



2025 Homeless Services Advisory Committee Annual Report

Reporting Period: January – December 2025

Introduction

The Homeless Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) continues to advance its mission to prevent and end homelessness in Durham by serving as the primary decision-making body for the Durham Continuum of Care (CoC). This report outlines key activities, transitions, and accomplishments from the past year, as well as strategic priorities moving forward.

Key Highlights

Transition to Durham Community Safety Department (DCSD)

The Continuum of Care's administrative functions transitioned to the DCSD from the former Community Development Department, marking a significant structural shift. This move strengthens alignment between homelessness response and broader public safety and community well-being strategies. DCSD uses a multi-disciplinary approach to better serve neighbors with a variety of complex needs. As such, HSAC is now fully staffed by the Housing Opportunities and Pathways Engagement (HOPE) team, which has significantly improved the support provided to the decision-making body.

Strategic Framework Planning Activities

In July of 2025, the City of Durham and DCSD launched a strategic framework planning process with Community Solutions, a nationally known best practice consultant working with 150 communities, to achieve Functional Zero in homelessness by 2031. Functional Zero occurs when a system can serve more neighbors than become homeless in a given month. From the beginning, HSAC has been involved in the process, with HSAC leadership represented throughout the strategic framework process. The process is intended to result in implementation of the strategic framework to achieve Functional Zero across all subpopulations (including singles, families, veterans, youth, seniors, and survivors of domestic violence).

Youth Homelessness System Improvement (YHSI) Initiative

HSAC has approved a workgroup under its Policy & Planning standing committee for a Youth Action Board (YAB). This is an effort led by Central Pines Regional Council to create a cross-CoC approach to streamlining services for youth experiencing homelessness. As youth cross neighboring county boundaries, services will be coordinated for continuity, and to avoid duplication and the likelihood of repeated trauma. This structure ensures youth voices are embedded in system design and accountability.

Successful Funding Competitions

HSAC approves the annual United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Continuum of Care and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding competition applications submitted by the CoC. For the FY24 HUD CoC competition, the CoC successfully earned its highest investment in this competition to date – \$2.99M. The CoC also received more than \$350K in Emergency Solutions Grant funds from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. Funds from the awards were distributed to local homeless services and housing providers through Rapid Rehousing and Permanent Supportive Housing projects. Members of HSAC and the CoC supported each funding competition by participating as volunteer objective reviewers of project applications, resolving appeals, and approving final submission packages.

Learning Reports

The CoC prioritized data transparency and continuous improvement through the release of several learning reports. These reports provided insights into system performance, client outcomes, Point-in-Time (PIT) Count trends, and improved service delivery. Throughout the process, feedback was collected from various stakeholder groups to inform final reports.

HSAC Orientation

A comprehensive orientation was held for new HSAC members, emphasizing governance responsibilities, CoC structure, racial equity, and the role of lived experience in decision-making. The orientation was well-received and will be institutionalized as an annual practice.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee (EC) of the Homeless Services Advisory Council spent 2025 strengthening the structure and transparency of its governance. Leadership transitions were completed smoothly, onboarding tools were created to help new members understand their roles, and meeting formats were adjusted to improve accessibility.

The committee also introduced a member portal and explored new technologies, such as Zoom's AI summary features, to preserve institutional knowledge and streamline operations.

Policy development was another major focus. The committee participated in thoughtful discussions around the creation of a tent policy, an improved appeals process for funding competitions, and responsiveness to public comments.

Alongside this, the EC advanced long-term planning by supporting the launch of a 6-month strategic framework planning process with DCSD and Community Solutions. Members of

the Executive Committee participated in listening sessions and joined the Core Leadership Team and Advisory Group.

The EC also supported the creation of a new workgroup for the Policy & Planning Committee. The Durham Youth Action Board, part of a regional Youth Homelessness System Improvement initiative led by Central Pines Regional Council, aims to help streamline efforts across neighboring CoCs so that services to youth are efficient and effective.

The EC also played a central role in funding oversight and community support. They submitted mid-year budget requests to expand system capacity, ensured full access to State ESG funds, and monitored progress on HOME-ARP investments. Their work extended to supporting new housing developments, backing the UNITE Street Medicine Project, and participating in a provider appreciation effort.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Performance Management Committee (PMC) achieved several key milestones in oversight, funding administration, and strategic evaluation for the Durham Continuum of Care (CoC).

Funding and Competition Management:

- The committee successfully managed the FY 2024-25 State Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) competition, overseeing the review of six applications. Durham CoC was funded its max entitlement of \$173,005 to fund emergency shelter operations, street outreach, and rapid rehousing across three providers.
- Following the ESG competition, the committee finalized funding recommendations and established new protocols for future cycles, such as providing pre-submittal peer application assessments and additional technical assistance to improve application quality.

Project Performance and Evaluations

- PMC Committee members volunteered alongside direct service projects to build consensus on 2025 performance metrics and development of the 2025 Scorecard. The results were used to revise Durham CoC's automated performance evaluation tool.
- Spring 2025 semi-annual performance evaluations were conducted and the results shared with projects, who also received "report cards" to help them understand their scores and opportunities to make improvements. Most projects scored well. Only one project scored below the threshold, triggering a Performance Improvement Plan. However, no PIP was issued because the project had already voluntarily reallocated their funds for the upcoming funding year.

- Fall 2025 semi-annual preliminary evaluations were conducted on 20 projects across 6 organizations by the Lead Agency. The results were shared with the projects and the PMC. This process involved running preliminary reports for street outreach, emergency shelter, and supportive housing to ensure data accuracy before final scoring. Final evaluation results are typically used to score and rank project performance during the annual United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) CoC funding competition, which was delayed in 2025.

Housing First Evaluation:

- PMC members engaged in robust discussions regarding Housing First evaluations, analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the community's approach and exploring innovative solutions like shorter leases with concrete benchmarks to ensure tenant success.
- Due to major shifts in HUD's priorities under the current administration, Durham CoC suspended its evaluation of Housing First for all projects. While a useful approach, the evaluation had primarily been conducted to show alignment with HUD, which has now effectively ended Housing First. However, Durham CoC continues to value and prioritize housing as appropriate for all neighbors experiencing homelessness.

Other notable PMC accomplishments included:

- Reviewed the draft Durham One Number dashboard, a public-facing tool that uses HMIS data to track demographics and inflow/outflow trends of people experiencing homelessness. The tool will be released in early 2026.
- Participated in an evaluation of the HMIS Lead's (North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness – NCCEH) performance to ensure compliance with HUD requirements and to identify communication improvements.

POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Throughout 2025, the Durham Homeless Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) Policy & Planning Committee grappled with systemic challenges rooted in a lack of diverse shelter options, insufficient affordable housing, and the complexities of system-wide coordination. The committee's work was characterized by intense debate over immediate harm reduction versus long-term housing solutions, culminating in several critical decisions and strategic shifts.

Significant focus was placed on improving the governance, structure, and long-term vision of Durham's homeless response system. The need for a new strategic plan was a recurring theme. In April, the committee discussed issuing an RFP for a consultant. By June, an organization was selected to lead the process, with work beginning on July 1, 2025. Updates in August and November confirmed that listening sessions and system mapping exercises were underway.

In June, the committee voted to recommend that a new Youth Action Board (YAB) become a subcommittee of Policy & Planning. The YAB, supported by a federal Youth Homeless System Improvement Grant, is designed to integrate the perspectives of youth with lived experience into policy development across Durham, Wake, Orange, and Chatham counties.

In November, the PIT Count Planning Work Group presented its recommendation to not conduct the traditional unsheltered PIT count in January 2026. The unsheltered PIT Count is required every other odd-numbered year (and thus not required in 2026). The group agreed that HMIS data, despite its flaws, provided a more comprehensive annual picture (1,487 unsheltered adults in FY25) than the one-night PIT count (196 unsheltered). The recommendation was to instead focus on 1) improving HMIS data accuracy, 2) conducting partial scans or "mini" PIT counts by outreach teams, and 3) holding a community engagement event in January to replace the volunteer-driven count. The official unsheltered PIT Count will resume in 2027 as required by HUD.

Major decisions regarding funding priorities were made, most notably the approval of a radically new strategy for the FY2025 HUD Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) in response to federal caps on permanent housing projects. The committee also navigated complex discussions on the future of the Unsheltered Coordinated Agency (UCA) and addressed persistent challenges in the referral and leasing processes for new affordable housing units at properties like Cedar Trace.

Data Collection, Reporting, and Performance

Improving the quality and use of data was a central priority, leading to a major shift in long-standing data collection practice.

- The committee voted in March and April to approve a change in the HMIS data quality reporting schedule from a trimester basis to a quarterly basis, aligning with other CoCs in the state.
- In October, a proposal was presented for a statewide HMIS data warehouse to integrate systems from four CoCs, with the primary goal of achieving an unduplicated count of people experiencing homelessness across North Carolina.
- A November report on HUD System Performance Measures showed Durham performing better than national averages on length of time homeless and successful housing placements but significantly under-performing on employment and income growth for individuals in CoC-funded projects.

Funding Allocations and Priorities

The committee made several key decisions regarding prioritization and allocation of local, state, and federal funds.

- In May, the committee voted to advance a recommendation to use \$4 million in HOME-ARP funds to support a housing development for which the Durham Housing Authority has committed 25 project-based vouchers.

- For the \$173,005 State ESG application in June, the committee voted to recommend prioritizing families as a subpopulation and maintaining the existing 50/50 funding split between Emergency Shelter and Housing Stabilization.
- In a critical vote in December, the committee approved the HOPE team's recommended prioritization for the HUD CoC NOFO. This new strategy was necessitated by a federal rule capping permanent housing projects at 30% of the overall budget. The approved plan is to prioritize Tier 1 for Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) for seniors and individuals with disabilities (not including substance use disorders), and Tier 2 for Transitional Housing and Supportive Services-Only projects.

Lived Experience Advisors (LEAD) Workgroup

The LEAD Workgroup continued to meet monthly. At the start of 2025, this workgroup submitted priorities focused on expanding emergency shelter capacity and variety (such as shelters for couples, neighbors with pets, and other unique subpopulations), requesting Day Center services, and advocating for sanctioned encampments and safe parking for unsheltered neighbors. Workgroup members reviewed unsheltered numbers and shared information from the field, providing insight into what might be happening with specific subpopulations. They also volunteered alongside standing committees to help update policies (such as the Coordinated Entry and Grievance policies) and to support funding competition application reviews. Several LEAD Workgroup recommendations from 2024 were included in the 2025 mid-year budget request, strengthening the voice and influence of LEAD'ers within Durham CoC.

Looking Ahead

In 2026, the HSAC will support the following in calendar year 2026:

- Implementation of the Strategic Framework (official kickoff July 1, 2026)
- Enhancing data integration and evaluation, and system performance
- Deepening collaboration with DCSD, other city departments, and external stakeholders
- Support federal funding priorities and competitions, including HUD CoC and State ESG
- Hosting the Durham Youth Action Board and monitoring progress on a regional system improvement approach for youth homelessness.

Conclusion

The Durham CoC and HSAC remain committed to a coordinated, equitable, and data-informed approach to ending homelessness. We thank the Clerk's Office and City leadership for their continued support and partnership.