

Ohio Balance of State Continuum of Care Coordinated Entry Evaluation Project Overview

September 25, 2023



Methodology

The C4 team utilized a mixed methods approach to understand the Ohio BoS CoC CES processes. The primary goals of the evaluation were to:

- Elicit information that evaluates the effectiveness of the client flow through the CES.
- Pinpoint any racial discrepancies within the county's CES.
- Identify ways in which the regional practice of the CES reflects the intent, vision statement, and guidance of funders.
- Data sources included stakeholder interviews, surveys, and analysis of data extracted from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).



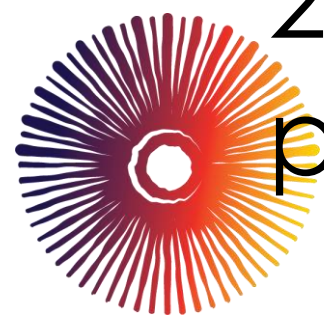
Equity – Quantitative Data

Households identifying as Black are over 5 times *more* likely to be represented in the PIT count as experiencing homelessness when compared to the Census demographics of the broader community.

Households identifying as Native American/Alaskan are 2.4 times *more* likely to be accounted for in the 2021 PIT count when compared to the general population.

Households identifying as Hispanic are 1.8 times *more* likely to be accounted for in the 2021 PIT count as experiencing homelessness when compared to the general population.

Households identifying as White are 1.2 times *less* likely to be accounted for in the 2021 PIT count as experiencing homelessness when compared to the general population.



Access – Qualitative Data

Limited Access Points and Hours Across Regions. There was a wide variation in survey responses around whether CES Access Points are well advertised. The researchers concluded that this was a region-by-region opinion with the CES having more exposure in certain regions.

Lack of Transportation and Walkability in Rural Communities Access to CES is hindered in rural areas due to a lack of public transportation and areas that are not easily walkable. These transportation challenges disproportionately affect residents of rural communities.



Access – Quantitative Data

Rates of participants in the CES during 2022 compared to the rate of participants in the 2021 PIT count and rates of the general population of Ohio

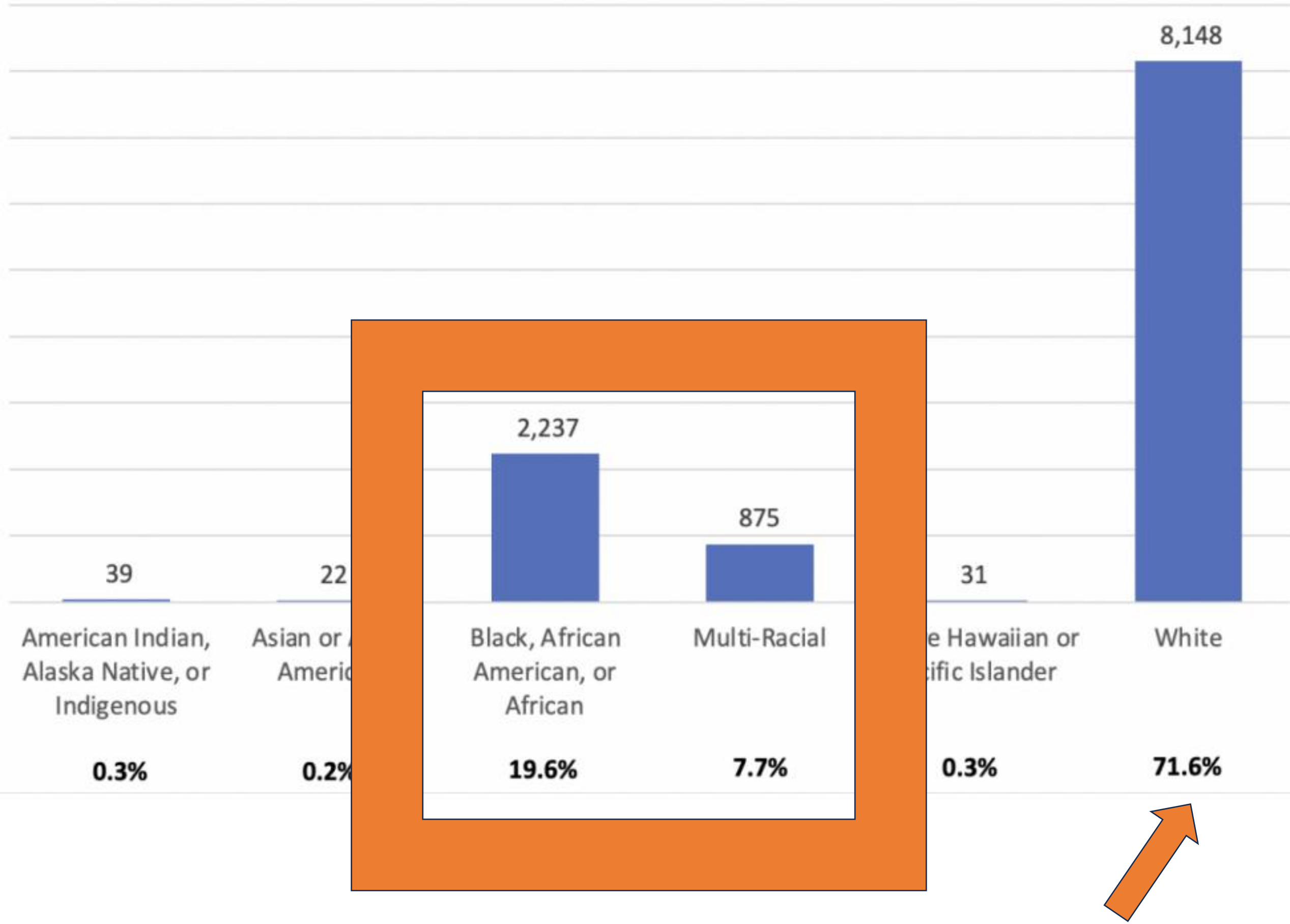
Households identifying as White are underrepresented in the CES when compared to the general population.

Households identifying as Black, African American, or African are 4.4 times more likely to have gone through the CES compared to the general population.

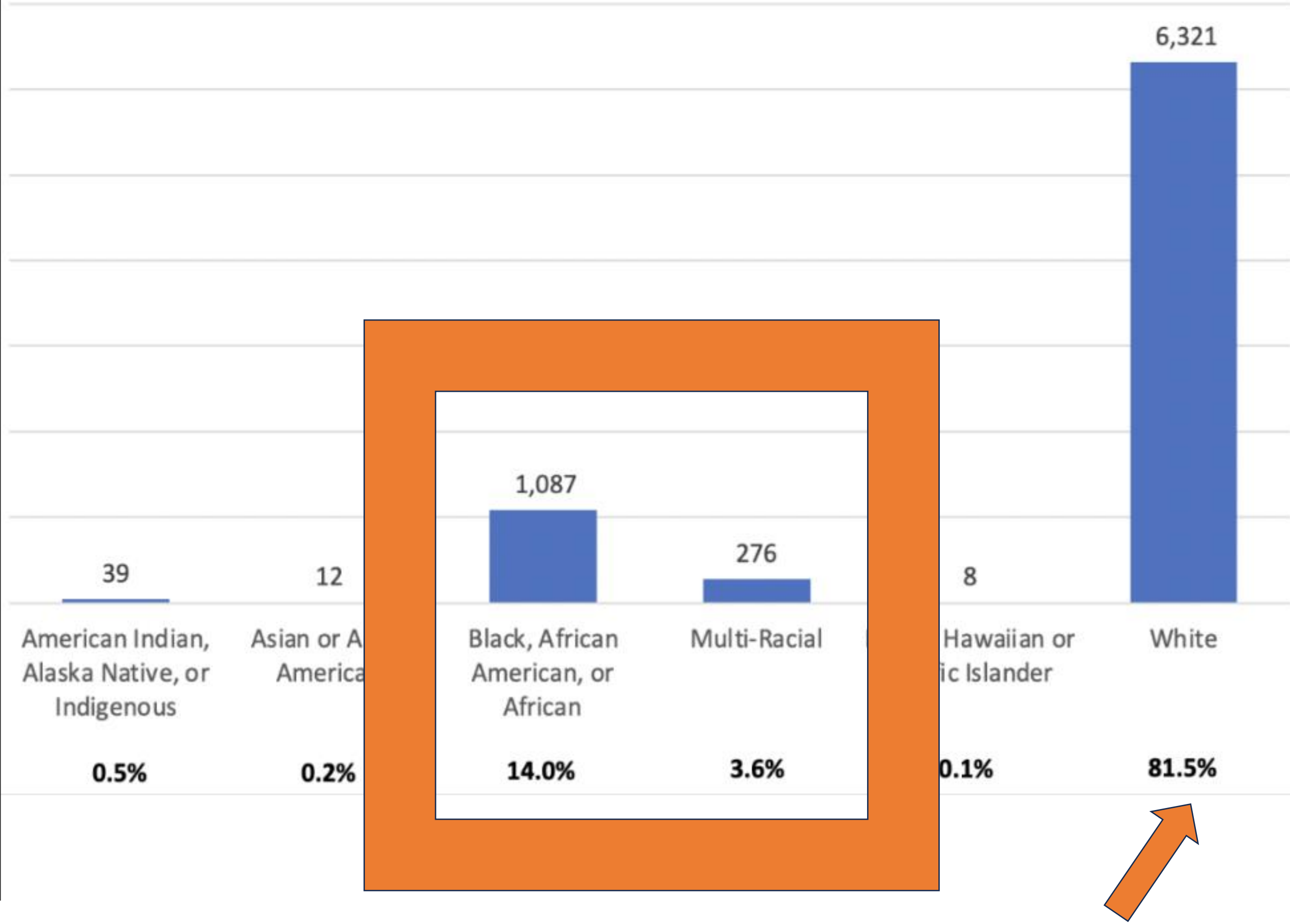
Households identifying as Multi-Racial are 2 times more likely to have gone through the CES when compared to the demographics of the general population.



**Racial Identities of Coordinated Entry Participants
With No Disabling Condition**



**Racial Identities of Coordinated Entry Participants
With Disabilities**



Assessment - Qualitative Data

Multiple stakeholders agreed that the VI-SPDAT may not identify the most vulnerable CES applicants.

Overall stakeholders described themselves as well trained on the assessment process

Many CES leads suggested a more trauma informed approach

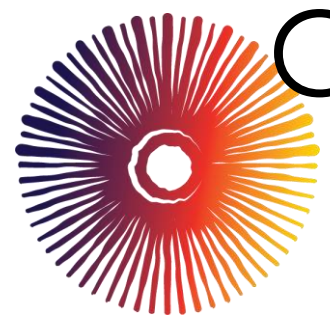


Assessment – Quantitative Data

In 2022, households identifying as White made up an average of 76.2% of total CES enrollees, households identifying as Black or African American or African represented an average of 17.8% of all CES enrollees, and households identifying as Multi-Racial made up an average of 6% of all enrollees.

Average Length of Time in Coordinated Entry:

Participants identifying as White and as Multi-Racial had similar average lengths of time in the CES, 90.1 days and 90.9 days, respectively. Participants identifying as Black or African American or African averaged 76.1 days in CES.



Prioritization

Multiple CES stakeholders commented that errors from the assessment tool inhibit their ability to prioritize CES participants appropriately. Reasons cited include:

- Participants not disclosing information about themselves because they do not want the information stored in a shared database (HMIS)
- Participants not disclosing truthful information about themselves but rather telling assessors what the participants believe assessors want or expect to hear
- Participants downplaying the severity of their needs or circumstances because they believe that it will increase their prioritization for housing.

Multiple survey participants suggested that their prioritization practices would be greatly improved by gaining access to additional housing opportunities and learning to clean the prioritization list.



Referrals – Qualitative Data

- Lack of Affordable Housing and Beds: The scarcity of housing options in Ohio presents a substantial hurdle for CES referrals. Without affordable housing, individuals referred to housing programs may face significant challenges in finding suitable accommodations.
- Absence of Clear Policies on Rejections: Stakeholders have noted the absence of clear policies regarding the rejection of referrals. The lack of transparency and consistency in this regard can hinder CES's ability to effectively match individuals with appropriate services.

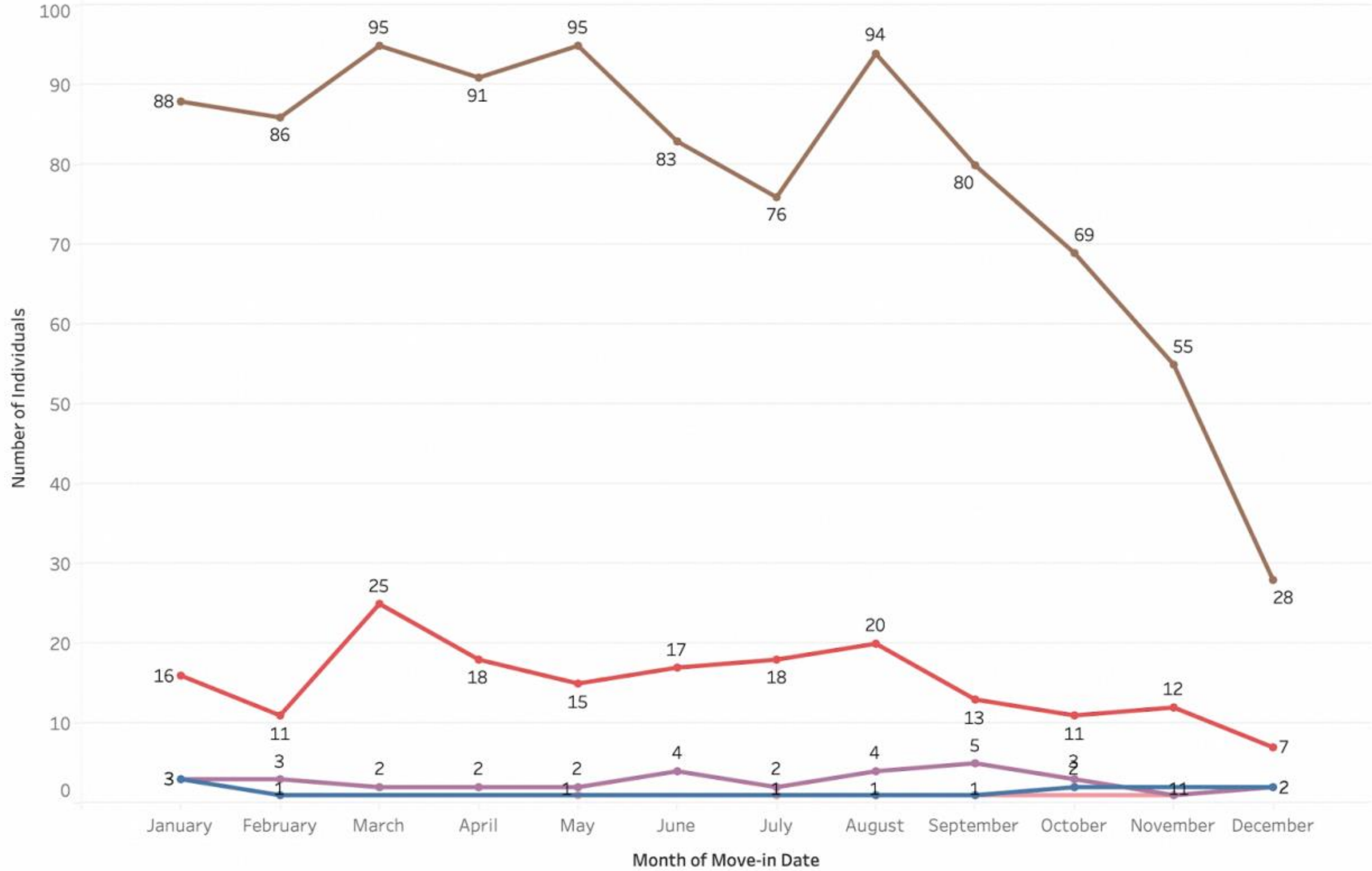


Referrals – Quantitative Data

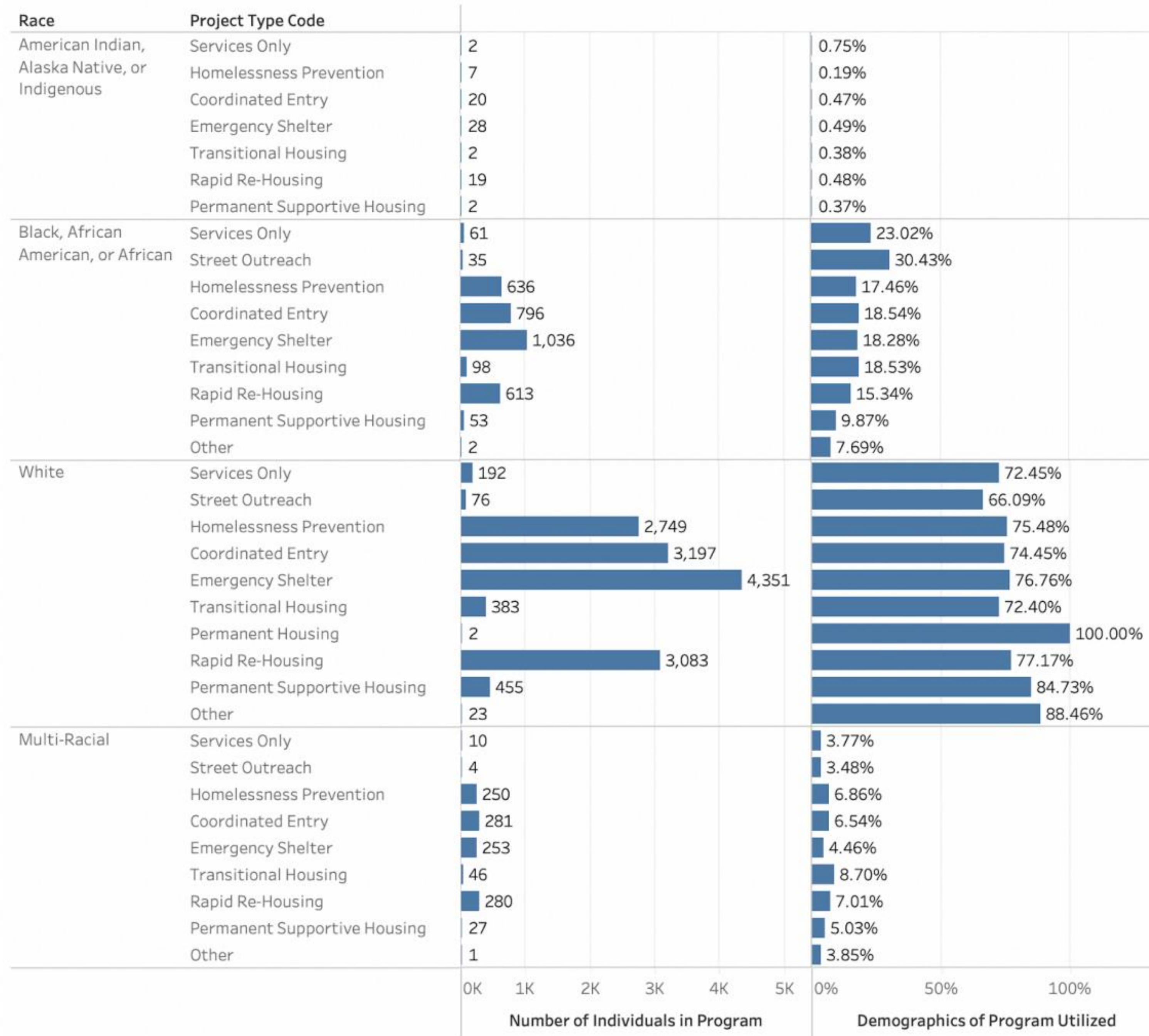
- Fifteen percent (15.34%) of all Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) was accessed by individuals identifying as Black, African American, or African in 2022. In comparison, individuals identifying as White received 77.17% of all RRH resources that were distributed, individuals identifying as Multi-Racial received 7.01% of all RRH resources, and American Indian, Alaska Native, and Indigenous households received 0.48% of RRH distributed in Ohio Balance of State.
- Nearly ten percent (9.87%) of all Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) was accessed by individuals identifying as Black, African American, or African in 2022. In comparison, 84.73% of all PSH resources were connected to individuals identifying as White. Folks identifying as Multi-Racial received 5.03% of all PSH, and American Indian, Alaska Native, and Indigenous households received 0.37% of all PSH distributed in the CoC in 2022.



Number of Housing Move-Ins by Race in 2022



Resources Accessed by Race



Region A

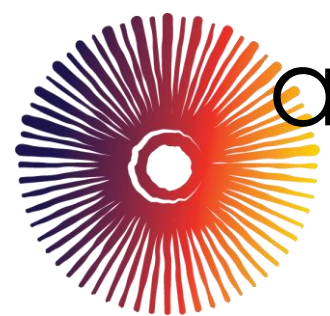
The community of providers are working more closely together in general and that they are experiencing success in housing people experiencing homelessness.

The region has an online application and offers the ability to be assessed via phone and on a walk-in basis.

They were positive that their assessment concerns were heard by the CoC and work to develop a revised tool was ongoing.

The region holds a “community conference” weekly for those who can participate and removing CES participants from the list after 30 days without contact.

Stakeholders reported that PWLE have a voice in the homeless services system in the region and that new CES staff are trained to respect and respond to their voices and needs.



Region A

Challenges cited by this group included not enough staff or time to work with every client that identifies as homeless and a lack of staffing to conduct assessments.

The region experiences a shortage of shelter space and the community does not use diversion strategies.

Shelters are not conducting CES assessments for all persons presenting for assistance, but rather they are assessing persons staying in the shelter.

Many staff members from homeless services agencies believe participants may not provide honest responses due to the deeply personal questions asked in the VISPDAT.



Region A - Recommendations

Consider supporting Region A to move to a “no wrong door” approach that allows equitable access to CES across subpopulations of people experiencing homelessness and in locations inclusive of urban and rural parts of the region.

The Lead Agency and community needs to prioritize support to streamline the assessment process to help ensure that all person seeking assistance are assessed for vulnerability.

Revisit the CoC’s diversion training for shelter providers. The Lead agency provides written guidance, training, and screening tools for CoC stakeholders but may consider in person or online training for shelters.



Region B

The community of providers are using the CES to focus on housing the most vulnerable individuals experiencing homelessness.

The region provides phone, walk-in and after-hours phone line access to CES and multiple access points.

Stakeholders feel like they are handling the management of the prioritization list in a responsible manner, describing the use of an excel spreadsheet for case conferencing meetings. Meetings to discuss prioritization for housing are held every other week and CES participants stay on the list until they receive the resources they need.



Region B

Access to CES in rural areas due to a lack of transportation in the region, not having enough staff to complete assessments and difficulty providing resources in rural parts of the region

CES staff also reported that participants are reluctant to answer some of the VISPDAT questions, especially youth, who must answer additional, personal questions in the assessment.

Stakeholders noted that their relationships with landlords are strained and that certain individuals are difficult to house even with financial resources.

CES stakeholders remarked that they make every effort to include CES participant choice in the CES experience, however it was most difficult to offer choices around permanent housing.



Region B - Recommendations

Region B could consider its lack of housing at a community-based level rather than at the agency level and apply for funding to have a regional landlord engagement lead. Having agencies collaborate to find housing may give more options towards engaging and partnering with landlords. Hiring a professional whose expertise lies in engaging and recruiting landlords benefits the whole homeless response system. It also prevents agencies competing with one another for a small landlord pool.

The community and Lead Agency could discuss a way forward around procedures to responsibly clean the prioritization list.



Best Practices

The implementation of a CES has led to an improvement in the prioritization of the most vulnerable and marginalized individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Operating a CES has brought the community of homeless services agencies and other social service providers into more collaborative working relationships.

Case conferencing now occurs on a regular basis throughout the CoC and should continue. Despite multiple stakeholders mentioning that housing opportunities were rare, services are offered regardless of housing options during these meetings and agencies are able to troubleshoot challenges with the assessment tool in this setting.



Recommendations

Increase access to permanent housing, especially for BIPOC

Increase involvement of people with lived experience of homelessness (PWLE)

Explore alternatives to the assessment tool

Review the HMIS data analysis and observation

Planning at the Regional level



Limitations

- Two hundred duplicate records were removed from the dataset before analysis was completed.
- C4 researchers interviewed 2 out of 17 regions in the Balance of State CoC
- Most qualitative data collected for this study came from surveys
- Researchers found a great deal of variation in survey and interview responses due to the large number of CES stakeholders from different geographic areas and circumstances throughout the CoC.
- HMIS data in the report reviews data patterns and trends within CES programs, not root causes.



Questions?





Community & Behavioral Health | Recovery | Social Change

Christy Hahn, *Associate Director of Housing Solutions*, chahn@c4innovates.com

Lindsey Giblin, *Lindsey Giblin Consulting*, lindseygiblinconsulting@outlook.com

Jonathan Cox, *Director of Housing Solutions*, jcox@c4innovates.com



c4innovates.com