Outcomes Tracking

What gets measured gets done. So what are we measuring? Funders have traditionally requested information on outputs – measures that focus on staff effort as a proxy for client success. For example, a funder may ask how many clients a caseworker serves in a day and how many referrals were provided to each individual. This would incentivize the caseworker to see as many people as possible and hand out as many brochures and phone numbers as possible.

Measuringoutcomes is more difficult, but it gives us the information we need to accurately assess the effectiveness of services. Armed with this information, we are able to:

* Continuously improve services within our shelters to ensure that increasing numbers of clients are able to break the cycle of homelessness
* Provide solid, evidence-based proposals to government funders and community decision-makers that can guide the direction of homelessness services system planning. Rather than reacting to new funder directions, we can help to lead the way.

The list below identifies the measures that can assess client outcomes and, more broadly, the impact that Salvation Army shelter services are having. The **outcome measures** assess Salvation Army shelters’ effectiveness in helping clients break the cycle of homelessness, and the **general shelter use measures** provide important contextual data for interpreting some of the factors affecting outcomes.

### Outcome Indicators

* The number and percentage of **people experiencing long-term homelessness** in the shelter (Principle 2)
* The number of long-term shelter users who leave the shelter tomove into **stable, housing** (as opposed to leaving for another shelter, the streets, or provisional accommodations) (Principle 2)
* The overall total of shelter users whose discharge meets criteria for an **organized departure** (Principle 5)
* The number of **care relationships** established between clients with high needs and community-based service providers that continue after the client leaves the shelter and is housed in the community (**Principle 4** and **Principle 6**)
* The number of long-term shelter users who **return to the shelter** after being housed (**Principle 2**)
* The number of long-term shelter users who **remain housed at 3, 6, and 12 months** (**Principle 2**, **Principle 4**, **Principle 5**, and **Principle 6**)

### General Shelter Use Indicators

* Client satisfaction with shelter services (**Principle 1** and **Principle 3**)
* Annual shelter occupancy rate (**Principle 3**)
* Number of prospective clients turned away each year (**Principle 3**)
* Annual shelter client recidivism rate (**Principle 2**)
* The number of staff trained to connect clients with community-based resources (i.e. via referrals or warm transfers) and the ratio of the number of staff trained in this way to the number of clients in the shelter (**Principle 1** and **Principle 2**)

Each shelter is encouraged to set targets that they feel are realistic but also aspirational, based on their resources, client population, community, service partnerships, and other factors.

⇨ Please see the Social Services Department’s Program Evaluation Toolkit elsewhere in the Social Services Manual on Lotus Notes and online for guidance in designing Logic Models for Outcomes Tracking.