

Housing Needs of Homeless Families and Individuals in Florida

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I. Introduction and Summary of Findings

This section of the Rental Market Study estimates the number of homeless families and individuals in Florida, including people in emergency shelters, transitional housing, and unsheltered locations. The report then estimates the supply of transitional housing and permanent supportive housing units.

Statewide, the report finds the following:

- There are 33,088 homeless single adults, unaccompanied youth, and married adults without children in Florida. The state has 13,788 transitional housing and permanent supportive housing beds for this population.
- There are 6,466 homeless families with children. The state has 2,768 transitional and permanent supportive housing units for family households.

Following a discussion of methodology, this report breaks down the homeless population and housing supply by Continuum of Care regions, which consist of single counties or multiple contiguous counties.

A second focus of this study is the effects of the 2004 and 2005 hurricanes on homelessness in Florida. The Shimberg Center for Affordable Housing interviewed staff from local homeless coalitions in counties most severely affected by the storms. The interviews found that many counties experienced increases in homelessness in the years immediately following the hurricanes, but that these increases had largely subsided by the most recent homelessness counts. However, many of those interviewed felt that local homeless counts missed many people made homeless by the storms. These counts do not include people doubled up with others or living in hotels, the primary means by which people found shelter when their homes were lost or damaged in the storms. Appendix 1 discusses the effects of the hurricanes on homelessness in more detail.

II. Methodology

The numbers of homeless households and transitional and permanent supportive housing units come from the Continuum of Care plans developed by Florida's local homeless coalitions as part of applications to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for McKinney Act homeless assistance funds. Each coalition represents a county or a group of counties in Florida. All 67 counties are now represented by homeless coalitions. The Office on Homelessness of the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) supplied the Shimberg Center with the 2007 Continuum of Care plans.

Need

The Continuum of Care plans divide homeless persons into two groups: 1) families with dependent children, and 2) households without dependent children, including single individuals, unaccompanied youth, and other adults such as a married couple without children. The latter group is generally referred to as "individuals" in this report.

Previous rental market studies measured the demand for homeless housing in terms of the number of homeless persons from each group. This year, the Continuum of Care plans allow us to count the number of *households* consisting of families with children, as well as the number of housing units designed for this population. Therefore, we can estimate the need for family housing units, a number more relevant for allocation of affordable housing resources, rather than just beds within those units. In this report, we refer to these households as "family" households. Note that this total of "family" households does not include married couples without children. HUD instructs Continuum of Care applicants to count these couples as part of "households without dependent children."

While the Continuum of Care plans also include the number of households made up of single adults, married couples, or unaccompanied minors, they do not include data on housing units for these households. However, they do count the number of beds for these individuals. Therefore, we use the number of persons rather than households in this report. In practice, there is little difference (seven percent statewide) in the count of persons versus the number of households for this population.¹ The vast majority of homeless persons in this category are single adults rather than members of multi-person households.

The estimates of the numbers of homeless individuals and families with children come from the plans' counts of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons and households in each coalition's service area. HUD establishes strict guidelines both for the definition of homelessness and for the methods for counting homeless persons:

- *Definition:* In addition to unsheltered populations who are living in places not meant for human habitation, the sheltered homeless population includes only those

¹ The Continuum of Care plans list both the number of homeless individuals and the number of households they constitute. In most regions, because most of these "households" comprise one single individual, the count of households is only slightly lower than the count of individuals. In fact, nine of the 27 Continuum of Care plans for the state list the same totals for individuals and households. The statewide total of individuals is 33,088, while the statewide total of households is 31,009, a seven percent difference.

in homeless and domestic violence shelters and transitional housing. (See footnote for full definitions and populations excluded from this definition.)²

- *Counting method:* These populations must be counted through a one-day census of homeless persons in each Continuum of Care region to be conducted at least bi-annually during the last week of January. In Florida, coalitions conduct these point-in-time surveys annually. Unlike in previous years, HUD does not allow the use of multipliers or other estimating methods to produce a population number.

Many homeless coalitions and advocates in Florida, including the state Council on Homelessness, support an expanded definition of homelessness that would include other populations, particularly those doubled up with others or living in motels because they cannot find housing. This report uses the Continuum of Care plan data because they represent the current definition of homelessness under state law, because they were derived through the same method and definitions by all coalitions in the state, and because they provide information about the number of family households that is unavailable from other counts. However, we recognize that many feel that the homeless population numbers in the Continuum of Care plans are artificially low. This is particularly true for homeless families with children, who are more likely to find temporary arrangements with friends and family.

² HUD's specific instructions for counting sheltered homeless persons are as follows:

HUD defines sheltered homeless persons as adults, children, and unaccompanied youth who, on the night of the count, are living in shelters for the homeless, including:

- *Emergency shelters;*
- *Transitional housing;*
- *Domestic violence shelters;*
- *Residential programs for runaway/homeless youth; and*
- *Any hotel, motel, or apartment voucher arrangements paid by a public or private agency because the person or family is homeless.*

[According to HUD's definition of homelessness] the following types of people should not be counted as part of the sheltered population:

- *Persons living doubled up in conventional housing;*
- *Formerly homeless persons living in Section 8 SRO, Shelter Plus Care, SHP permanent housing or other permanent housing units;*
- *Children or youth, who because of their own or a parent's homelessness or abandonment now reside temporarily or for a short anticipated duration in hospitals, residential treatment facilities, emergency foster care, or detention facilities;*
- *Adults in mental health facilities, chemical dependency facilities, or criminal justice facilities.*

From U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *A Guide to Counting Sheltered Homeless People*, October 2, 2006, p.5.

HUD's instructions for counting unsheltered homeless persons are as follows:

An unsheltered homeless person resides in a place not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, abandoned buildings, or on the street.

From U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD's Homeless Assistance Programs, *A Guide to Counting Unsheltered Homeless People Revised*, Sept. 29, 2006, p.5.

Supply

To estimate the amount of transitional and permanent supportive housing available, we used the counts from the 2007 Continuum of Care plans. Again, note that the report counts *units* for families with children and *beds* for persons in other households. The average family housing unit houses 3-4 family members. An individual bed, whether in its own housing unit or in a shared facility, by definition houses one person.

The report does not include emergency shelter beds as part of the housing supply. The Florida Housing Finance Corporation does not consider shelter beds to constitute anything but temporary housing, and persons residing in emergency shelters are counted in the homeless population.

III. Need and Supply

Need

Statewide, 33,088 single adults, unaccompanied youth, and married adults without children are homeless in Florida. The counties or multi-county regions with more than 1,000 individuals from this population are Hillsborough, Miami-Dade, Broward, Clay-Duval-Baker-Nassau, Pinellas, Orange-Osceola-Seminole, Lee, Brevard, Palm Beach, Okaloosa-Walton, St. Johns, and Monroe.

Among families with children, 6,466 households are homeless. The counties or multi-county regions with more than 200 homeless families are Hillsborough, Pasco,³ Orange-Osceola-Seminole, Okaloosa-Walton, Indian River-Martin-St. Lucie, De Soto-Glades-Hendry-Hardee-Highlands-Okeechobee, Citrus-Hernando-Lake-Sumter, Miami-Dade, Flagler-Volusia, and Clay-Duval-Baker-Nassau.

Table 1 and Figures 1 and 2 on the following pages show the number of homeless individuals and families by county or multi-county region. Note that in areas where more than one county collaborated on a Continuum of Care plan, the same need category is displayed for each on the maps. This represents the total across all of the counties participating in the plan. For example, Orange, Osceola, and Seminole Counties fall within the “2,001-4,663” category on the individuals map. This represents the total need across all three counties, not the need in any one county.

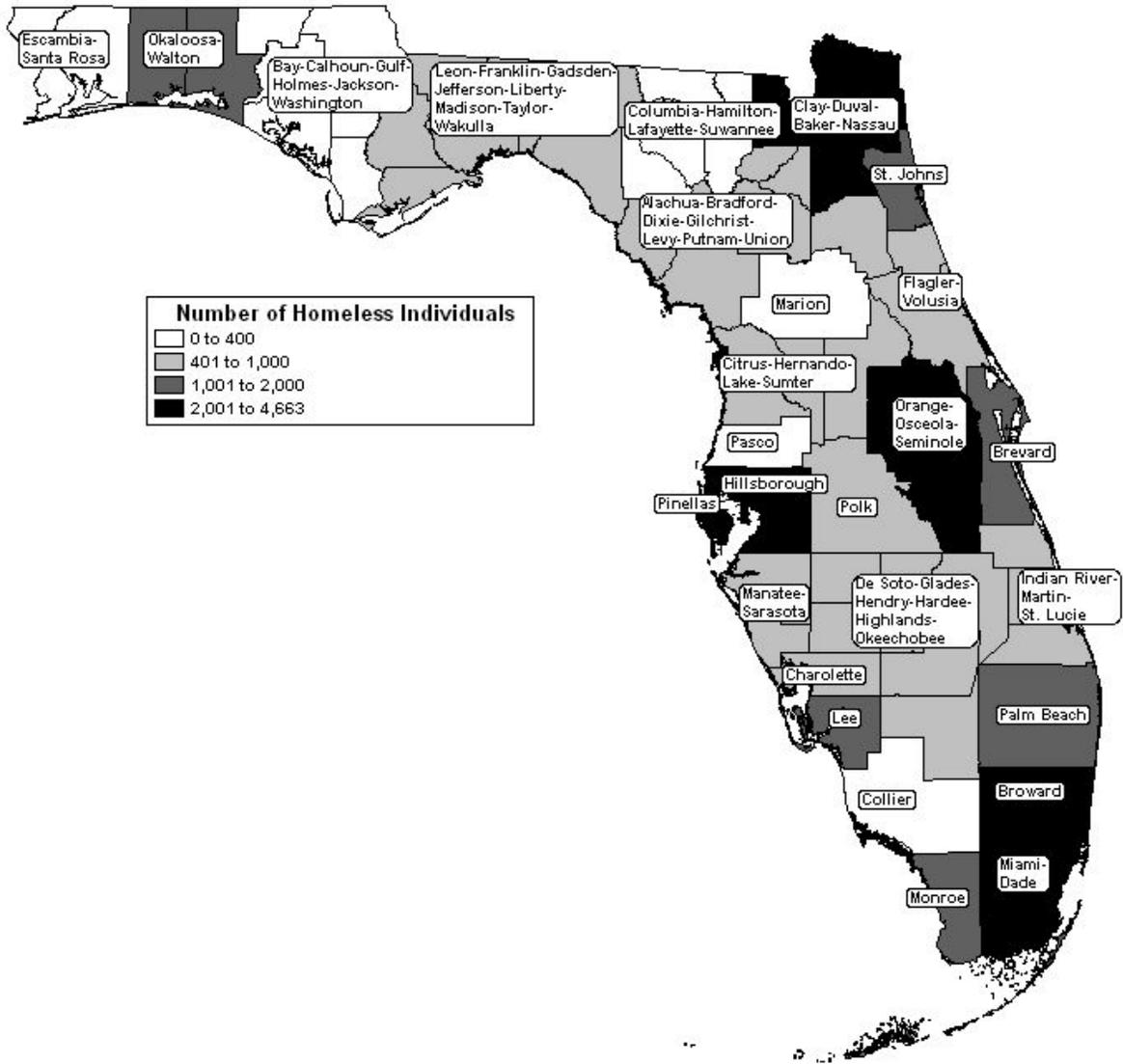
³ Pasco County’s count of homeless families, as reported by the local homeless coalition, includes the total from the local school board’s count of homeless children. This count likely includes families in situations not included in other coalitions’ totals, such as families doubled up with others, in substandard housing, or at risk of homelessness. Therefore, while including families that would be included in a more expansive definition of homelessness, the Pasco County family count is relatively high and is not methodologically consistent with the counts for other areas included in this report.

Table 1. Homeless Individuals and Families by Region, 2007

Coalition	Coalition Counties	Individuals	Families with Children
Big Bend	Leon-Franklin-Gadsden-Jefferson-Liberty-Madison-Taylor-Wakulla	434	44
Brevard	Brevard	1,532	115
Broward	Broward	2,451	178
Central Florida	Orange-Osceola-Seminole	2,009	544
Charlotte	Charlotte	635	46
Collier	Collier	383	32
EscaRosa	Escambia-Santa Rosa	368	104
Heartland	De Soto-Glades-Hendry-Hardee-Highlands-Okeechobee	904	398
Hillsborough	Hillsborough	4,663	1,287
Jacksonville	Clay-Duval-Baker-Nassau	2,237	250
Lee	Lee	1,958	123
Marion	Marion	348	45
Miami-Dade	Miami-Dade	3,163	347
Mid-Florida	Citrus-Hernando-Lake-Sumter	845	378
N. Central	Alachua-Bradford-Dixie-Gilchrist-Levy-Putnam-Union	589	39
Northwest	Bay-Calhoun-Gulf-Holmes-Jackson-Washington	269	12
Okaloosa/Walton	Okaloosa-Walton	1,193	442
Palm Beach	Palm Beach	1,302	150
Pasco	Pasco	215	831
Pinellas	Pinellas	2,129	151
Polk	Polk	593	63
Southernmost	Monroe	1,017	37
St. Johns	St. Johns	1,099	50
Suncoast	Manatee-Sarasota	777	79
Suwannee	Columbia-Hamilton-Lafayette-Suwannee	149	19
Treasure Coast	Indian River-Martin-St. Lucie	972	398
Volusia/Flagler	Flagler-Volusia	854	304
Total		33,088	6,466

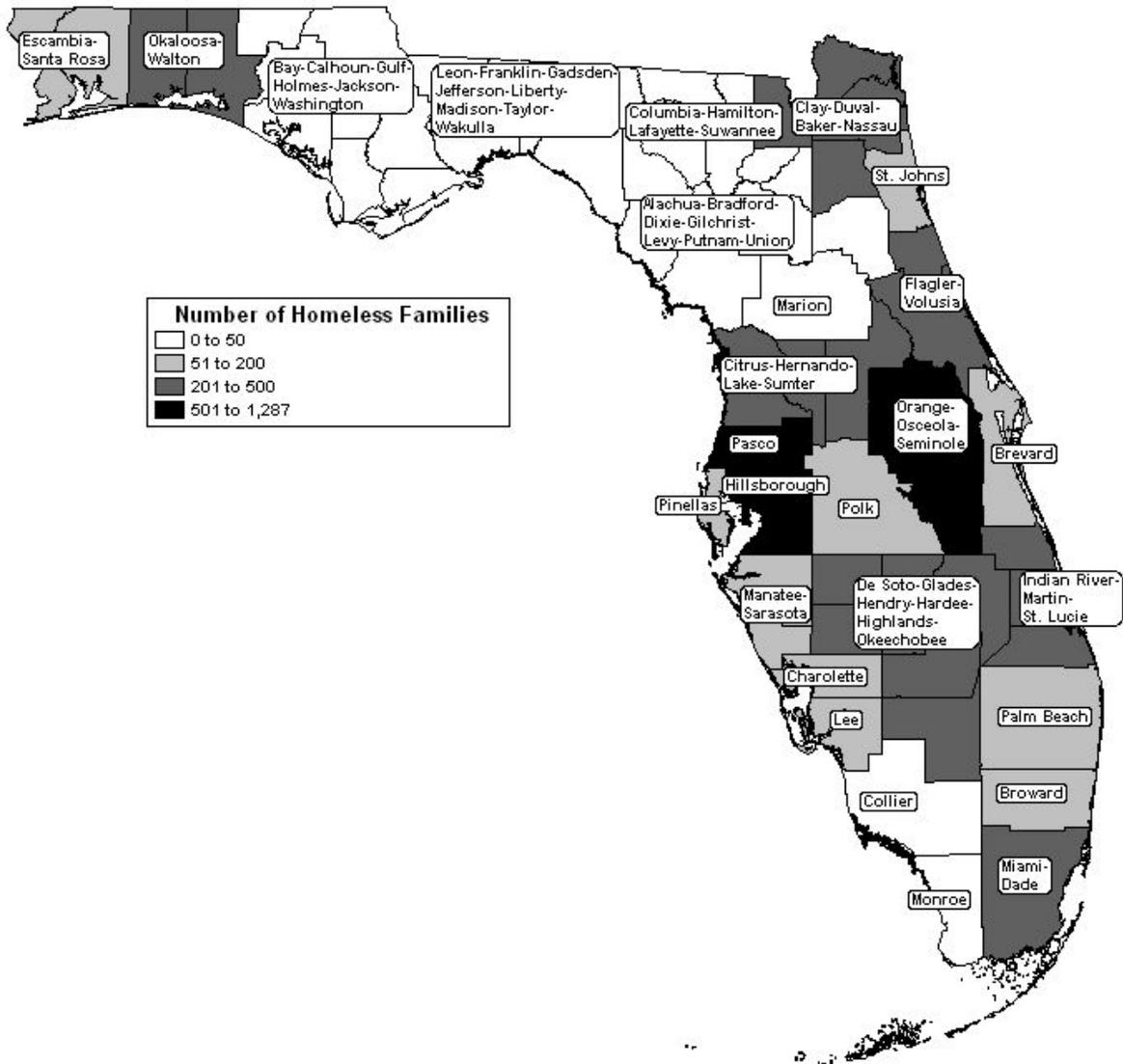
Source: Local Homeless Coalitions, *HUD Continuum of Care Plan: Exhibit 1*, 2007.

Figure 1. Homeless Individuals by Region, 2007



Source: Local Homeless Coalitions, *HUD Continuum of Care Plan: Exhibit 1, 2007.*

Figure 2. Homeless Families by Region, 2007



Note: In areas where more than one county collaborated on a Continuum of Care plan, the same need category is displayed for each. This represents the total across all of the counties participating in the plan, not the total for any single county. Also, note that Pasco County's count of homeless families, as reported by the local homeless coalition, includes the total from the local school board's count of homeless children. This count likely includes families in situations not included in other coalitions' totals, such as families doubled up with others, in substandard housing, or at risk of homelessness.

Source: Local Homeless Coalitions, *HUD Continuum of Care Plan: Exhibit 1*, 2007.

Supply

The state has 13,788 transitional housing and permanent supportive housing beds for single adults, unaccompanied youth, and married adults without children. For families with children, there are 2,768 transitional and permanent supportive housing units statewide.

Table 2 on the following page lists the supply of transitional housing and permanent supportive housing for individuals and families in each county or multi-county region. Note that the table lists the number of beds for individuals and the number of housing units for family households.

The table also calculates each region's "level of effort" in providing permanent supportive housing compared to the homeless population. The level of effort equals the number of permanent supportive housing units divided by the number of individuals or families who are currently homeless. A level of effort ratio below 1.0 indicates that there are more individuals or families currently homeless than there are permanent supportive housing beds or units. A ratio of 1.0 indicates a region that has an equal number of homeless individuals or families and of beds or units. A ratio greater than 1.0 indicates that the region has more permanent supportive housing beds or units than individuals or families who are currently homeless. Note, however, that the permanent housing supply is likely to be largely occupied and therefore unavailable to currently homeless individuals and families. Therefore, a ratio greater than 1.0 does not imply that there is not a need for additional housing for homeless persons.

Statewide, the level of effort ratio is 0.18 for housing for individuals and 0.2 for housing for families.

Table 2. Transitional and Permanent Housing Supply by Region, 2007

Coalition	Counties	Individuals			Families		
		Transitional Housing Beds	Permanent Supportive Housing Beds	Permanent Supportive Housing Level of Effort	Transitional Housing Units	Permanent Supportive Housing Units	Permanent Supportive Housing Level of Effort
Big Bend	Leon-Franklin-Gadsden-Jefferson-Liberty-Madison-Taylor-Wakulla	262	149	0.34	42	54	1.23
Brevard	Brevard	252	43	0.03	64	36	0.31
Broward	Broward	1,356	474	0.19	132	381	2.14
Central Florida	Orange-Osceola-Seminole	606	581	0.29	193	-	-
Charlotte	Charlotte	76	96	0.15	20	26	0.57
Collier	Collier	47	34	0.09	11	2	0.06
EscaRosa	Escambia-Santa Rosa	283	55	0.15	21	-	-
Heartland	De Soto-Glades-Hendry-Hardee-Highlands-Okeechobee	63	122	0.13	12	24	0.06
Hillsborough	Hillsborough	701	201	0.04	125	136	0.11
Jacksonville	Clay-Duval-Baker-Nassau	728	783	0.35	96	14	0.06
Lee	Lee	265	122	0.06	1	-	-
Marion	Marion	200	24	0.07	34	-	-
Miami-Dade	Miami-Dade	1,081	1,441	0.46	295	479	1.38
Mid-Florida	Citrus-Hernando-Lake-Sumter	145	59	0.07	3	-	-
N. Central	Alachua-Bradford-Dixie-Gilchrist-Levy-Putnam-Union	106	124	0.21	25	2	0.05
Northwest	Bay-Calhoun-Gulf-Holmes-Jackson-Washington	100	-	-	25	-	-
Okaloosa/Walton	Okaloosa-Walton	30	35	0.03	12	14	0.03
Palm Beach	Palm Beach	185	275	0.21	84	7	0.05
Pasco	Pasco	25	-	-	-	10	0.01

Coalition	Counties	Individuals			Families		
		Transitional Housing Beds	Permanent Supportive Housing Beds	Permanent Supportive Housing Level of Effort	Transitional Housing Units	Permanent Supportive Housing Units	Permanent Supportive Housing Level of Effort
Pinellas	Pinellas	473	310	0.15	82	21	0.14
Polk	Polk	218	28	0.05	32	24	0.38
Southernmost	Monroe	178	147	0.14	16	13	0.35
St. Johns	St. Johns	72	75	0.07	35	8	0.16
Suncoast	Manatee-Sarasota	258	486	0.63	37	1	0.01
Suwannee	Columbia-Hamilton-Lafayette-Suwannee	24	11	0.07	-	-	-
Treasure Coast	Indian River-Martin-St. Lucie	54	123	0.13	20	7	0.02
Volusia/Flagler	Flagler-Volusia	140	62	0.07	88	11	0.04
Total		7,928	5,860	0.18	1,505	1,270	0.20

Source: Local Homeless Coalitions, *HUD Continuum of Care Plan: Exhibit 1*, 2007.

IV. Data Limitations

By nature, estimates of the number of homeless persons contain uncertainty. Because all population estimates are now done using the one-day point-in-time survey, they are likely more consistent across the various homeless coalitions than in previous years, when coalitions chose their own methods of estimating population. However, as noted above, many in the state feel that HUD's definition of homelessness forces them to greatly understate the full population in need of housing. The exclusion of people doubled up in conventional housing, people living temporarily in hotels or motels, youth aging out of foster care, and adults currently in correctional facilities with no home to return to after a sentence, is particularly problematic.

Moreover, the one-day counts are themselves difficult to perform accurately, particularly as coalitions attempt to identify unsheltered populations. Factors such as the weather on the day of the count and the coalitions' familiarity with the locations most likely occupied by unsheltered persons affect the accuracy of the count.

Because they are based on counts of actual beds provided by local agencies, the supply estimates in the Continuum of Care plans should be more reliable. It is likely that Table 2 above includes most if not all of the state's supply of transitional housing and permanent supportive housing. Nevertheless, the supply data have both obvious and more subtle limitations. One clear omission in the supply data is the availability of housing for homeless persons other than the transitional and permanent supportive housing beds reserved specifically for them. For example, some of the supply of public and subsidized housing identified elsewhere in the Rental Market Study also may be available to some homeless individuals and families.

In other ways, however, the supply numbers likely mask the true housing needs of Florida's homeless population. First, homelessness is a fluid characteristic. Estimates reported in this section of the assessment reflect the magnitude of the homeless population only at a single point in time. However, individuals and families move in and out of homelessness at varying rates. Some are homeless only for a brief period due to a short-term crisis or transition, while others are cyclically or chronically homeless. Consequently, a greater number of persons are homeless during the course of a month or year than at any given instant, and more housing may be needed throughout the year to accommodate them.

Second, the various types of beds for homeless persons are not interchangeable. Housing facilities serving homeless persons often are directed toward a specific population, and these facilities and their services may not be appropriate for other populations. For example, a supportive housing facility for single adults with HIV/AIDS is not interchangeable with a facility for persons with mental illness, but both would be counted in the general supply of housing for single adults. Therefore, the aggregate supply numbers mask the need for a number of types of facilities matching the different types of services needed by homeless individuals and families.

Appendix 1. Effects of the 2004-2005 Hurricanes on Homelessness

The hurricanes of 2004 and 2005 damaged millions of homes in Florida. The University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research estimates that 2.6 million of Florida's 8.1 million housing units were damaged in the 2004 storms alone, with 35,000 units destroyed and 649,000 sustaining major damage.⁴

To determine how the storms affected the incidence of homelessness in Florida, the Shimberg Center conducted interviews with nine local homeless coalitions representing 15 counties that experienced the worst hurricane housing damage in 2004 or 2005:

- EscaRosa Coalition on the Homeless (Escambia, Santa Rosa Counties)
- Charlotte County Homeless Coalition (Charlotte County)
- Treasure Coast Homeless Services Council, Inc. (St. Lucie, Indian River, Martin Counties)
- Heartland Rural Consortia for the Homeless (De Soto, Okeechobee, Hardee, Hendry Counties)
- Homeless Coalition of Polk County (Polk County)
- Brevard County Department of Housing and Human Services (Brevard County)
- Broward Coalition for the Homeless (Broward County)
- Homeless Coalition of Palm Beach County (Palm Beach County)
- Southernmost Homeless Assistance League (Monroe County)

The local coalition for a sixteenth county, Miami-Dade, could not be reached for an interview. The interview questions are included as Appendix 2.

The hurricanes affected homelessness in these counties in different ways. In some areas, such as Charlotte County, the hurricanes caused an acute increase in homelessness due to damaged homes and lost jobs in the months immediately after the storms, followed by a gradual recovery in 2006 and 2007. In others, such as Broward County, the hurricanes simply exacerbated an ongoing shortage of affordable housing for low-wage workers.

⁴ Stanley K. Smith and Chris McCarty, *Florida's 2004 Hurricane Season; Demographic Response and Recovery*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southern Demographic Association Durham, NC, November 2-4, 2006, p.11.< [http://www.bebr.ufl.edu/system/files/SDA%202006%20\(FL%20Hurr\).pdf](http://www.bebr.ufl.edu/system/files/SDA%202006%20(FL%20Hurr).pdf)>.

About half of those interviewed reported that their area counts of homeless persons increased following the storms, but that these increases had subsided by the 2007 counts.⁵ Many felt, however, that the homeless point-in-time counts missed the bulk of those made homeless by the hurricanes. The counts do not include persons who are doubled up with others or living in hotels, the primary means by which people found shelter when their homes were lost or damaged.

While the local coalitions see conditions returning to normal, interviewees cited many different lingering effects of the hurricanes on homelessness and housing for low-income residents. Examples include:

- The persistence of households living in FEMA trailers in some regions, ranging from a few households to hundreds. These households are counted as homeless in the point-in-time surveys.
- The loss of multifamily rental stock that, while in poorer condition and thus easily damaged, did provide affordable housing before the storms.
- Continuing mold and mildew problems in multifamily units.
- Lower unemployment than immediately following the storms, but more people working in intermittent or low-paying jobs that leave them unable to afford housing.
- A loss of service jobs as tourists have begun to avoid storm-prone areas during hurricane season.

Finally, the storms also affected the area's emergency shelters and other homeless service providers. Loss of power was the most common problem, although many shelters also sustained damage. In most cases, this damage has been fixed; a few shelters and programs operating in market-rate housing remain closed. A number of interviewees said that cooperation between service agencies allowed homeless service providers to continue or restart their operations quickly despite power losses and damage from the storms.

⁵ In one case, the opposite was true. Brevard County's homeless count *decreased* following the storms as many long-term homeless persons left the coast for inland areas. To some extent, they were replaced by those made newly homeless by a combination of rising rents and job loss due to hurricane damage to businesses.

Appendix 2. Hurricane Survey Questions

1. How do you think the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons affected homelessness in your service area?
2. Did your coalition ask about hurricane damage to homes as a cause of homelessness in your 2006 point-in-time survey? In 2007? If so, what were the results?
3. Did your coalition change its definition of homelessness because of the hurricanes?
4. To the best of your knowledge, in your service area, to what extent did:
 - a. People become homeless because of hurricane damage to homes?
 - b. People become homeless because of other economic losses related to the hurricanes, such as job loss?
 - c. The number of homeless people increase in your area because of hurricane-related relocations from other communities?
 - d. The hurricanes affect the existing homeless service delivery system, either by damaging facilities or by adding newly homeless people needing services?