes of Homelessness Preceded by a Rental or Utility Assistance Service by Year

Year Episode of Homelessness Started	Episodes of Homelessness	Episodes that Followed a Request for Rental or Utility Assistance (%)		Episodes that Followed a *Completed* Request for Rental or Utility Assistance (%)	
2021	2,732	14	0.512%	10	0.366%
2022	2,379	19	0.799%	8	0.336%
2023	2,470	14	0.567%	8	0.324%
2024	3,372	26	0.771%	5	0.148%
2025	3,403	62	1.82%	14	0.411%
2026	1,449	30	2.07%	6	0.414%

Rental Assistance and Risk of Returns to Homelessness

Logically, rental assistance might help some clients avoid returning to homelessness. To test this hypothesis, this section asks whether rental assistance received after a first episode of homelessness (but before a second) is associated with the risk of returning to homelessness, either as a protective factor or a risk factor.

The returns to homelessness dataset described in previous sections was examined to see whether each client had a service history of a request for rental or utility assistance (regardless of outcome) within 90 days *after the end* of their first episode of homelessness or within 90 days *before the start* of their second (if they had a second). A Cox proportional hazards model was used to test for an association between a service request and risk of return to homelessness.

Of 7,016 clients in the returns to homelessness dataset, only 69 (0.98%) had a rental or utility assistance service during the defined time window between episodes of homelessness. There was no statistically significant association between rental or utility assistance and returns to

homelessness. However, the small number of service records may limit the test's power to detect an effect.

Service Pathways

The section expands on the rental assistance analysis in the previous section to look at service history more generally.

Pathways into Homelessness

Service records might offer early warning of housing instability. This section looks at services observed before the onset of an episode of homelessness.

Of 7,016 clients with a first episode of homelessness, only a small subset (485, or 6.9%) had a service recorded in the Network of Care in the 90 days prior (excluding the day homelessness started). In other words, about 93% of people experiencing their first episode of homelessness had not presented to any Network of Care agency in the 90 days leading up to that event.

Of those clients who did seek services leading up to their first episode of homelessness, most had just one (39.6%) or two (27%) services during that 90-day period. The most services recorded per client was 18, and 14.2% of clients had five or more services.

The following table shows the top 20 most frequently recorded services among clients in the 90 days prior to the beginning of a first episode of homelessness. Note that an individual client may have multiple services, so the total of services sums to more than the number of clients who had recorded services.

The table also shows the number of services across the entire study dataset that were recorded by clients who did not have any episodes of homelessness ("housed clients"). For each group, the table shows the percentage of services with a "Completed" outcome. For example, of the 34 Furniture services dated 90 days prior to a first episode of homelessness, 44% were completed, compared to 72% of Furniture services to housed clients.

Table 38. Services Prior to First Episode of Homelessness versus Services among Housed Clients, with Percent Completed

	Total Services 90 Days Prior to First Episode of Homelessness		Total Services to Housed Clients	
		Completed		Completed
	N	(%)	N	(%)
Faith Based Counseling - RD-1900	352	99.7	5,705	99.7
Day Labor - ND-3600.0400-180	127	67.7	1,010	56.0
Bicycle Repair - BM-7000.1000	121	99.2	2,486	99.9
Local Bicycle Transportation - BT-4500.4600	121	100.0	2,847	99.3
General Clothing Provision - BM-6500.1500-250	89	100.0	1,631	97.6
Case/Care Management - PH-1000	80	96.3	8,286	95.7
Rent Payment Assistance - BH-3800.7000	60	25.0	9,513	34.7
Furniture - BM-3000.2000	34	44.1	11,571	72.0
Street Outreach Programs - PH-8000	30	93.3	699	92.8
Comprehensive Information and Referral - TJ-3000.1500 * Ex-Offenders - YJ-2030	26	100.0	363	100.0
Rental Deposit Assistance - BH-3800.7250	22	9.1	1,837	37.5
ID Card Expense Assistance - DF-7020.3300	20	85.0	154	53.9
Work Clothing - BM-6500.1500-950	14	64.3	1,681	91.1
Birth Certificates - DF-7000.1200	12	83.3	76	67.1
Case/Care Management Referrals - PH-2400.1300	12	100.0	183	94.0
Personal and Grooming Supplies - BM-6500.6500-650	11	100.0	685	99.3
Employment Related Transportation - BT-4500.6500-255	10	100.0	646	84.7
First Month's Rent Assistance - BH-3800.7000-850	10	10.0	502	25.7
Mobile Health Care - LN-5000	9	100.0	241	96.7
Bus Fare - BT-8300.1000	7	100.0	348	92.5

The next table provides a statistical test to compare the types of services received by people experiencing homelessness in the 90 days prior to their first episode versus services received by housed clients in the broader Network of Care dataset.

The *Z-score* column compares each service as a proportion of all services received by clients within 90 days prior to their first episode of homelessness compared to that service as a proportion of all services received by housed clients. A positive number indicates the service was relatively more frequent among housed clients with no recorded episodes of homelessness; a negative number indicates it was more frequent among clients in the 90 days prior to their first episode of homelessness. As in the prior table, only the 20 most frequently received services in the 90 days prior to the onset of homelessness are shown.

Services can be grouped into three rough categories: those relatively more common in the 90 days prior to a first episode of homelessness ("Risk"), those relatively more common among housed clients ("Protective"), and those that are relatively neutral ("Neutral").

Association here does not mean causation: while a difference in service frequency might suggest that service has a protective effect, it could also be due to differences in underlying client characteristics or circumstances that yield different needs. For example, furniture is grouped with protective factors because it is relatively more frequent among housed clients. Logically, it is unlikely furniture causes a reduced risk of homelessness; rather, clients who are housed are more likely to need and have a place to put furniture. Similarly, street outreach programs are grouped with risk factors because these services are relatively more frequent among people who went on to experience homelessness within 90 days. Logically, the street outreach program did not cause homelessness, but rather, addressed a need found more frequently among those experiencing homelessness.[6]

Table 39. S Services Prior to First Episode of Homelessness versus Services among Housed Clients, with Comparison of Relative Proportion

	Total Services 90 Days Prior to First Episode of Homelessness	Total Services to Housed Clients	Z-score	Group
Faith Based Counseling - RD-1900	352	5,705	-26.91	Risk
Day Labor - ND-3600.0400-180	127	1,010	-25.69	Risk
Bicycle Repair - BM-7000.1000	121	2,486	-12.42	Risk
Local Bicycle Transportation - BT-4500.4600	121	2,847	-10.81	Risk
General Clothing Provision - BM-6500.1500-250	89	1,631	-11.80	Risk
Case/Care Management - PH-1000	80	8,286	5.10	Protective
Rent Payment Assistance - BH-3800.7000	60	9,513	8.23	Protective
Furniture - BM-3000.2000	34	11,571	12.30	Protective
Street Outreach Programs - PH-8000	30	699	-5.36	Risk
Comprehensive Information and Referral - TJ-3000.1500 * Ex-Offenders - YJ-2030	26	363	-7.93	Risk
Rental Deposit Assistance - BH-3800.7250	22	1,837	1.51	Neutral
ID Card Expense Assistance - DF-7020.3300	20	154	-10.32	Risk
Work Clothing - BM-6500.1500-950	14	1,681	2.62	Protective
Birth Certificates - DF-7000.1200	12	76	-8.93	Risk
Case/Care Management Referrals - PH-2400.1300	12	183	-5.02	Risk
Personal and Grooming Supplies - BM-6500.6500-650	11	685	0.09	Neutral

[6] Note that an episode of homelessness is defined based on stays in emergency shelter or transitional housing. Someone might be homeless but unsheltered prior to the beginning of a study-defined episode of homelessness. This could mean that the association of street outreach programs with the beginning of episodes of homelessness actually shows a propensity for recipients of street outreach services to move from unsheltered homelessness to sheltered homelessness.

	Total Services 90 Days Prior to First Episode of Homelessness	Total Services to Housed Clients	Z-score	Group
Employment Related Transportation - BT-4500.6500-255	10	646	0.20	Neutral
First Month's Rent Assistance - BH-3800.7000-850	10	502	-0.60	Neutral
Mobile Health Care - LN-5000	9	241	-2.48	Risk
Bus Fare - BT-8300.1000	7	348	-0.52	Neutral

Pathways out of Homelessness

Service records might offer a pathway out of homelessness and toward housing stability. This section looks at services observed after the onset of an episode of homelessness.

Among 7,016 clients, there were 30,931 services recorded during the interim period between the start date of clients' first episodes of homelessness and the start date of their second episodes (or, for those who had only one recorded episode of homelessness, before the data extraction date on June 12, 2026).

The following table shows the most common services recorded during that interim period, along with the number recorded for clients who went on to return to homelessness versus those who did not, and the percentage of services with a "Completed" outcome. Only services with 50 or more instances among this population are shown in the table.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, homeless shelter and case/care management are the most frequent services overall. Of note, clients who go on to return to homelessness received relatively more homeless shelter services but fewer case/care management services.

Table 40. Most Frequent Services after First Episode of Homelessness

Need Met	Total Services	Services for Clients Who Did NOT Return to Homelessness	Services for Clients who DID Return to Homelessness	Completed Services (%) for Clients Who Did NOT Return to Homelessness	Completed Services (%) for Clients Who DID Return to Homelessness
Homeless Shelter - BH-1800.8500	15,172	5,797	9,375	99.4	99.8
Case/Care Management - PH-1000	7,400	5,234	2,166	98.5	98.8
Faith Based Counseling - RD-1900	1,833	960	873	99.9	99.7
Furniture - BM-3000.2000	777	554	223	66.4	61.0
Bicycle Repair - BM-7000.1000	760	381	379	99.7	98.7
Local Bicycle Transportation - BT-4500.4600	637	321	316	98.4	98.4

Need Met	Total Services	Services for Clients Who Did NOT Return to Homelessness	Services for Clients who DID Return to Homelessness	Completed Services (%) for Clients Who Did NOT Return to Homelessness	Completed Services (%) for Clients Who DID Return to Homelessness
Rent Payment Assistance - BH-3800.7000	543	431	112	31.6	26.8
Day Labor - ND-3600.0400-180	508	258	250	66.3	64.4
General Clothing Provision - BM-6500.1500-250	473	283	190	96.5	97.9
Mobile Health Care - LN-5000	260	131	129	96.2	99.2
Street Outreach Programs - PH-8000	236	134	102	94.8	92.2
Rental Deposit Assistance - BH-3800.7250	229	157	72	38.2	25.0
Homeless Motel Vouchers - BH-1800.5000	205	161	44	82.6	79.5
Work Clothing - BM-6500.1500-950	146	97	49	86.6	73.5
Employment Related Transportation - BT-4500.6500-255	139	96	43	94.8	93.0
Personal and Grooming Supplies - BM-6500.6500-650	99	53	46	100.0	100.0
Comprehensive Information and Referral - TJ-3000.1500 * Ex-Offenders - YJ-2030	90	55	35	100.0	100.0
Case/Care Management Referrals - PH-2400.1300, Homeless Shelter - BH-1800.8500	89	64	25	100.0	100.0
First Month's Rent Assistance - BH-3800.7000-850	78	66	12	42.4	33.3
ID Card Expense Assistance - DF-7020.3300	78	32	46	71.9	60.9
Bus Fare - BT-8300.1000	77	57	20	94.7	80.0
Holiday Gifts/Toys - PH-2950.3200	59	43	16	72.1	62.5
Household Goods Vouchers - BM-3000.3000	56	33	23	100.0	95.7
Utility Service Payment Assistance - BV-8900.9300	54	48	6	43.8	33.3
Phone Service Expense Assistance - BV-8900.1700-850	50	40	10	100.0	90.0

To better identify those services associated with returns to homelessness (or avoiding returns), the following table shows services ranked by the difference in proportion of the services received by clients who did or did not return to homelessness. The *Z-score* column compares the proportion of a service recorded for clients who did not return to homelessness (versus the proportion for those who did return) compared to the overall proportion of clients who did not return to homelessness (57.2%). A positive number indicates the service was relatively more frequent among clients who did *not* return to homelessness; a negative number indicates it was more frequent among those who *did*. As in the prior table, only services with at least 50 instances are shown.

Services can be grouped into three rough categories: those associated with returns to homelessness ("Risk"), those associated with avoiding returns ("Protective"), and those that are relatively neutral ("Neutral"). Importantly, association in this case does not mean causation: while a difference in service frequency might suggest that service has a protective effect, it could also be due to differences in underlying client characteristics or circumstances that yield different needs.

Table 41. Services Recorded Relatively More or Less Frequently for Clients Returning to Homelessness

Need Met	Total Services	Z-Score	Group
Case/Care Management - PH-1000	7,400	23.55	Protective
Rent Payment Assistance - BH-3800.7000	543	10.45	Protective
Furniture - BM-3000.2000	777	7.95	Protective
Homeless Motel Vouchers - BH-1800.5000	205	6.18	Protective
First Month's Rent Assistance - BH-3800.7000-850	78	4.90	Protective
Utility Service Payment Assistance - BV-8900.9300	54	4.71	Protective
Rental Deposit Assistance - BH-3800.7250	229	3.48	Protective
Phone Service Expense Assistance - BV-8900.1700-850	50	3.26	Protective
Bus Fare - BT-8300.1000	77	2.99	Protective
Employment Related Transportation - BT-4500.6500-255	139	2.83	Protective
Case/Care Management Referrals - PH-2400.1300, Homeless Shelter - BH-1800.8500	89	2.81	Protective
Holiday Gifts/Toys - PH-2950.3200	59	2.44	Protective
Work Clothing - BM-6500.1500-950	146	2.26	Protective
General Clothing Provision - BM-6500.1500-250	473	1.16	Neutral
Comprehensive Information and Referral - TJ-3000.1500 * Ex-Offenders - YJ-2030	90	0.75	Neutral
Household Goods Vouchers - BM-3000.3000	56	0.26	Neutral
Street Outreach Programs - PH-8000	236	-0.13	Neutral
Personal and Grooming Supplies - BM-6500.6500-650	99	-0.73	Neutral
Mobile Health Care - LN-5000	260	-2.22	Risk
ID Card Expense Assistance - DF-7020.3300	78	-2.88	Risk
Day Labor - ND-3600.0400-180	508	-2.91	Risk
Local Bicycle Transportation - BT-4500.4600	637	-3.46	Risk
Bicycle Repair - BM-7000.1000	760	-3.93	Risk
Faith Based Counseling - RD-1900	1,833	-4.16	Risk
Homeless Shelter - BH-1800.8500	15,172	-47.23	Risk

Survival Analysis: Case Management

While the table above shows a variety of potentially protective services, this section tests only one: case/care management. This service type is both the most frequent overall of the protective service types and it also has the greatest disparity between the number of services received by clients who do or do not return to homelessness. Other frequent service types, including rental assistance and furniture, are explored in more depth in other parts of this report.

This analysis compares clients who recorded a case management service during or after their first episode of homelessness (but before their second, if applicable) to those who did not. Compared to clients without a case management service, those with a record of case management had a 14% lower risk of returning to homelessness after a first episode. That is, case management is associated with a reduced risk of returning to homelessness.

Table 42. Case Management Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), n = 7,016

Had a Case Management Service?	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
False	*1.00*	—	—
True	0.86	(0.78, 0.96)	0.005

Whereas the table above compares clients who did or did not have a case management service, the following looks at the association with the number of case management services. It asks whether clients who receive *more* case management services are more or less likely to return to homelessness.

The hazard ratio of 0.98 suggests that for each case management service a client records, the risk of returning to homelessness is reduced by 2% (all other factors being equal).

Table 43. Case Management Count Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), n = 7,016

	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
Number of case management services	0.98	(0.97, 0.99)	<0.001

Client Subgroups

This section examines how patterns of returns to homelessness and service pathways may vary for certain subgroups of interest. Those subgroups include the following:

- Families with children;
- Justice-impact clients;
- And high utilizers of Network of Care services.

Families are defined here as households with two or more people and with at least one child.

Justice-impacted clients are identified using the following criteria, which were developed on consultation with Helpline staff. Clients who met any one of the following criteria were considered justice-impacted:

- From service records data:
    - UGM prior living situation was, during any service, recorded as "Jail/Prison"
    - UGM checkout destination for any services was "Jail, prison, or juvenile detention"
    - Referring agency for any service was Parole Office, U.S. Probation, East River Legal Services, Minnehaha County States Attorneys Office, Unified Judicial System, Court Services, DUI/Drug Court, Hughes Law Office, or Lutheran Social Services - Re-Entry Services
    - Providing agency for any service was St. Francis House
    - The field "Has this relative been arrested in the past week?" used by South Dakota Urban Indian Health was ever "Yes" for any service
- From client data:
    - UGM question "Are you currently in probation or parole?" was ever "Yes"
    - UGM question "Have you ever been to JDC, jail, or prison?" was ever "Yes"

High utilizers of services are defined as clients with 15 or more services recorded (regardless of service outcome). Initially, all services were counted. However, clients with multiple shelter visits accumulate shelter visit services, conflating homelessness (the outcome or dependent variable) with service utilization (the independent variable). To better distinguish between high utilizers of services generally and clients with many shelter visits, this client subgroup was ultimately defined as clients with 15 or more services recorded *excluding* services from Bishop Dudley Hospitality House, Union Gospel Mission, or St Francis House.

Families

In total, 327 clients with at least one episode of homelessness met the definition of "family." All other clients (including those with insufficient data to conclude that they were definitively families) are treated as non-family households. Of the 327 family clients, only *five* had a prior Network of Care service recorded before their first episode of homelessness. Most first presented to the Network of Care when they entered shelter.

After experiencing a first episode of homelessness, families have a 29% lower risk of returning to homelessness, compared to non-family households.

Table 44. Families and Non-Family Households Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), n = 7,016

Family?	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
False (non-family household)	*1.00*	—	—
True (family)	0.71	(0.59, 0.86)	<0.001

The median survival time for families (where survival means avoiding a return to homelessness) is 50.4 months. In other words, among families with a first episode of homelessness, half with return to homelessness within 50.4 months (a little over four years); the other half will not.

The following table shows survival probability by month after the end of a first episode of homelessness for families. For instance, after three months, 88% of families will have *not* returned to homelessness (the other 12% will).

Table 45. Family Survival Probability by Month after Exiting First Episode of Homelessness (Return to Homelessness)

Months since Exiting First Episode of Homelessness	At Risk (N)	Returns to Shelter (N)	Survival Rate	SE	95% CI
1	302	20	0.938	0.0134	(0.913, 0.965)
2	284	11	0.904	0.0164	(0.872, 0.937)
3	273	6	0.884	0.0179	(0.850, 0.920)
6	247	17	0.829	0.0212	(0.788, 0.872)
12	208	25	0.742	0.0251	(0.695, 0.793)
18	186	4	0.727	0.0257	(0.679, 0.780)
24	137	10	0.682	0.0279	(0.629, 0.739)
36	52	10	0.604	0.0347	(0.540, 0.676)
60	5	8	0.463	0.0527	(0.371, 0.579)

Compared to non-family households, at any given point in time, families likewise have a 29% lower risk of experiencing chronic homelessness after a first episode of homelessness.

Table 46. Families and Non-Family Households Hazard Ratio (Chronic Homelessness), n = 7,077

Family?	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
False (non-family household)	*1.00*	—	—
True (family)	0.71	(0.42, 0.85)	0.004

The median survival time for families (where survival means avoiding a fourth episode of homelessness, referred to here as chronic homelessness) is undefined. This means that, within the timeframe available in the data for this study, more than half of families had not yet experienced a fourth episode of homelessness.

The following table shows the survival probability by month for families after a first episode of homelessness, where survival means avoiding a fourth episode. For example, after 18 months, 94.7% of families had less than four episodes of homelessness; only 5.3% had crossed the threshold into what is here defined as chronic homelessness.

Table 47. Family Survival Probability by Month after Exiting First Episode of Homelessness (Chronic Homelessness)

Months since Exiting First Episode of Homelessness	At Risk (N)	Total of 4+ Episodes (N)	Survival Rate	SE	95% CI
6	298	2	0.993	0.0046	(0.984, 1.000)
12	273	6	0.973	0.0093	(0.955, 0.992)
18	242	7	0.947	0.0133	(0.921, 0.974)
24	187	5	0.924	0.0165	(0.892, 0.957)
36	81	4	0.894	0.0221	(0.852, 0.938)
60	9	9	0.723	0.0662	(0.604, 0.865)

The following table shows the results of a comparison of the types of services that are relatively more frequent among families returning to homelessness. Protective services are those that are relatively more frequent among families that do not return to homelessness, while services labeled "risk" are relatively more frequent among those who do. Note that association does not necessarily imply causation or causal direction: protective services might help families stave off a return to homelessness, but they might also be services that families access because they have already achieved housing stability.

Table 48. Services Recorded Relatively More or Less Frequently for Families Returning to Homelessness

Need Met	Total Services	Z-Score	Group
Case/Care Management - PH-1000	1,042	15.35	Protective
Rent Payment Assistance - BH-3800.7000	170	5.39	Protective
Furniture - BM-3000.2000	161	3.81	Protective
Holiday Gifts/Toys - PH-2950.3200	54	2.51	Protective
Homeless Motel Vouchers - BH-1800.5000	68	2.23	Protective
Rental Deposit Assistance - BH-3800.7250	57	1.98	Protective
Faith Based Counseling - RD-1900	124	1.47	Neutral
Homeless Shelter - BH-1800.8500	491	-5.63	Risk

Among families, there is no significant association between having received at least one case management service and risk of return to homelessness.

Table 49. Case Management (Families) Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), n = 327

Had a Case Management Service?	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
False	*1.00*	—	—
True	0.84	(0.57, 1.25)	0.4

Likewise, there is no statistically significant association between the number of case management services a family receives and the risk of returning to homelessness.

Table 50. Case Management Count (Families) Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), n = 327

	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
Number of case management services	0.97	(0.93, 1.00)	0.059

High Utilizers of Services

This section looks at a subgroup of clients classified as high utilizers of services, defined as clients who have 15 or more service records—excluding services from Bishop Dudley Hospitality House, Union Gospel Mission, or St Francis House. In total, 408 clients with at least one episode of homelessness met this criterion. Of those clients, 82 (20%) had a prior Network of Care service recorded before their first episode of homelessness. The most common prior services were the following (only those with 10 or more recorded services shown):

Table 51. Services Prior to First Episode of Homelessness among High Utilizers, with Percent Completed

	Total Services 90 Days Prior to First Episode of Homelessness	
	N	Completed (%)
Faith Based Counseling - RD-1900	79	100
Bicycle Repair - BM-7000.1000	63	98.4
Local Bicycle Transportation - BT-4500.4600	28	100
Day Labor - ND-3600.0400-18	20	70.0
Street Outreach Programs - PH-8000	19	89.5
General Clothing Provision - BM-6500.1500-250	13	100
Case/Care Management - PH-1000	12	91.7

The most frequently sought services before a first episode of homelessness include faith-based counseling and bicycle services provided by the Center of Hope. Street outreach services suggest some of these clients experienced unsheltered homelessness or housing instability before entering shelter. These services are similar to the services observed among the broader group, as discussed earlier in this report.

Compared to other clients, following a first episode of homelessness, high utilizers have an increased risk of returning to homelessness. At any given point in time, high utilizers have a 178% higher risk of returning to homelessness.

Table 52. High Utilizers (Excluding Shelter Services) Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), n = 7,016

High utilizer?	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
False	*1.00*	—	—
True (high utilizer)	2.78	(2.48, 3.12)	<0.001

The median survival time for high utilizers returning to homelessness is 4.7 months. In other words, within 4.7 months of a first episode of homelessness, half of high utilizers will have returned to homelessness while the other half will have not.

The following table shows the survival probability by month after exiting a first episode of homelessness for high utilizers. One month after a first episode, 76.9% of high utilizers have not yet returned to homelessness (23.1% have). A year (12 months) after a first episode, 32.7% have not yet returned (67.3% have).

Table 53. High Utilizer (Excluding Shelter Services) Survival Probability by Month after Exiting First Episode of Homelessness (Return to Homelessness)

Months since Exiting First Episode of Homelessness	At Risk (N)	Returns to Shelter (N)	Survival Rate	SE	95% CI
1	312	94	0.769	0.0209	(0.729, 0.811)
2	260	51	0.643	0.0238	(0.598, 0.691)
3	232	26	0.578	0.0245	(0.532, 0.628)
6	170	55	0.439	0.0248	(0.393, 0.490)
12	118	42	0.327	0.0237	(0.284, 0.377)
18	96	15	0.284	0.0231	(0.242, 0.333)
24	67	18	0.228	0.0220	(0.189, 0.276)
36	41	17	0.165	0.0206	(0.129, 0.211)
60	4	13	0.099	0.0193	(0.068, 0.145)

The difference in risk is even more extreme when considering chronic homelessness—that is, the risk of returning to homelessness at least three times after the first episode. Compared to other clients, at a given point in time, high utilizers of services have a 324% higher risk of returning a third time.

Table 54. High Utilizers (Excluding Shelter Services) Hazard Ratio (Chronic Homelessness), n = 7,077

High utilizer?	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
False	*1.00*	—	—
True (high utilizer)	4.24	(3.67, 4.91)	<0.001

For high utilizers of services, median survival time for chronic homelessness is 30.3 months. That means that within 30.3 months of a first episode of homelessness, half of high utilizers will have gone on to experience at least three additional episodes.

The following table shows the survival probability by month after exiting a first episode of homelessness for high utilizers to cross the chronic homelessness threshold (i.e., experience a third return to homelessness). Within 6 months of a first episode, 97.5% of high utilizers have not yet crossed that threshold, but within three years (36 months), only 41.9% have survived (i.e., avoided a third return).

Table 55. High Utilizer (Excluding Shelter Services) Survival Probability by Month after Exiting First Episode of Homelessness (Chronic Homelessness)

Months since Exiting First Episode of Homelessness	At Risk (N)	Total of 4+ Episodes (N)	Survival Rate	SE	95% CI
6	392	8	0.975	0.0077	(0.960, 0.991)
12	305	63	0.813	0.0198	(0.775, 0.852)
18	235	50	0.675	0.0242	(0.629, 0.724)
24	173	35	0.567	0.0263	(0.518, 0.621)
36	100	40	0.419	0.0282	(0.367, 0.478)
60	13	23	0.268	0.0338	(0.209, 0.343)

The following table shows the types of services recorded relatively more or less frequently among high utilizers who return to homelessness (compared to those who do not). Rent payment and case management are relatively more frequent among high utilizers who do not return to homelessness, whereas mobile health care, general clothing provision, street outreach, and other services are relatively more common for high utilizers who do return to homelessness. As noted above, association does not mean causation.

Table 56. Services Recorded Relatively More or Less Frequently for High Utilizers Returning to Homelessness

Need Met	Total Services	Z-Score	Group
Rent Payment Assistance - BH-3800.7000	117	2.63	Protective
Case/Care Management - PH-1000	823	2.63	Protective
Furniture - BM-3000.2000	139	-0.25	Neutral
Rental Deposit Assistance - BH-3800.7250	54	-1.62	Neutral
Mobile Health Care - LN-5000	57	-2.84	Risk
General Clothing Provision - BM-6500.1500-250	96	-2.87	Risk
Street Outreach Programs - PH-8000	108	-4.23	Risk
Day Labor - ND-3600.0400-180	91	-5.52	Risk
Bicycle Repair - BM-7000.1000	423	-6.28	Risk
Local Bicycle Transportation - BT-4500.4600	165	-7.45	Risk
Faith Based Counseling - RD-1900	495	-9.63	Risk
Homeless Shelter - BH-1800.8500	1,307	-34.12	Risk

As the previous table shows, case management appears to be associated with housing stability, or reduced risk of returning to homelessness for high utilizers. A statistical test of case management for high utilizers shows that having a case management service is indeed associated with reduced risk of returning to homelessness. At a given point in time, high utilizers who have had a case management service have a 45% lower risk of returning to homelessness.

Table 57. Case Management (High Utilizers) Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), n = 408

Had a Case Management Service?	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
False	*1.00*	—	—
True	0.55	(0.42, 0.72)	<0.001

Further, it appears that the more case management services a client has, the further the risk of retuning to homelessness is reduced. Among high utilizers, each case management service is associated with a 6% lower risk of returning to homelessness.

Table 58. Case Management Count (High Utilizers) Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), n = 408

	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
Number of case management services	0.94	(0.91, 0.97)	<0.001

Justice-Impacted Clients

Justice-impacted clients may face different challenges to housing stability. In total, 1,258 clients with at least one episode of homelessness met the criteria for identifying justice-impacted clients, as described above. Of those clients, 136 (11%) had a prior Network of Care service recorded before their first episode of homelessness. The following table shows most common prior services among justice-impacted clients (only those with 10 or more recorded services shown).

Table 59. Services Prior to First Episode of Homelessness among Justice-Impacted Clients, with Percent Completed

	Total Services 90 Days Prior to First Episode of Homelessness	
	N	Completed (%)
Faith Based Counseling - RD-1900	94	98.9
Local Bicycle Transportation - BT-4500.4600	43	100
Day Labor - ND-3600.0400-180	34	64.7
Bicycle Repair - BM-7000.1000	33	100
Street Outreach Programs - PH-8000	26	92.3
General Clothing Provision - BM-6500.1500-250	20	100
Case/Care Management Referrals - PH-2400.1300	12	100
Case/Care Management - PH-1000	11	90.9
Furniture - BM-3000.2000	10	40.0

These services are similar to those observed among high utilizers of services and among the broader group of clients.

Compared to other clients, justice-impacted clients have an increased risk of returning to homelessness after a first episode of homelessness. Being in the justice-impacted subgroup is associated with a 38% higher risk of returning to homelessness at any given point in time.

Table 60. Justice-Impacted Clients Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), n = 7,016

Justice impacted?	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
False	*1.00*	—	—
True (justice impacted)	1.38	(1.26, 1.50)	<0.001

For justice-impacted clients, the median survival time for a return to homelessness is 20.8 months. This means that within 20.8 months of experiencing a first episode of homelessness, half of justice-impacted clients will return to homelessness; the other half will not.

The following table shows the survival probability by month for justice-impacted clients returning to homelessness. For instance, within one month of the end of a first episode of homelessness, 87.7% of justice-impacted clients have not yet experienced a second episode, while 12.3% have.

Table 61. Justice-Impacted Clients Survival Probability by Month after Exiting First Episode of Homelessness (Return to Homelessness)

Months since Exiting First Episode of Homelessness	At Risk (N)	Returns to Shelter (N)	Survival Rate	SE	95% CI
1	1,094	154	0.877	0.0093	(0.859, 0.895)
2	974	107	0.791	0.0115	(0.768, 0.814)
3	906	58	0.743	0.012	(0.719, 0.768)
6	763	108	0.653	0.0136	(0.626, 0.680)
12	602	94	0.569	0.0144	(0.541, 0.597)
18	500	55	0.515	0.0147	(0.487, 0.544)
24	407	36	0.476	0.0150	(0.447, 0.506)
36	286	37	0.425	0.0156	(0.395, 0.456)
60	66	32	0.366	0.0170	(0.334, 0.401)

Justice-impacted clients also have an increased risk of experiencing chronic homelessness (i.e., of returning to homelessness at least three times after a first episode). Being classified as justice-impacted is associated with a 64% higher risk of reaching the chronic homelessness threshold, at any given point in time.

Table 62. Justice-Impacted Hazard Ratio (Chronic Homelessness), n = 7,077

Justice impacted?	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
False	*1.00*	—	—
True (justice impacted)	1.64	(1.44, 1.86)	<0.001

The median survival time for justice-impacted clients to experience a fourth episode of homelessness (cross the chronic homelessness threshold) is undefined. That means that by the end of the timeframe available in the study data, less than half of justice-impacted clients had experienced four or more episodes of homelessness.

The following table shows the survival probability by month for justice-impacted clients reaching the chronic homelessness threshold. For instance, within six months after the end of a first episode of homelessness, 98.1% of justice-impacted clients had not yet experienced three additional episodes of homelessness, while 1.9% had. After three years (36 months), 71.2% of justice-impacted clients had not yet experienced three additional episodes, while 28.8% had.

Table 63. Justice-Impacted Clients Survival Probability by Month after Exiting First Episode of Homelessness (Chronic Homelessness)

Months since Exiting First Episode of Homelessness	At Risk (N)	Total of 4+ Episodes (N)	Survival Rate	SE	95% CI
6	1,168	16	0.981	0.0039	(0.974, 0.989)
12	985	78	0.912	0.0084	(0.896, 0.929)
18	842	66	0.849	0.0108	(0.828, 0.870)
24	702	51	0.795	0.0125	(0.771, 0.820)
36	485	63	0.712	0.0150	(0.683, 0.742)
60	123	46	0.631	0.0177	(0.597, 0.667)

The following table shows the types of services recorded relatively more or less frequently among justice-impacted clients who return to homelessness (compared to those who do not). Rent payment and case management are relatively more frequent among high utilizers who do not return to homelessness, whereas bicycle services and street outreach are relatively more common for justice-impacted clients who do return to homelessness. As noted above, association does not mean causation.

Table 64. Services Recorded Relatively More or Less Frequently for Justice-Impacted Clients Returning to Homelessness

Need Met	Total Services	Z-Score	Group
Rent Payment Assistance - BH-3800.7000	169	6.12	Protective
Case/Care Management Referrals - PH-2400.1300, Homeless Shelter - BH-1800.8500	89	2.81	Protective
Furniture - BM-3000.2000	211	2.27	Protective
Employment Related Transportation - BT-4500.6500-255	51	1.37	Neutral
Comprehensive Information and Referral - TJ-3000.1500 * Ex-Offenders - YJ-2030	52	1.20	Neutral
General Clothing Provision - BM-6500.1500-250	145	0.18	Neutral
Case/Care Management - PH-1000	807	-0.10	Neutral
Day Labor - ND-3600.0400-180	192	-0.26	Neutral
Local Bicycle Transportation - BT-4500.4600	229	-3.20	Risk
Faith Based Counseling - RD-1900	599	-3.51	Risk
Bicycle Repair - BM-7000.1000	214	-5.02	Risk
Street Outreach Programs - PH-8000	98	-5.11	Risk
Homeless Shelter - BH-1800.8500	2,678	-32.39	Risk

Unlike high utilizers of services, for justice-impacted clients, case management services were not significantly associated with the risk of returning to homelessness.

Table 65. Case Management (Justice-Impacted Clients) Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), n = 1,258

Had a Case Management Service?	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
False	*1.00*	—	—
True	0.86	(0.71, 1.04)	0.12

Table 66. Case Management Count (Justice-Impacted Clients) Hazard Ratio (Returns to Homelessness), n = 1,258

	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
Number of case management services	0.99	(0.96, 1.01)	0.3

Place of Origin

Over time, Network of Care agencies have begun tracking place of origin for clients entering emergency shelter. This section summarizes available data about the city and state where clients entering emergency shelter reported last residing.

Information about where clients last resided before entering shelter is recorded in agency-specific fields maintained by Union Gospel Mission and Bishop Dudley Hospitality House. Additionally, client records have an address field that may be updated periodically by various agencies. The client address field reflects only the most recently entered address; it is not intended to show place of origin, and it cannot be used to track change in address over time.

Bishop Dudley Hospitality House Place of Origin Records

This section summarizes place of origin data recorded in Bishop Dudley Hospitality House records. Bishop Dudley Hospitality House tracks check-ins and client data in a separate platform. The platform is integrated with the Network of Care by API, but not all data is transferred. To maximize data available for consideration, this analysis uses a data extract directly from Bishop Dudley's check-in data system, not the Network of Care. This data set is more fully described at the beginning of this report.

The Bishop Dudley data set contains client records from January 1, 2021 through June 2, 2026. Data include 268,734 entries for 10,285 unique client IDs. Place of origin is recorded as the city and state where the client last resided before entering shelter. Information about place of origin is missing for 99,563 records (37%).

A client may have multiple entries in the Bishop Dudley data, one for each check-in. In order to identify a client's place of origin, this analysis uses the earliest check-in date for each client and looks at the first recorded city and state of origin.

The following table summarizes the most frequently recorded states (those with at least 10 guests in at least one of the reported years). Other states are lumped together in the "Other" row. Note the high proportion of missing data, especially in earlier years. Percentages are calculated from among guests with a recorded state, excluding missing counts.

Consistently across years, about 80% of Bishop Dudley guests with a recorded state of origin are from South Dakota. No other state accounts for more than 4% of guests' state of origin. The most frequently recorded states other than South Dakota are the neighboring states of Iowa and Minnesota.

Table 67. Bishop Dudley Hospitality House Guests by State of Origin, 2021 - 2026

	2021		2022		2023		2024		2025		2026*	
SD	433	78%	1,184	82%	1,273	81%	1,318	78%	1,154	80%	272	80%
IA	16	3%	45	3%	50	3%	64	4%	53	4%	13	4%
MN	12	2%	48	3%	37	2%	51	3%	49	3%	10	3%
NE	10	2%	18	1%	25	2%	34	2%	18	1%	4	1%
ND	9	2%	16	1%	25	2%	17	1%	15	1%	4	1%
CA	2	0%	10	1%	13	1%	19	1%	16	1%	2	1%
CO	10	2%	15	1%	14	1%	17	1%	10	1%	5	1%
IL	3	1%	1	0%	12	1%	16	1%	12	1%	1	0%
TX	7	1%	11	1%	14	1%	14	1%	15	1%	2	1%
FL	1	0%	3	0%	9	1%	14	1%	6	0%	2	1%
MI	2	0%	5	0%	4	0%	12	1%	4	0%	0	0%
MO	1	0%	8	1%	8	1%	8	0%	10	1%	1	0%
WA	2	0%	1	0%	4	0%	5	0%	10	1%	0	0%
Other	50	9%	76	5%	88	6%	106	6%	68	5%	26	8%
Missing data	1,466	0	666	0	477	0	395	0	197	0	32	0

*2026 includes data through June 2, 2026.

Bishop Dudley also records the last city where a client resided. The city field is a free text field, so data is subject to inconsistencies from typos and misspellings. For this report, all values were manually reviewed to standardize spelling.

The following table provides a city-by-city breakdown for clients whose state of origin was South Dakota. Across all six years for which data are available, 70 to 80% of South Dakota clients came from Sioux Falls. The next most common city of origin for South Dakota clients was Rapid City, which was the city of origin for 5 to 8% of clients each year.

Table 68. Bishop Dudley Hospitality House South Dakota Guests by City of Origin, 2021 - 2026

	2021		2022		2023		2024		2025		2026*	
Sioux Falls	340	79%	942	80%	962	76%	912	70%	807	70%	200	74%
Rapid City	24	6%	59	5%	84	7%	104	8%	81	7%	13	5%
Yankton	7	2%	19	2%	16	1%	22	2%	24	2%	3	1%
Pierre	5	1%	14	1%	15	1%	30	2%	22	2%	4	1%
Mitchell	8	2%	9	1%	20	2%	25	2%	13	1%	6	2%
Watertown	3	1%	11	1%	13	1%	19	1%	8	1%	2	1%
Brookings	2	0%	7	1%	17	1%	14	1%	10	1%	2	1%
Mission	5	1%	10	1%	7	1%	10	1%	11	1%	3	1%
Sisseton	4	1%	5	0%	8	1%	13	1%	10	1%	3	1%
Huron	2	0%	11	1%	7	1%	8	1%	11	1%	1	0%
Canton	2	0%	8	1%	11	1%	8	1%	7	1%	2	1%
Aberdeen	0	0%	1	0%	7	1%	12	1%	14	1%	0	0%
Rosebud	0	0%	7	1%	3	0%	9	1%	10	1%	1	0%
Other	29	7%	71	6%	96	8%	114	9%	117	10%	31	11%
Missing data	2		10		7		18		9		1	

*2026 includes data through June 2, 2026.

Network of Care Place of Origin Records

To broaden the analysis, Bishop Dudley records of place of origin were combined with Network of Care data. Not all clients exist in both datasets; only those that exist in the Network of Care data (regardless of whether or not they also exist in the Bishop Dudley check-in data) were used for this analysis. Because of this, the numbers presented in this section do not directly correspond to Bishop Dudley-alone numbers in the previous section.

The following logic was used to identify a single city and state of origin for each client:

- If Network of Care client can be matched to a Bishop Dudley client record, add the Bishop Dudley city and state to the Network of Care record.
- If a city and state of origin were recorded and linked from the Bishop Dudley check-in data, use those values; otherwise,
- Use the Union Gospel Mission city and state of origin from the Network of Care client record; otherwise,
- If Bishop Dudley and Union Gospel Mission city or state of origin is missing, use the city or state value from the client address field.

When considering all clients with at least one episode of homelessness (n = 7,016), there appears to be an increase over time of clients from other states. However, characteristics of the data make it difficult to judge whether that increase reflects reality or is an artifact of the way data are collected and recorded: State and city of origin fields on the client record do not have time stamps to indicate when they were recorded, and a client's address city and state may be updated periodically and no

longer reflect where they resided before their first episode of homelessness. Additionally, note the large reduction in records with missing data. It may be the case that in earlier years, a similar proportion of people were coming from other states, but the data were not recorded. However, assuming missingness is randomly distributed, a smaller proportion of guests have come from South Dakota in 2025 and 2026 compared to prior years.

Table 69. First Episode of Homelessness by State of Origin, 2021 - 2026

	2021		2022		2023		2024		2025		2026*	
SD	1,066	97%	594	95%	678	95%	1,081	88%	907	74%	305	75%
MN	5	0%	4	1%	6	1%	32	3%	47	4%	17	4%
IA	8	1%	9	1%	6	1%	27	2%	45	4%	17	4%
NE	3	0%	2	0%	1	0%	11	1%	30	2%	9	2%
CA	5	0%	3	0%	2	0%	8	1%	18	1%	3	1%
ND	2	0%	2	0%	2	0%	2	0%	18	1%	5	1%
TX	2	0%	1	0%	0	0%	3	0%	16	1%	2	0%
IL	3	0%	0	0%	3	0%	5	0%	12	1%	1	0%
WA	0	0%	1	0%	0	0%	3	0%	12	1%	0	0%
MO	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%	6	0%	10	1%	3	1%
Other	9	1%	11	2%	12	2%	46	4%	113	9%	44	11%
Missing data	672		419		345		244		25		12	

*2026 includes data through June 2, 2026.

The same pattern of increasing geographic dispersion is apparent within the state, too: in 2025 and 2026, a smaller proportion of clients from South Dakota came from Sioux Falls. (City names were manually reviewed in order to standardize spelling.)

Table 70. First Episode of Homelessness by City of Origin among Guests from South Dakota, 2021 - 2026

	2021		2022		2023		2024		2025		2026*	
Sioux Falls	987	93%	542	92%	601	89%	907	84%	608	67%	216	71%
Rapid City	17	2%	7	1%	9	1%	46	4%	58	6%	14	5%
Watertown	6	1%	8	1%	15	2%	15	1%	16	2%	1	0%
Yankton	2	0%	3	1%	3	0%	10	1%	23	3%	7	2%
Pierre	3	0%	2	0%	3	0%	12	1%	19	2%	3	1%
Mitchell	2	0%	2	0%	3	0%	5	0%	17	2%	5	2%
Aberdeen	5	0%	0	0%	1	0%	3	0%	17	2%	2	1%
Sisseton	3	0%	1	0%	1	0%	5	0%	10	1%	3	1%
Other	39	4%	26	4%	40	6%	77	7%	139	15%	54	18%
Missing data	2		3		2		1		0		0	

*2026 includes data through June 2, 2026.

This analysis looked at individual cities, not metropolitan areas. In future studies, it could be informative to consider neighboring communities within the Sioux Falls metro area (e.g., Canton, Baltic, Tea, Lennox, Garretson, etc.), some of which are growing more rapidly than the population within the confines of the Sioux Falls city limits.

Place of Origin and Returns to Homelessness

A client's place of origin may influence their risk of returning to homelessness after experiencing a first episode of homelessness in Sioux Falls. Indeed, survival analysis looking at state of origin suggests that clients from South Dakota have a higher risk of returning to homelessness. The following table shows the results of a Cox proportional hazards test: clients from South Dakota have a 23% higher risk of returning to homelessness after a first episode. (No significant association between South Dakota origin and the risk of chronic homelessness was observed.)

Table 71. South Dakotan versus Other Households Hazard Ratio (Return to Homelessness), n = 5,306

From South Dakota?	Hazard Ratio (HR)	95% CI	p-value
False	*1.00*	—	—
True (from SD)	1.23	(1.07, 1.41)	0.004

The median survival time for clients from South Dakota for returns to homelessness is 24.3 months. In other words, within about two years following an initial episode of homelessness, half of clients from South Dakota will return to homelessness, while the other half will not.

The following table shows the survival probability by month after a first episode of homelessness for clients from South Dakota. For example, within three months after a first episode, 75.3% of clients from South Dakota have not experienced another episode of homelessness, while 24.75 have.

Table 72. South Dakotan Survival Probability by Month after Exiting First Episode of Homelessness (Return to Homelessness)

Months since Exiting First Episode of Homelessness	At Risk (N)	Returns to Shelter (N)	Survival Rate	SE	95% CI
1	4,015	553	0.880	0.0048	(0.870, 0.889)
2	3,577	369	0.798	0.0060	(0.786, 0.810)
3	3,317	199	0.753	0.0064	(0.741, 0.766)
6	2,784	352	0.671	0.0071	(0.657, 0.685)
12	2,118	314	0.590	0.0075	(0.576, 0.605)
18	1,655	160	0.543	0.0078	(0.527, 0.558)
24	1,211	113	0.502	0.0081	(0.486, 0.518)
36	576	144	0.418	0.0094	(0.400, 0.437)
60	92	75	0.339	0.0121	(0.316, 0.363)

Association is not causation, and these data do not reveal the mechanism behind the association between place of origin and the risk of return to homelessness. One possible explanation could be that clients from out of state are "just passing through" the Sioux Falls area and, if they return to homelessness, are more likely to do so elsewhere and so miss being recorded in the Network of Care. Another possible explanation is that people who return to homelessness are more likely to have had their state of origin at some point recorded as South Dakota because they have been in the area longer, even if South Dakota was not their original state of origin. Because state is typically recorded on the client record and not time-stamped, actual place of origin may be overwritten by more recent residential information.

Duration of Homelessness

As shown earlier in this report, a longer first episode of homelessness is associated with increased risk of a return to homelessness. This section explores patterns of the duration of episodes of homelessness among clients, including client characteristics that may be associated with longer durations of homelessness.

The duration of homelessness is calculated as the time elapsed from the start date of an episode of homelessness until the end date. In total, the study dataset encompasses 15,805 episodes of homelessness (including multiple episodes per client). Of these episodes, four had a calculated duration of less than zero and were removed. The resulting 15,801 episodes of homelessness ranged in duration from zero to 52.5 months, with a median duration of 1 month and an average duration of 1.8 months. As the following table shows, about three-quarters of episodes were less than two months in duration, and 96% were less than six months in duration.

Table 73. Duration of episodes of homelessness in months

Duration of less than __ months	Episodes (N)	% of Episodes
1	2,124	13.4%
2	12,143	76.8%
3	13,743	87.0%
6	15,172	96.0%

The total time spent homeless per client (summed across all episodes) ranges from zero to 59.3 months, with a median of 1.5 months and a mean of 3.9 months. As shown in the following table, more than half (53.4%) of clients experienced homelessness for a total of less than two months, while about two-thirds (66.8%) experienced homelessness for a total of no more than three months.

Table 74. Total time spent homeless (in months) across all episodes, per client

Total time of less than __ months	Clients (N)	% of Clients
1	987	14.1%
2	3,750	53.4%
3	4,688	66.8%
6	5,772	82.3%

In total, 504 clients had at least one episode of homelessness with a duration of six months or longer. The rest of this section asks how these clients compare to other clients who experienced at least one episode of homelessness but never experienced an episode of homelessness of six months or more.

Associations were tested using logistic regression. Results are presented as odds ratios: an odds ratio compares the odds of an event happening in one group to the odds of it happening in a baseline or reference group. Odds are the ratio of successes to failures, not the total percentage probability.

The event in this analysis refers to enduring an episode of homelessness of six or more months in duration. An odds ratio of 1 means the groups have equal odds of the event; an odds ratio greater than 1 indicates increased odds (i.e., the event is more likely compared to the reference group); an odds ratio of less than 1 means decreased odds (i.e., less likely).

Gender: Compared to male clients, female clients have .59 the odds (41% lower odds) of experiencing a long episode of homelessness of six months or more. In other words, male clients are more likely to experience an episode of long duration.

Table 75. Odds ratio of long duration of homelessness by gender (n = 7,012)

Gender	OR	95% CI	p-value
Male	—	—	
Female	0.59	0.47, 0.73	<0.001
Trans or Gender Non-conforming	1.27	0.30, 3.60	0.7
Unknown	2.15	0.33, 8.06	0.3
Abbreviations: CI = Confidence Interval, OR = Odds Ratio			

Age: Age is positively associated with the odds of experiencing an episode of homelessness of six months or more. Each year increase in age is associated with 4% higher odds of experiencing a long-duration episode of homelessness.

Table 76. Odds ratio of long duration of homelessness by age (n = 6,993)

	OR	95% CI	p-value
Age (years)	1.04	1.03, 1.04	<0.001
Abbreviations: CI = Confidence Interval, OR = Odds Ratio			

Considering different age groups, older adults aged 45 or greater have increased odds of experiencing a long episode of homelessness.

Table 77. Odds ratio of long duration of homelessness by age group (n = 6,993)

Age Group	OR	95% CI	p-value
25 to 44	—	—	
Under 18	0.29	0.09, 0.70	0.016
18 to 24	0.44	0.21, 0.83	0.019
45 to 64	2.37	1.94, 2.90	<0.001
65+	2.08	1.43, 2.96	<0.001

Abbreviations: CI = Confidence Interval, OR = Odds Ratio

Race: Race is also associated with the odds of experiencing a long episode of homelessness. Specifically, compared to white clients, Native American clients have reduced odds of experiencing an episode of homelessness of six months or longer.

Table 78. Odds ratio of long duration of homelessness by race (n = 6,997)

Race	OR	95% CI	p-value
White or Caucasian	—	—	
Asian	1.74	0.71, 3.67	0.2
Black or African American	1.04	0.79, 1.35	0.8
Hispanic or Latino	0.72	0.38, 1.26	0.3
Native American or Alaska Native	0.64	0.50, 0.80	<0.001
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.00	0.00, 0.10	>0.9
Multiracial	0.85	0.59, 1.20	0.4
Other	1.11	0.26, 3.14	0.9
Did Not Ask	0.90	0.42, 1.71	0.8
Declined	0.00	0.00, 1.48	>0.9

Abbreviations: CI = Confidence Interval, OR = Odds Ratio

Income: There is no significant association between income and the odds of experiencing a long episode of homelessness.

Single parents: Single parenthood is negatively associated with the odds of experiencing a long episode of homelessness. Clients who are single parents have 0.59 the odds of clients of experiencing an episode of homelessness of six months or more.

Table 79. Odds ratio of long duration of homelessness by single parenthood (n = 2,120)

Single parent?	OR	95% CI	p-value
False	—	—	
True (single parent)	0.59	0.41, 0.82	0.002

Abbreviations: CI = Confidence Interval, OR = Odds Ratio

Education: Compared to clients with a high school diploma or GED, clients with a technical school certification or graduate degree have increased odds of experiencing a long episode of homelessness. Clients with less than a high school education have decreased odds. On face, this association appears puzzling. One explanation could be related to the circumstances that precipitate homelessness for clients with higher levels of education compared to those with lower levels. For instance, it may be the case that homelessness among clients with lower levels of education is more often the result of the instability of lower earnings and more quickly resolved by restoring income or accessing financial resources, whereas among clients with higher levels of education, homelessness is the result of mental or physical health problems or other problems that more permanently interfere with earnings or housing stability. However, these explanations are conjecture and further research would be needed to assess their validity.

Table 80. Odds ratio of long duration of homelessness by education (n = 6,770)

Education	OR	95% CI	p-value
High School Diploma / GED	—	—	
College Degree	1.43	0.98, 2.01	0.051
Graduate Degree	2.05	0.94, 3.98	0.049
Less Than High School	0.76	0.58, 0.98	0.036
Some College	1.00	0.75, 1.33	>0.9
Technical School Certification	1.68	0.99, 2.68	0.041
Unknown	1.37	0.86, 2.08	0.2

Abbreviations: CI = Confidence Interval, OR = Odds Ratio

Marital status: Compared to single clients, clients who are divorced have increased odds of experiencing a long episode of homelessness. By contrast, clients who are married have reduced odds.

Table 81. Odds ratio of long duration of homelessness by marital status (n = 6,290)

Marital status	OR	95% CI	p-value
Single	—	—	
Divorced	1.52	1.15, 2.00	0.003
Married	0.56	0.31, 0.93	0.037
Separated	0.66	0.35, 1.14	0.2
Unknown	0.63	0.22, 1.40	0.3
Widowed	1.53	0.81, 2.64	0.2

Abbreviations: CI = Confidence Interval, OR = Odds Ratio

Employment: Compared to clients who are employed, those who receive SSDI have increased odds of experiencing a long episode of homelessness. Those who are students have decreased odds. The odds of experiencing an episode of six months or longer did not differ significantly for clients who were unemployed, retired, or doing temporary or day labor.

Table 82. Odds ratio of long duration of homelessness by employment status (n = 4,754)

Employment status	OR	95% CI	p-value
Employed	—	—	
Unemployed	0.91	0.71, 1.16	0.4
SSDI	1.55	1.08, 2.20	0.016
Retired	0.96	0.36, 2.10	>0.9
Temporary or Day Labor	1.35	0.80, 2.18	0.2
Student	0.13	0.02, 0.43	0.005

Abbreviations: CI = Confidence Interval, OR = Odds Ratio

Households with children: Households with children present have reduced odds of experiencing long episodes of homelessness.

Table 83. Odds ratio of long duration of homelessness by households with children present (n = 1,925)

Children present?	OR	95% CI	p-value
False	—	—	
True (children present)	0.38	0.26, 0.55	<0.001

Abbreviations: CI = Confidence Interval, OR = Odds Ratio

Insurance: Compared to clients who are not insured, those who have health insurance do have significantly different odds of experiencing a long episode of homelessness. Odds are lower for clients with an unknown insurance status, which may reflect data collection practices if clients who experience shorter episodes of homelessness are less likely to have information about their insurance status recorded.

Table 84. Odds ratio of long duration of homelessness by insurance status (n = 5,707)

Insurance status	OR	95% CI	p-value
Not insured	—	—	
Insured	1.16	0.92, 1.46	0.2
Unknown	0.49	0.35, 0.66	<0.001

Abbreviations: CI = Confidence Interval, OR = Odds Ratio

Military status: Compared to clients with no military connection, only clients with the value "Did Not Ask" had significantly different odds of experiencing a long episode of homelessness. As with insurance status, this may reflect data collection practices rather than anything about the nature of military connection.

Table 85. Odds ratio of long duration of homelessness by military status (n = 6,759)

Military status	OR	95% CI	p-value
None	—	—	
Veteran	0.75	0.46, 1.18	0.2
Active Duty	0.00		>0.9
Declined	1.03	0.25, 2.86	>0.9
Did Not Ask	1.90	1.05, 3.18	0.022

Abbreviations: CI = Confidence Interval, OR = Odds Ratio

Disabling condition: Clients with a disabling condition have increased odds of experiencing a long episode of homelessness. This is notable since clients with a disabling condition were not statistically more likely to return to homelessness after a first episode. These findings suggest that disabling conditions are a barrier to resolving homelessness, resulting in long duration, but once resolved do not increase the risk of a subsequent return.

Table 86. Odds ratio of long duration of homelessness by disabling condition (n = 4,745)

Disabling condition?	OR	95% CI	p-value
False	—	—	
True (disabling condition)	1.46	1.17, 1.82	<0.001

Abbreviations: CI = Confidence Interval, OR = Odds Ratio

High utilizers: Compared to other clients, high utilizers of services have much higher odds of experiencing a long episode of homelessness, indicating significant overlap between the population of high utilizers and those who endure episodes of longer duration. Of note, clients experiencing longer episodes will accumulate more services during that episode (e.g., check-ins or case management interactions), so the relationship is not unidirectional.

Table 87. Odds ratio of long duration of homelessness by high utilizer classification (n = 7,016)

High utilizer?	OR	95% CI	p-value
False	—	—	
True (high utilizer)	29.8	23.1, 38.9	<0.001

Abbreviations: CI = Confidence Interval, OR = Odds Ratio

Justice-impacted clients: Compared to other clients, justice-impacted clients do not have significantly different odds of experiencing a long episode of homelessness.

Family: Clients in families have reduced odds of experiencing a long episode of homelessness.

Table 88. Odds ratio of long duration of homelessness by family classification (n = 7,016)

Family?	OR	95% CI	p-value
False	—	—	
True (family)	0.42	0.21, 0.74	0.007

Abbreviations: CI = Confidence Interval, OR = Odds Ratio

Case management: Case management is associated with increased odds of experiencing a long episode of homelessness. On face, this relationship is puzzling. However, association is not causation, and case management visits are often the result of longer episodes of homelessness (i.e., clients with longer shelter stays will have more case management services recorded in the Network of Care due to those stays).

Table 89. Odds ratio of long duration of homelessness by case management (n = 7,016)

	OR	95% CI	p-value
Number of case management services	1.06	1.04, 1.07	<0.001

Abbreviations: CI = Confidence Interval, OR = Odds Ratio

Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of Findings

This report seeks to shed light on the experience of homelessness in Sioux Falls, as captured by data in the Network of Care. This analysis can help answer key questions to inform programs and policies: After experiencing homelessness, how often do clients maintain housing stability or return to homelessness? What client characteristics are associated with an increased risk of returning to homelessness after a first episode of homelessness resolves? What service pathways promote stability or signal risk of returning to homelessness?

For many, homelessness is brief and temporary. But longer or more frequent experiences of homelessness compound risk of continued instability.

Of 7,187 clients, 57% experienced only a single episode of homelessness. However, those who return to homelessness for a second or third time are much more likely to experience subsequent episodes of homelessness as well. For clients who experience a return to homeless, the risk is highest in the first few months after an initial episode: clients have about a 10% chance of returning to homelessness within one month and a 28% within six months. But over a longer time period, risk rises more slowly: clients have a 36% chance of returning to homelessness within a year, 48% within three years, and 54% within 5 years. Those clients who do not return to homelessness in the first few months after exiting an episode of homelessness are more likely to avoid a return.

Resolving homelessness swiftly may lead to better long-term outcomes. Longer initial episodes of homelessness are associated with increased risk of returning to homelessness in the future. The median duration of an episode of homelessness among Network of Care clients is one month (average 1.8 months). However, each additional month of an initial episode's duration increases the hazard of returning to homelessness by 5% and chronic homelessness by 7%.

Permanent housing is a powerful path to stability. Case management also promotes stability, and rental assistance may help prevent homelessness.

Achieving permanent housing at first exit is the most powerful protective factor identified in this study, associated with a 54% lower risk of returning to homelessness and a 71% lower risk of chronic homelessness after controlling for client characteristics. However, only 9% of initial episodes of homelessness ended with an exit to permanent housing.

Case management also serves as a protective factor to promote stability and resolve homelessness. Case management services are the most frequently recorded type of service identified as protective, and they are associated with reduced risk of returning to homelessness.

Rental assistance may also help stave off homelessness, although the nature of this observational study makes it difficult to draw causal conclusions. While only 1% of clients requested rental assistance in the 90 days before an episode of homelessness, when those requests were completed (as opposed to denied, deferred, or otherwise not completed), they may have had a protective effect. Of "completed" rental assistance services, only 1.14% occurred in the 90 days

before an episode of homelessness; however, of rental assistance services that were *not* completed, 2.32% occurred in the 90 days before an episode of homelessness.

Service records might offer early warning of housing instability. However, of 7,016 clients with a first episode of homelessness, only a small subset (485, or 6.9%) had a service recorded in the Network of Care in the 90 days prior. In other words, about 93% of people experiencing their first episode of homelessness had not presented to any Network of Care agency in the 90 days leading up to that event.

Comparing services that are more frequent among clients in the 90 days before an episode of homelessness to those that are relatively more frequent among clients not facing imminent homelessness suggests clusters of services that may be protective or that may signal risk.

Protective services associated with stability include case management, rental and utility assistance, furniture provision, deposit assistance, motel vouchers, and work clothing.

Possible risk indicators associated with instability or unsheltered needs include street outreach, faith-based counseling, day labor, ID/birth certificate assistance, bicycle transportation/repair, and mobile health care.

Different clients have different risk profiles: men, Native American and Black clients, high utilizers of services, justice-impacted clients, older adults, and people with disabilities face barriers.

Client characteristics associated with an increased risk of returning to homelessness after an initial episode include gender (high risk for male clients), age (higher risk among adults age 45 or older), race (higher risk for Native American and Black clients), and reliance on SSDI or temporary or day labor. Certain client characteristics are associated with *reduced* risk, including being a student, having children (including single parents), having health insurance, and being married or separated (as opposed to single).

Characteristics associated with an increased risk of enduring a long episode of homelessness (six months or longer) include having a disabling condition, older age (45+), and SSDI reliance.

Risk profiles vary across key subgroups and demographic groups, demonstrating the importance of adaptable service models:

- **High utilizers of services:** Clients with 15 or more non-shelter service records represent the most vulnerable subgroup identified in this report. At any given point in time, high utilizers face a 178% higher risk of returning to homelessness, with a median time to return of just 4.7 months after an initial episode of homelessness. Their risk of chronic homelessness (four or more episodes) is 324% higher than other clients at any given time, with a median time of 30.3 months from an initial episode of homelessness to a fourth. However, case management serves as a powerful stabilizer for this population: receiving case management reduces return risk by 45%, with each additional session lowering risk by 6%. Intensive case management may help better address the needs of this group.
- **Justice-impacted clients:** Clients with a history of justice system involvement face elevated instability, with a 38% higher risk of returning to homelessness (median time to

return: 20.8 months) and a 64% higher risk of reaching chronic homelessness. While case management alone did not show a statistically significant reduction in return risk for this group, basic-need stabilization services such as rental assistance and furniture provision appear to be protective factors. For this group, targeted reentry support and the availability of permanent housing options may help address the risk of returning to homelessness.

- **Families and households with children:** Families with children tend to have higher long-term housing stability than non-family households. Families have a 29% lower risk of returning to homelessness (median survival time of 50.4 months) and a 29% lower risk of chronic homelessness. More broadly, households with children present show a 40% reduced risk of return, and single parents show a 26% reduced risk. In terms of household dynamics, married or separated clients have a 23% lower risk of return compared to single clients; divorced clients have a high risk of enduring a long duration episode. Notably, families rarely present to service agencies prior to entering shelter (only 5 of 327 had prior service records), highlighting an opportunity for earlier community-level identification and prevention.
- **Age and disability:** Older adults aged 45 to 64 experience an 18% higher risk of returning to homelessness and have significantly higher odds of enduring long-duration episodes (six months or more). Conversely, youth under 18 (81% lower risk) and young adults aged 18 to 24 (30% lower risk) are much less likely to return to homelessness after an initial episode. Disabling conditions do not significantly increase the hazard of returning once an initial episode ends, but they do substantially increase the odds of experience a long episode of homelessness lasting six months or longer, identifying disability as a primary barrier to exit rather than a driver of returns. For both older adults and people with disabilities (groups which often overlap), increased availability of permanent supportive housing may help resolve homelessness more rapidly to reduce the duration.
- **Employment, income, and education:** Employment type shapes housing stability. Compared to employed clients, those relying on SSDI face a 34% higher risk of returning to homelessness, while temporary or day laborers face a 69% higher risk. Students, in contrast, experience a 71% lower risk of return, indicating that homelessness is largely a temporary disruption for this group. Educational attainment is protective at higher levels: clients with a college degree have a 25% lower risk of return and a 34% lower risk of chronic homelessness. These findings reinforce the observation that fixed income or precarious income sources may limit housing stability. Access to affordable or subsidized housing as well as workforce development and educational opportunities may help address these gaps.
- **Healthcare access:** Having health insurance is associated with reduced risk of returning to homelessness or experiencing chronic homelessness. Causal direction has not been determined: this association may indicate that healthcare access is a buffer to returning to homelessness, or it may be that the process of resolving homelessness involves gaining access to insurance.

Most clients are from Sioux Falls, though geographic diversity in place of origin appears to be increasing.

Most clients come from South Dakota or neighboring states, and most clients from South Dakota come from Sioux Falls. Over time, it appears that clients are coming to shelters from increasingly disperse places of origin. However, characteristics of the data make it difficult to judge whether that increase reflects reality or is an artifact of the way data are collected and recorded.

A client's place of origin may influence their risk of returning to homelessness after experiencing a first episode of homelessness in Sioux Falls. Clients whose state of origin is South Dakota have a 23% higher risk of recorded returns to homelessness compared to out-of-state clients. While this may reflect deeper local ties and sustained presence in the Sioux Falls service network, it may also indicate that out-of-state clients who experience repeat episodes do so outside the local data tracking area.

Recommendations for future study

To strengthen future analysis, support improved service delivery, and better evaluate the long-term impact of services, the Network of Care should consider several changes to how client data is collected, standardized, and used across partner agencies.

1. Standardize prior living situations and exit destinations and align with HMIS standards.

Capturing high quality data about clients' prior living situations (including city and state of origin) and exit destination would make it possible to better document and understand where clients come from and where they go after leaving a shelter or transitional housing program. Homeless management information systems (HMIS), used by the South Dakota Housing for the Homeless Coalition and other Continuum of Care (CoC) organizations across the United States, use standard definitions as required by HUD. Aligning the Network of Care with these definitions would allow comparison to data from the broader South Dakota CoC or with other CoCs or national data.

Recommendations:

- Consistently record both exit destination (e.g., permanent supportive housing, market-rate rental, family reunification) and the exit reason across all network partners, aligning directly with HUD HMIS standards.
- Introduce an intake field detailing the client's living situation immediately prior to shelter entry. In addition to supporting analysis of place of origin, differentiating between individuals entering directly from unsheltered homelessness versus those entering from housed or precarious arrangements will clarify upstream indicators of risk or opportunities for intervention and prevention.

2. Record transaction timestamps to enable longitudinal client tracking and analysis.

In the data extract used for this report, data regarding client characteristics are static and lack information about when during a client's journey they were recorded. This makes it difficult to analyze dynamic changes in circumstances such as employment or income. Recording timestamps for when client fields were updated would support longitudinal analysis of client

journeys. Additionally, automating the calculation or identifying of certain derivative client characteristics would allow for more consistent analysis and reporting in the future.

Recommendations:

- Transition dynamic data points (especially employment status, income, household size, presence of children, and insurance) from static profile fields to timestamped records. This would enable future researchers to observe how changes in circumstances affect housing stability over time.
- Implement an automated system variable that calculates and tracks homelessness "episodes" across agencies using shared date logic, as was done for the analysis in this report. Calculating a cross-agency episode of homelessness variable allows client-focused reporting and analysis.
- Create explicit, standardized flags for key populations (such as justice-impacted individuals or veterans) to support targeted service delivery and outcome tracking without relying on post-hoc identification or proxy measures.

3. Improve place of origin geographic data quality and regional granularity.

Existing free text fields for place of origin (specifically city) yield inconsistent data: misspellings, names of cities mismatched to states, and the like. Using field validation for geographic data would improve data quality and support future analysis of place of origin and geographic patterns.

Recommendations:

- Implement input validation rules to reduce inconsistencies in location data. Adopt standardized entry formats (e.g., dropdown menus for common municipalities like Sioux Falls, controlled text fields for less common cities, and standardized two-letter state abbreviations across all participating shelters).
- Consider alternative or additional fields for tracking geographic patterns:
    - Add dedicated fields to distinguish between municipal, county-level, and tribal reservation residences (“city” may not be applicable in all cases).
    - Record how long a client has lived in the Sioux Falls area to differentiate between long-term residents and newly arrived individuals (who may both give “Sioux Falls” as place of origin).
    - Expand geographic analysis to track the wider Sioux Falls metropolitan area (e.g., Canton, Tea, Baltic, Lennox, Garretson) to capture regional growth patterns.

4. Screen for unmeasured social determinants of health.

Because chronic medical conditions, substance use disorders, and mental health challenges are critical factors in housing retention but are currently unmeasured, integrate a brief, standardized social determinants of health screening tool at intake to systematically identify these underlying barriers. Alternatively, integration with the statewide Coordinated Entry System could provide access to similar data points.

5. Plan for future analysis that more directly assesses causal connections.

This study is primarily descriptive. It has identified associations between client characteristics, service pathways, and risk of homelessness. Future analysis could delve further into causality or predictive analytics with techniques such as propensity score analysis and predictive risk modeling.

Recommendations:

- Conduct a propensity score analysis comparing housed clients who received completed rental assistance to similar at-risk clients who did not, quantifying the exact protective effect of rental assistance (or other services) in delaying or preventing homelessness.
- Analyze the broader Network of Care client base to identify the socioeconomic and demographic markers that differentiate housed clients who never enter shelter from those who experience a first homelessness episode. Develop a predictive risk model to inform an early warning or prevention intervention system.