

# Homeless Women

## IN MONTEREY COUNTY





# Homeless Women

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### BACKGROUND

The goal of this assessment is to document the primary causes of homelessness for women, women’s needs and challenges, existing services, and recommendations for supporting women’s path to stability. This assessment was commissioned by the Community Foundation for Monterey County (CFMC) on behalf of the County of Monterey, Department of Social Services and Health Department.

Data was gathered through primary and secondary sources. Data included contributions from 107 staff of service providers, public agencies and faith-based organizations, and over 120 homeless women from the Monterey Peninsula, Salinas and Salinas Valley who generously participated in surveys, interviews and group conversations. A policy scan was also conducted to identify policies and environmental factors that impact homeless women in Monterey County.

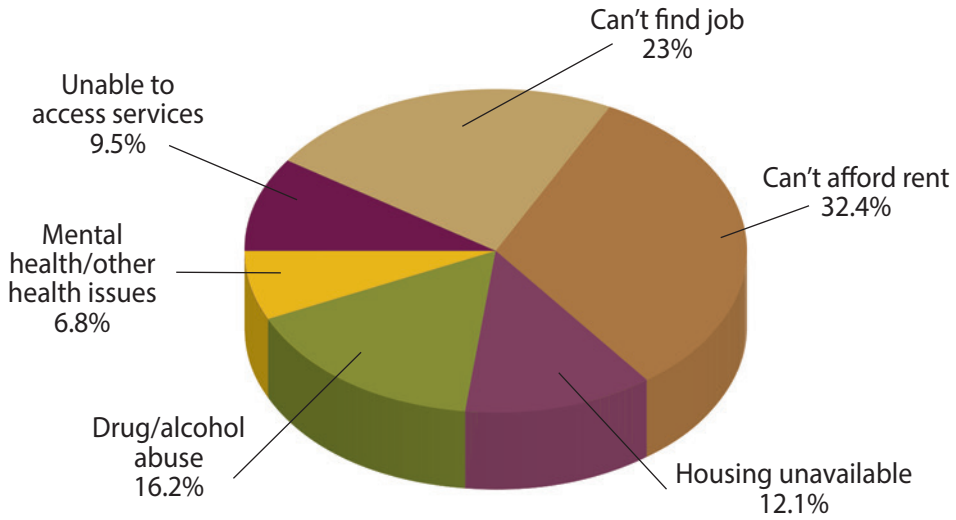
### MAIN CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS:

#### Poverty and loss of income

The primary causes of homelessness among Monterey County women are mostly connected to **poverty** and **loss of income** in a community with very limited availability of affordable housing. Other important factors include: **mental illness and/or alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence**, family disintegration, divorce/separation from partner or spouse, and catastrophic illness/accident.

### Greatest Obstacles for Securing Housing

Women interviewed and surveyed identified the following as the greatest obstacles for securing housing.



### Local Landscape

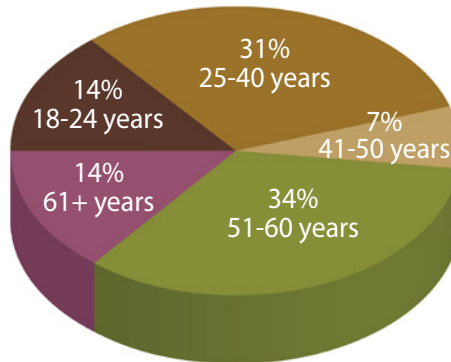
- **Few options** for residents who can't afford the increasing market rates for home ownership and rental
- **A limited job market**, particularly for older women or women who have been unemployed for some time
- **Complex service structures** and regulations that, through eligibility and application requirements, limit or inhibit access to services
- **Limited allocation of resources** for the expansion of agency capacity to provide more space and more flexible options to meet the needs of a very diverse homeless population
- The **stigma** associated with homelessness interferes with decisions about allocation of public resources and location of services, including shelters, and affordable housing, whether transitional or permanent

# Key Statistics

## Age of women surveyed or interviewed

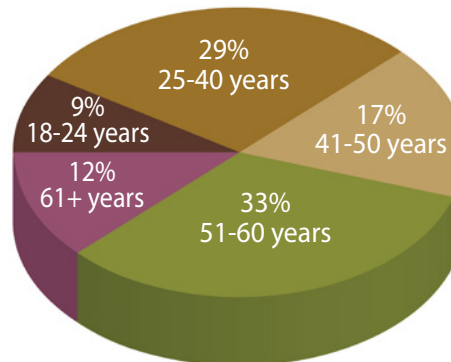
### Peninsula

Our study and data provided by organizations and advocacy groups serving homeless women on the Peninsula identify them as older than the Monterey County homeless population overall; 34% in the 51 to 60 age range, and 14% over age 61.



### Salinas Valley

The largest percentages of women surveyed in the Salinas Valley were in the age ranges of 51 to 60 years old (33%) and 25 to 40 years old (29%).



It is important to also consider age-related data provided by Monterey County Departments serving homeless women, which is included in other sections of this report.

## Ethnicity

According to women interviewed and, as reported by service providers and advocacy groups, over 60% of the homeless women on the Peninsula are white, followed by Latinas of any race, African Americans and Asians/Pacific Islanders.

Of 249 homeless women served by the Housing Resource Center from 2015 to date, 61 women identified as being Latinas.

51% of the women interviewed in Salinas identify as Latinas, 29% as non-Latina white, 7% as African-American, 11% as mixed race and 2% identify as Asian.

Service providers in North County and South County indicate that most of the homeless women they serve are Latina, including indigenous women from Oaxaca, Mexico.



## Homeless Females in Public Agency Records

- 1,803 - clients of the Monterey County Department of Social and Employment Services (MCDSS)
- 240 - served in 2015-16 by Monterey County Behavioral Health Division
- 2,722 - served in 2015 -16 in Monterey County Clinics Services
- 6,077 - homeless children in the Monterey County Schools System (all genders)





### The Challenge with Shelters

Some women find them unsafe if shared with men, and prefer not to use them, while other women won't use them if they have to be separated from their male partner or teen/adult son.

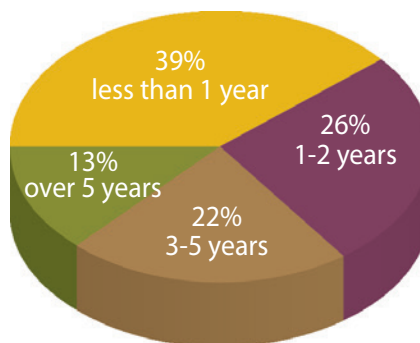
**Education: Over 57% of the women surveyed in all parts of the County had completed high school. 35% had attended college, mostly one or two years. A small percentage had a college degree.**

## Key Statistics, continued

### Time

- ▶ **39% of women surveyed on the Peninsula and 21% in Salinas had been homeless for less than a year** while 13% of Peninsula women and 17% of Salinas women had been homeless for more than 5 years.
- ▶ **In North & South County, unsheltered homelessness is reported to be episodic and of short duration.** Women live in hotels or vehicles until they can find a room or space to rent ("doubled up" condition).

### Time Experiencing Homelessness



Monterey Peninsula

## Living Arrangements

Living arrangements describe the way a homeless woman spends her day and where she may find sleeping accommodations.

- 60% of unsheltered Peninsula women surveyed sleep in vehicles. 70% are alone (without family, spouse or partner).
- In Salinas, 68% of unsheltered women surveyed sleep in tents, parks, freeways or parking structures, and only 11% sleep in vehicles. Others sleep in motels or couch surf. 57% of Salinas women surveyed were alone and 18% had children with them.
- Of the 249 homeless women served by the Housing Resource Center from 2015 to date, 217 had children with them; 31 were alone.
- In North & South County, service providers in the region report that most homeless women live with other families, especially if they have children, but often in one room, garage or shed. A few may live temporarily in vans or vehicles.

**Note:** Researchers had greater access to sheltered women in Salinas than on the Peninsula. 43% of women surveyed in Salinas and 37% of women on the Peninsula indicated sleeping or living in some form of shelter.

## Key Statistics, continued

**“With more people finding high rents or mortgage payments impossible to pay, sleeping in a car or motor home has become a widespread last resort.”**

—California Homelessness Reporter

## Income

On average, over 80% of the women surveyed or interviewed on the Peninsula and 71% of women interviewed in Salinas had some form of income, such as government benefits from General Assistance (GA), Social Security (SS), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Disability Income (DI), or part-time or self-employment (retail, housecleaning, care giving, gardening, recycling, cooking, agricultural fields, child care, clerical, etc.) 17.8% of income reported by women in Salinas was from some form of employment. Those interviewed who reported not having income lacked required ID or documentation such as birth certificate, were not eligible to apply for benefits, or had recently become unemployed and had not applied for benefits. A few had simply given up trying to apply.

**Although most women have income, the income reported is very low.**

▶ **60% live on less than \$500 per month**

▶ **Only 15% receive over \$1,000 per month**

## Use of Income

On the Peninsula, the women's greatest expenses were food and gasoline, followed by shelter/motels. Other items mentioned with equal frequency were: vehicle repair/insurance, hygiene (showers and products), laundry, telephone and pet food. Also mentioned with less frequency were storage, transportation (bus passes or taxi), batteries and veterinary expenses.

In Salinas, income is used primarily for shelter, food and personal care. Other uses include:

- |                  |                        |
|------------------|------------------------|
| ■ Transportation | ■ Day care             |
| ■ Clothing       | ■ Baby products        |
| ■ Phone          | ■ Car-related expenses |
| ■ Laundry        | ■ Keeping warm         |



## SERVICE GAPS

Many service gaps were identified by the women, advocates and service providers. Key among them are:

- Easily accessible places to apply for support services, and to meet daily needs, particularly in certain areas of Salinas, the Peninsula, and North and South County
- Easily accessible mental health screening and referrals, and preventative health services
- Greater shelter capacity for women fleeing domestic violence
- Free or very low-cost childcare and free or low-cost transportation
- Legal services for women of all ages
- Financial counseling and training
- Job counseling and advocacy with employers and job training to update basic skills
- Greater availability of shelters, transitional housing and affordable permanent housing



“I have food stamps but I don’t have refrigeration or safe storage for food. Buying supplies for one meal at a time is expensive.”

—Focus Group Participant

#### Peninsula Respondents rated their health as:

Physical Health	Mental Health
50% Poor	43% Poor
41% Good	44% Good
9% Excellent	13% Excellent

#### Salinas/N&S County Respondents rated their health as:

Physical Health	Mental Health
33% Poor	30% Poor
53% Good	50% Good
14% Excellent	20% Excellent

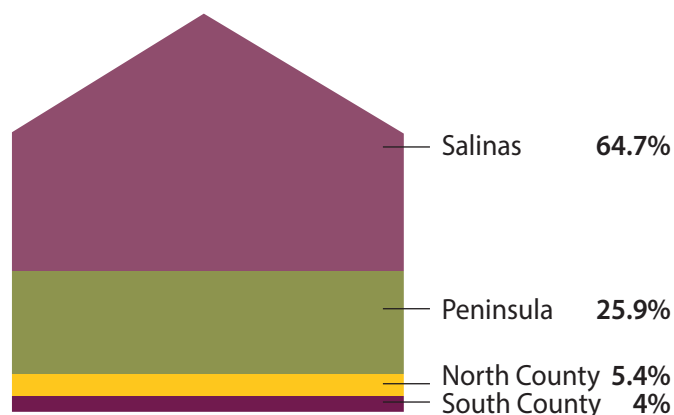
## Health & Safety

**“Having a stable home lifts a huge burden. With a roof over their heads, the women can begin to dream and take steps towards self-sufficiency—they can begin to change.”** —Kim Carter, Founder, Time for Change Foundation and former homeless woman

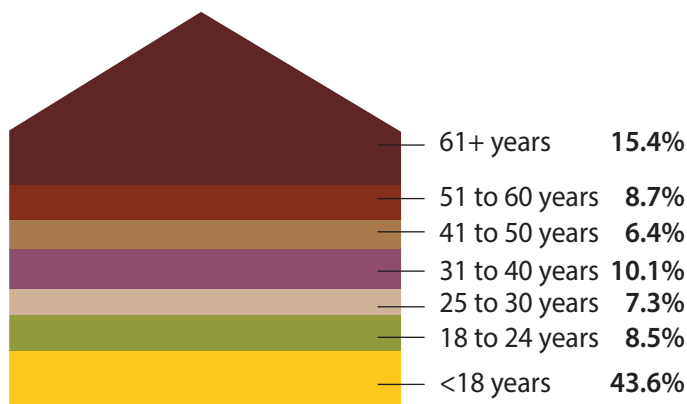
### Health Status

Data provided by the Monterey County Health Department indicates that 2,722 homeless women and girls received services in the county’s clinics in 2015-16. Of the diagnoses reported, 2.5% had substance use issues, 20% had a psychiatric diagnosis, 19% had hypertension and 14% had diabetes. 80.7% of the women and girls were Latinas. Of the women surveyed for this study, 85% reported having seen a doctor within the past year.

### Homeless Women – County Clinics by Region



### Homeless Women – County Clinics by Age



Regarding age, 43.6% were under age 18. Among adult women the highest percentage (15.4%) is in the 61+ range.

“¿Mi salud mental?  
Estoy desesperada.”  
 (“My mental health? I’m desperate.”)

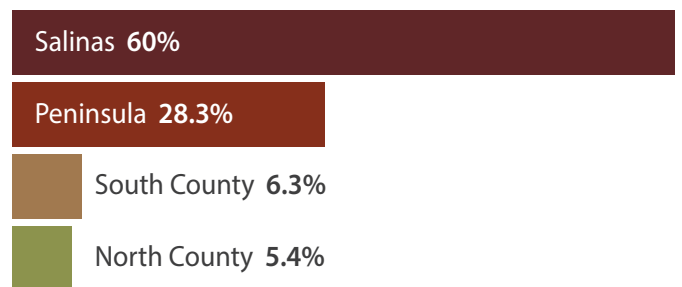
—Homeless mother of 5 children in Greenfield. Works in the fields but income is not sufficient for permanent housing. Lives in hotel for now.

# Health & Safety, continued

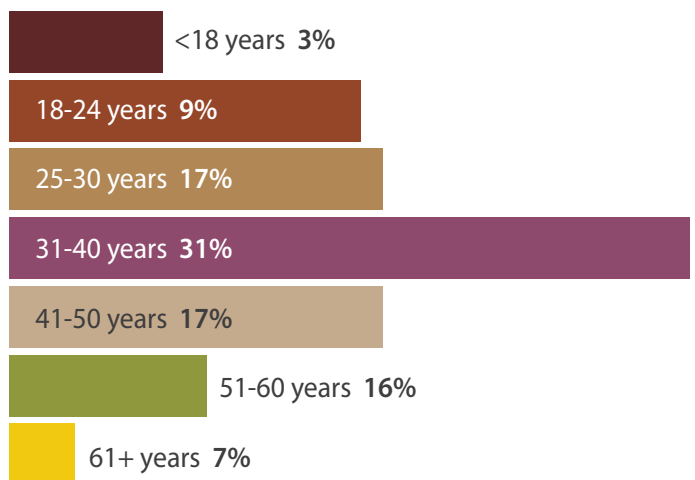
## Health and Safety Findings

- 64.7% of homeless women served in county clinic services were from Salinas and 25.9% from the Peninsula.
- Regarding age, the largest percentage of females served in county clinics was of young women and girls under age 18 (43.6%).
- Among the adult population, the largest percentage was of women age 61 or over (15.4%)
- Over 70% of women surveyed on the Peninsula and 87% surveyed in Salinas and other regions of the County indicated being able to access some form of health care.
- Women on the Peninsula use the Monterey County clinics in Seaside and Marina, as well as Doctors on Duty/Urgent Care in Monterey, among others.
- In Salinas, women surveyed reported receiving health care at the following:
  - ✓ 47.17% - Natividad
  - ✓ 20.75% - Clínica de Salud
  - ✓ 7.55% - Private doctor
  - ✓ 28.30% - Other:
    - Doctors on Duty
    - Monterey County Behavioral (Mental) Health
    - Emergency Room
    - Health Clinic at Dorothy's Place
- Of the 240 homeless women receiving services in the County Behavioral Health System in 2015-16, the largest percentage was in the 31 to 40 age range (31.3%). 60% were in Salinas and, countywide, 37.5% were Latinas. 35% were diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder, 15% had substance use issues, and 41% had a dual diagnosis (mental illness and substance addiction.)

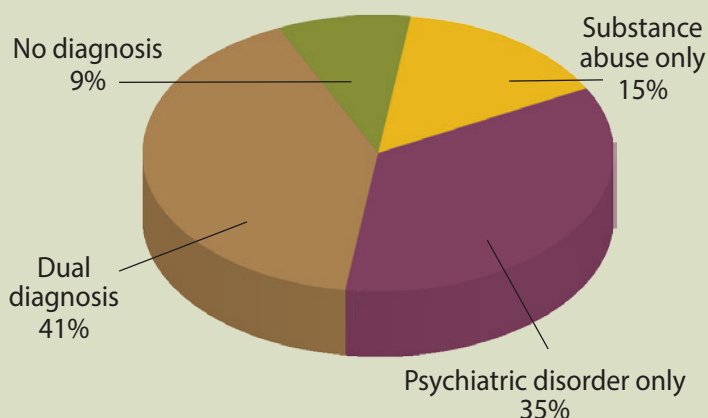
## In Behavioral Health – by Region



## In Behavioral Health – by Age



## Diagnosis – in Behavioral Health System



### What the Women said:

- 26.8% of women surveyed for this study in Salinas had been diagnosed with a mental illness.
- 63% of the women surveyed by Interfaith Homeless Emergency Lodging Program (I-HELP) on the Peninsula reported that use of alcohol or other drugs was not keeping them from obtaining housing. 13% identified addiction or mental illness as a cause for their homelessness.





# Health & Safety, continued

## Health Issues Impacting Homeless Women Surveyed

### Physical Health:

- Arthritis
- Chronic back problems: injuries, pain
- Leg, knee, hip pain; some use walkers; some waiting for surgeries
- Diabetes
- Diverticulitis
- Heart problems
- Hepatitis C
- High blood pressure
- Dental problems
- Physically weak; exhaustion
- Strokes & seizures

### Behavioral Health

- Bipolar disorder
- Addiction/alcoholism
- Stress & trauma related issues

### Other Health Notes:

The Natividad Hospital Case Management Services Department utilizes registered nurses who work directly with attending physicians, interdisciplinary teams, and outside agencies to organize appropriate levels of care and a safe discharge plan. Regarding homeless women who receive services at the hospital, they indicated the following:

- Women are often seen at the emergency room and are sometimes admitted to the hospital
- Most women are middle age to elders
- Some have children, but family members take care of them while the woman is in the hospital; if no family is available, women are likely to leave hospital sooner than advised because of the children
- Most are suffering from illness, not injury from violence
- The causes of their homelessness are primarily poverty, alcohol use or other drugs and mental illness
- They have very few housing options when they leave the hospital
- It is easier to find placement for men in alcohol or other drug recovery facilities than for women (limited bed capacity and long wait lists). It is more effective for patients with alcohol addiction to be released to a treatment facility from the hospital, rather than waiting for placement later on.
- Natividad Hospital Foundation sometimes provides funding for two to five days in a motel for “softer landing” after the hospital

Three hospitals—Natividad, Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula (Montage Health) and Salinas Valley Health Care Systems (SVMH)—share “Respite House” managed by Community Homeless Solutions in Seaside for homeless people who require longer term care after the hospital stay (6 beds – 30 to 45 days). Social workers help them get into a stable environment before they leave the Respite House.

“We need more facilities for women in rehab. We need safety for women. We need to understand they are on drugs and they draw each other to it. If they had a safe place, at least some would come out of drugs. They are afraid and cannot believe they could leave that place.” —Survey Respondent

#### Clinica de Salud – Mobile Clinic in Chinatown

- Approximately 120 visits from women a month (some may be repeat visits by the same woman)
- Many women have MediCal but clinic has grant to cover care of those who don't
- Provide check ups and routine care; if more advanced care is needed, they are referred to Natividad or a specialist – 70% require referrals
- Ages 25 to 50 but mostly older
- More protection is needed to reduce women's exposure to violence

#### Door to Hope Women's Recovery Programs

- Of 287 served in Outpatient last year, 11% were homeless women
- Of 69 participants at Nueva Esperanza, 30 were homeless women



# Health & Safety, continued

## The Threat of and Experience with Violence

Law enforcement personnel we interviewed throughout the County for this study indicated that assaults, whether sexual assault or domestic violence, are often not reported and, even if reported initially, many women in vulnerable situations, including homelessness, don't press charges. Officers responding to assault or domestic violence incidents report being restricted in their ability to find shelter for the women who chose to accept it due to the limited capacity of the shelters in our County.

**SURVIVAL**  
defines all decisions  
and relationships.

► **From January 1 to September 30, 2016, Monterey Rape Crisis Center served 14 homeless rape survivors; 9 were from Salinas and 5 were from the Peninsula.**

Paying for one or two nights at a motel (some motel owners reduce rates on a limited basis to police departments in case of emergencies, and the officers pay the fees out of their own resources) is a temporary solution when no other options are available.

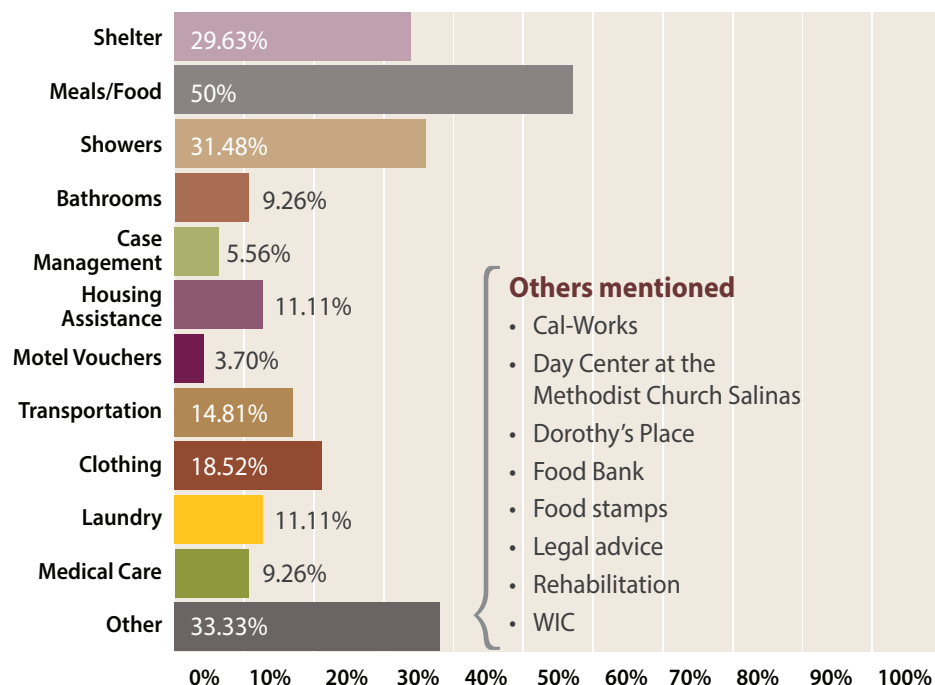
If no shelters are found locally, women sometimes are referred to facilities in Hollister, Watsonville or San Luis Obispo. The latter two sites are resources that YWCA staff access when their safe house is at full capacity. The YWCA serves those fleeing domestic violence and human trafficking. The safe house can only accommodate 3 families at a time, for up to 10 beds. Their crisis line (24/7) and counseling services are used more than the shelter. 50% of women using all services are or have been homeless, but the majority live with family members; most are from Salinas. Women can stay at the shelter for two months and then move to transitional housing, if needed and available (Salvation Army, Pueblo del Mar, Community Homeless Solutions, etc.). Lack of childcare is a major barrier to getting jobs or participating in counseling. The woman's legal status is also a challenge because it is sometimes difficult to place undocumented women in other programs. Emergency shelter for domestic violence is also provided by Community Homeless Solutions at Hamilton House on the Peninsula (16 beds) and the Salinas Emergency Shelter (12 rooms – 32 beds) for women alone or with children.

- 40% of female respondents to the 2015 County Homeless Survey reported having experienced domestic violence and 12% identified as a cause for their homelessness.
- 20% of the women surveyed by I-HELP for Women mentioned domestic or parental violence as the cause for their homelessness.
- Interim's MCHOME team worked intensively from January to October 2016 with 18 women, the majority over age 40. 15 out of the 18 women disclosed having been the victim of domestic violence.
- The Housing Resource Center has served 249 homeless women from 2015 to date. Of those, 17 identified domestic violence as the cause of their homelessness.
- YWCA staff report that most women lack knowledge of their legal options (e.g., property control orders that enable them to stay home).
- Women of all ages are at risk of sexual violence. From January 1 to September 30, 2016, Monterey Rape Crisis Center served 14 homeless rape survivors; 9 were from Salinas and 5 were from the Peninsula.
- Fear for their safety is often the reason why women stay away from coed warming shelters, why a car with locking doors becomes their fortress, and why pets, particularly dogs are essential companions.
- Local police departments follow Sexual Assault Resources Services (SARS) protocols when a rape or sexual assault is reported. All efforts are made to find a safe place for the woman to go after the attack (YWCA safe house, emergency shelter, motel or out of county placement, if necessary and the woman accepts). But rape counselors fear that, having no other recourse, some women may eventually return to the area where they were assaulted.
- Women in a focus group shared that many are not likely to report the assault for fear of retaliation and shame.

# Accessing Services

Women surveyed were asked to identify the services they use most. In all parts of the county, food, shelter/housing, personal care and help in connecting to services are in great demand. Case management, counseling, physical and mental health services and recovery from addiction are also greatly needed.

## Accessing Services



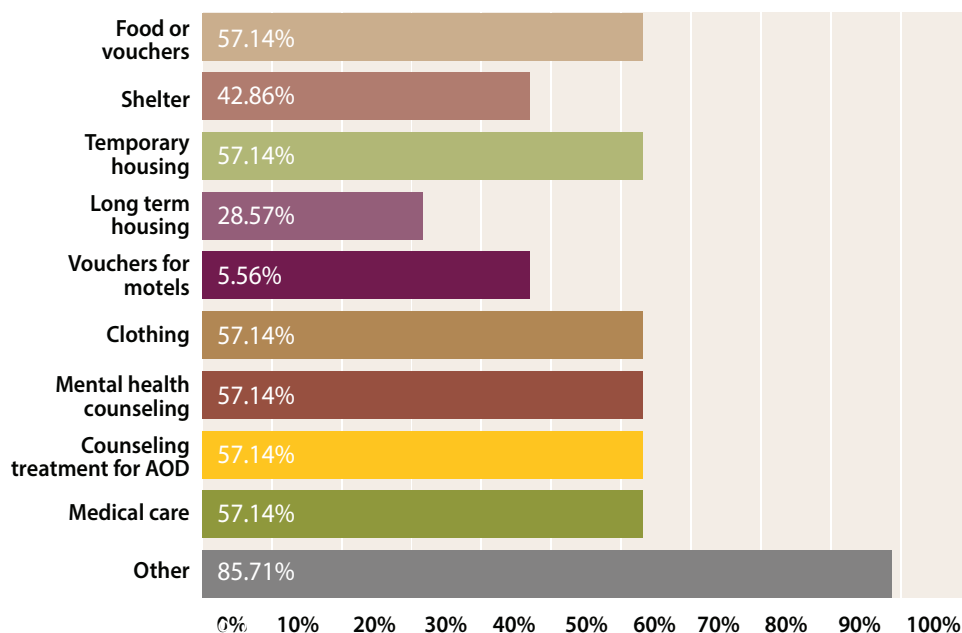
**“Faith-based organizations need funding to meet the needs of the homeless.”**

—Leader, local faith-based organization

*Note: These graphs represents percentage of agencies that responded to the survey and marked the item as one of the services they provided. Agencies could mark as many services as applicable, so the percentages will not total 100.*

Agencies that responded to our survey identified services they provided:

## Types of Services Provided



### Listed in the “Other” category were:

- Bus passes & transportation
- Personal items such as hygiene products
- A cell phone and/or cell phone minutes
- Housing vouchers
- Move-in assistance for transitional or permanent housing
- Educational counseling and employment assistance
- Assistance in applying for benefits
- Assistance in obtaining and/or paying for a CA ID card
- Legal assistance for seniors
- Reentry support and services for those released from incarceration
- Rape crisis counseling
- Recreational programs

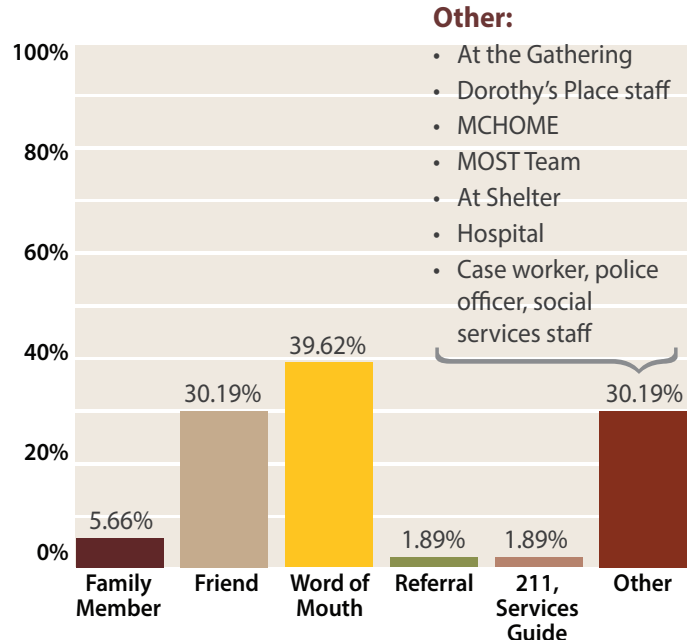
# Accessing Services, continued

## GAPS IN SERVICES

Women surveyed identified services not available or difficult to access. They include:

- ✓ Transportation (bus passes, rides)
- ✓ More laundry areas/showers
- ✓ Food/food stamps (CalFresh)
- ✓ Storage
- ✓ Clothing
- ✓ Night shelters
- ✓ Intact family programs/shelters
- ✓ Permanent low-income housing for single women
- ✓ Deposit for apartment rent
- ✓ Furniture if she gets housing
- ✓ Legal services/credit counseling
- ✓ Child care
- ✓ Help with child support
- ✓ Dental and vision care
- ✓ Counseling
- ✓ Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) related services and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- ✓ More information about services
- ✓ Telephone/cell phones

## How do homeless women find out about services?



## The Challenge of Service Eligibility

All programs and services have eligibility requirements that potential clients must meet to be accepted into the service. Each organization fills a particular need, and criteria for entrance may be defined by their mission or limited by funding sources. Other requirements respond to organizational priorities or organizational values or perspectives.

**When asked about their ability to access services, women surveyed or interviewed often identified eligibility requirements as a key barrier. Requirements mentioned most often fall within these categories:**

- **Family status:** Whether the woman has children, has a spouse, or an unmarried partner
- **Needing formal identifying documentation**, some of which may have been stolen or lost
- **Able to provide documentation** of legal status
- **Transitional housing programs** that only accept women who can become employable or financially self-sufficient – great barrier for older women
- **Have a qualifying mental health diagnosis**
- **Be in recovery** from alcohol abuse or other drugs
- **Sobriety** as a precondition of program admittance
- Willingness and ability to **provide pertinent intake information** at time of initial interview
- **Meet regularly with the social worker**
- **Participate in program goals** for increasing their income, finding housing, or addressing health care issues, such as sobriety
- **Student status:** CalFresh restricts some students from receiving benefits. In order to be eligible, a student who is age 18 through 49, physically and mentally fit for employment, must meet at least certain exemptions at the date of their interview

**“Changes in regulations continue to limit access – almost all doors are wrong.”**

—Service Provider

# Shelter & Housing Options for Homeless Women in Monterey County

All shelters and housing for homeless individuals in Monterey County have requirements potential clients must meet before receiving services. Each organization fills a particular need, and criteria for entrance may be defined by their mission or limited by funding sources. Unfortunately, whether strict or lenient, these requirements can sometimes be barriers for women who do not meet the established criteria.

## What are the Countywide Gaps?



### Few Housing Options Exist for Women Who:

- Are single; have no children
- Do not have a mental illness
- Have no income/No ID
- Cannot work
- Are not a documented citizen or resident
- Have pets
- Are not in recovery from alcohol or substance use
- Live in North or South County

## MONTEREY PENINSULA



### OPTIONS

- 1 Community Human Services, Safe Place Shelter
- 2 Outreach Unlimited, I-HELP for Women
- 3 Community Homeless Solutions, Hamilton House
- 4 One Starfish Safe Parking
- 5 The Salvation Army, Frederiksen House
- 6 Interim, MCHOME

### REQUIREMENTS

- 1 Age 18-24
- 2 Be sober upon arrival at pick-up location
- 3 ID/Social Security card • Birth certificate for children preferred • DV Victims and families given priority
- 4 Intake • Work on securing income, addressing health issues, finding housing • No AOD • Car insurance & license
- 5 Women with children • Waiting List • Legal citizen • Criminal background check • Sober for 12 months (with proof) • Couples must be married
- 6 Homeless adults • Mental illness



- 1 Community Homeless Solutions, Women in Transition
- 2 Community Human Services, Elm House
- 3 Community Homeless Solutions, Lexington Court / Homeward Bound
- 4 Sun Street Centers, Pueblo del Mar
- 5 Community Human Services, Safe Passage
- 6 The Salvation Army, Casa de Las Palmas / Phase 11
- 7 Interim, Bridge House/Shelter Cove
- 8 Veteran's Transition Center Housing Program

- 1 Single women with no children
- 2 Single women with no children • In recovery from substance abuse
- 3 Dual parent family (Lexington Court) or single mother with children (Homeward Bound) • Proof of household income meeting HUD guidelines
- 4 Dual parent or single mother with children • In recovery from substance abuse (90 days clean and sober) • CalWORKS or meet low income requirement (with proof) • Legal citizen • Participate in community programs • Birth certificates for all children
- 5 Age 18-21 • Drug and alcohol free • Full-time work or student • Participate in services
- 6 Parents with children • Proof of income meeting Health and Human Services Dept guidelines • Legal resident • Drug and alcohol free • Criminal background check • Employed full-time for 30 days • Photo ID and birth certificate
- 7 Mental illness (SC) or dual diagnosis (BH) • Referred by MC Behavioral Health • Sliding scale fees, insurance
- 8 Veteran



# Shelter & Housing Options for Homeless Women in Monterey County, continued

## SALINAS

### EMERGENCY/ SHELTER HOUSING

#### OPTIONS

- 1 Dorothy's Place, Women Alive!
- 2 Interim, Manzanita House
- 3 YWCA, Safehouse
- 4 Community Homeless Solutions, Salinas Shelter
- 5 Interim, MCHOME

#### REQUIREMENTS

- 1 Arrive by 7-8pm and Leave by 6am • Single women
- 2 Psychiatric disability • In crisis • Referred by MC Behavioral Health
- 3 Fleeing domestic violence or human trafficking
- 4 Social Security card/ID • Birth certificates/IDs for children
- 5 Homeless adults • Mental illness

### TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

- 1 Dorothy's Place, House of Peace
- 2 Door to Hope, Hayward Home
- 3 Door to Hope, Santa Lucia Group Home
- 4 Door to Hope, Nueva Esperanza
- 5 Peacock Acres
- 6 Rancho Cielo Youth Campus

- 1 Coed
- 2 Single women • In recovery from substance abuse • 72+ hours sober • Motivated to participate in programs • Rent
- 3 Age 12-18 • Both mental health and substance abuse disorders • Motivated to participate in programs
- 4 In recovery from substance abuse/mental health disorders • Pregnant or in custody of children under 11 • Able to parent own children • Motivated to participate in programs
- 5 Former foster youth • Age 18-24
- 6 Age 16-24 • Former student at Rancho Cielo (referral required) • Participate in case management and programs

## COUNTYWIDE

### COUNTYWIDE PERMANENT HOUSING

- 1 Interim Permanent Supportive Housing
- 2 CHISPA Housing
- 3 Housing Resource Center
- 4 Housing Authority Voucher Program
- 5 Housing Authority Public Housing
- 6 MidPen Housing

- 1 Mental illness diagnosis • Referred by MC Behavioral Health • 30% income for rent
- 2 Low to moderate income
- 3 Veteran discharged honorably • Annual income Less than 50% area median income • Proof of financial sustainability or willing to develop plan to become financially independent • ID • Social security card • Proof of income • Proof of homelessness or eviction notice
- 4 Make Less than 50% of area median income • Birth certificates • Social security card • Proof of income • ID of all adults in household • Previous 3 months receipts of utilities bills, rent payments, child care payments, and regular monthly medical expenses (for elderly or disabled families only)
- 5 Disabled, senior, or low-income depending on property • US citizen, national, or "eligible non-citizen" (with verification of immigration status) • SSN documentation • Criminal background checks • No terminated HA lease in last 5 years
- 6 Senior and/or make 30-60% area median income depending on property • New Chinatown project some units require meeting chronic homeless definition

**“Societal pressures, trauma, make homeless women feel they don’t have value. Physical and emotional abuse is common. Some women don’t understand the concept of rape. They carry a sense of worthlessness. Reporting abuse to police is not considered.”**

**“Addiction is a big problem but is a consequence of the experience: self-medication; misuse of medication. Real poverty is the emotional poverty.”**

**“For young women,** the current cause of homelessness may be drug use but the root causes are dysfunctional families, experience in foster care, family rejection of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) youth, financial insecurity in families. They are caught in a circle of poverty (no role models or mentors; don’t see a future that is different); what does respect and dignity mean? No networks of support for jobs or connections. Some young women have parents in Chinatown and experienced living there, describe it as traumatizing: drugs, violence, mental illness. People battling addiction don’t want to be in Chinatown.”  
—Homeless Youth Advocates

## Words of Wisdom and Experience – *The Stories*

“Don’t give up. Suicide is not the way!”  
“Homelessness doesn’t define you. It is not who you are.”

“I just want to get a 1 bedroom. Take care of my grandbabies, live in peace, shower every day anytime am/pm, eat, sleep and be warm. Be able to do laundry.”

“This is so hard. I’m living in my van with three kids. I make sure we’re safe at night by parking in the ‘good neighborhoods’ in town. I wait for everyone to go to sleep and park until early morning before anyone notices us. I don’t get much sleep.”

**“Undocumented women live in fear.”**

“Just have a little more compassion and understanding. Life is hard and when you’re homeless, it’s even harder. So many rules scare us. I’m afraid of being put out on street with kids. If it was me alone no problem. I could survive. Not with kids, I need help!”

“Seek help; get into an AA meeting or other recovery; don’t hide in the bottle.”

**“Homeless women’s issues are very complex. Business model that believes that “if they work hard enough, they can get out of it” doesn’t work for this population.”**

—Service Provider

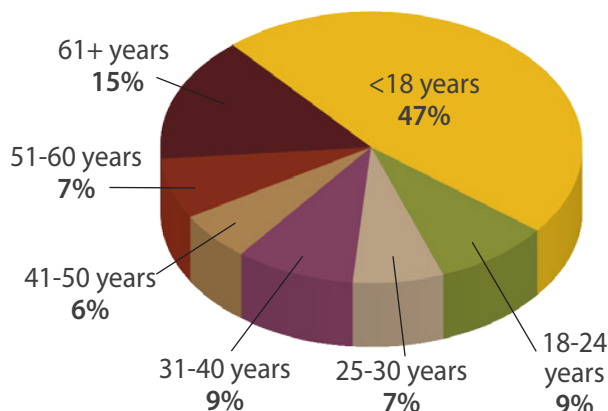


# Regional Snapshots—Salinas

## Homeless Women Receiving Government Benefits through MCDSS (537)

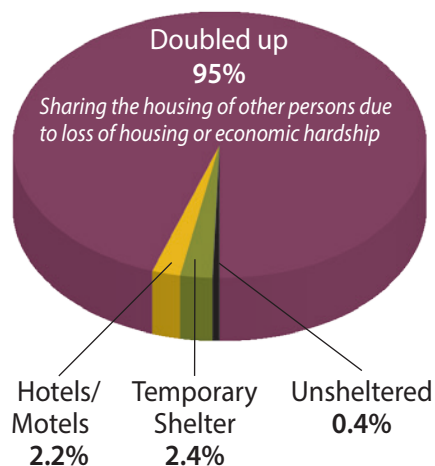
# of Women	Zip Code
76	93905
340	93901
1	93902
108	93906
8	93912
1	93915
3	93908

## Homeless Females, County Clinics Services by Age—Salinas



► **65% of homeless women served by County Clinic Services and 60% of those served by County Behavioral Health live in Salinas**

## Homeless Student Data



## Services Provided to Homeless Families at Family Resource Centers (FRC)

(Types of services vary at each FRC)

- Food baskets
- Uniforms for children/clothing for children & parents
- Blankets
- Toiletries and other personal items
- Bus passes; food vouchers, etc.
- Help in applying for benefits, acquiring birth certificates, etc.
- Referrals to other agencies
- Air mattresses/sleeping bags
- Use of computers to apply for jobs or develop resumes

## Service Needs in Salinas

- Parent education on rights under McKinney-Vento Act
- Transportation
- More meals, particularly in the evening and weekends when children are not in school – all year
- More showers/laundry facilities
- Child care
- Gas and hotel vouchers
- Greater service capacity: case managers, residential programs, etc.
- Counseling for mothers and children
- Financial literacy
- Legal services
- Help processing documentation: IDs, birth certificates
- More “One Stop” Resource Centers throughout the community
- Greater capacity in emergency housing/shelter
- Safe places to “open up” and talk

## Key Day Centers

### Dorothy’s “Drop-In Center” and Kitchen

An average of 120 people per day use the Drop-In Center to meet essential needs from hygiene to medical support, rape crisis advocacy, and applying for government benefits. Nearly half of those that need help at Dorothy’s Place speak Spanish. Dorothy’s Kitchen provides 150 hot breakfasts and 200 hot dinner-style lunches every day of the year. The Clínica de Salud mobile clinic also provides medical and dental care near the Center.

### Chinatown Health Services Center

Offers no-cost showers and restrooms between the hours of 7:00 AM and 10:00 PM, daily, and case management for all who are ready to work on life change and permanent housing. It expands previously provided medical care with the availability of mental health and addiction outpatient treatment services.

### First United Methodist Church of Salinas

Fellowship Hall is open from 6:00 AM to 1:00 PM Sunday through Friday. Guests use computers, telephones and restrooms; also, art room. Hot breakfast and lunch are served Sunday through Friday, in partnership with other churches. Provide toiletries and personal hygiene products; clothes closet and access to medical and dental services in partnership with Clínica de Salud and prescription assistance. Host “Twelve-Step” groups. Also host VA Palo Alto Health Care System Housing Resource Group to provide information and assist veterans connect with a wide range of services.



## Key Day Center Services

**Food:** Food is provided by various faith-based, advocacy groups and nonprofit organizations on the Peninsula: meal sharing events at churches and other locations, food pantries, etc.

**Clothing:** Free or low-cost clothing is available at Gathering for Women, St. Mary's Church in Pacific Grove, Salvation Army, Safe Place, Veteran's Transition Center, Community Homeless Solutions – Mobile Outreach Service Team (MOST) team, Goodwill.

**Showers:** Veteran's Park in Monterey with vouchers or by paying fees, the Good Samaritan Center in Sand City, Community Homeless Solutions Day Center in Marina, Coast Guard Wharf, and the Monterey Sports Center or other similar facilities with a day pass.

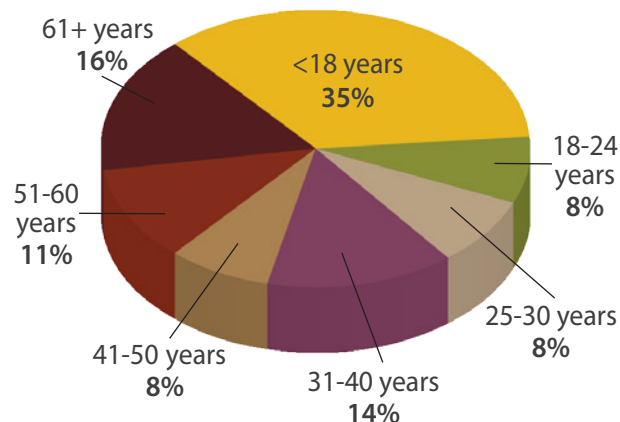
**Laundry:** Local organizations provide vouchers for the women to use laundry facilities or they use the facility at the Good Samaritan Center or Community Homeless Solutions Day Center in Marina.

# Regional Snapshots—Peninsula

## Homeless Women Receiving Government Benefits through MCDSS (516)

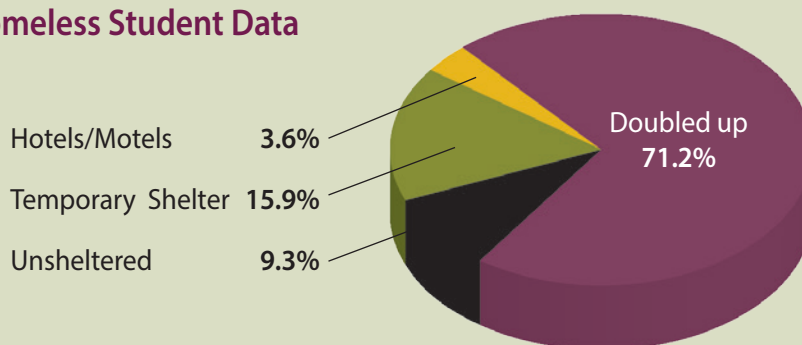
# of Women	Zip Code
6	93920
7	93921
1	93922
10	93923
9	93924
100	93933
118	93940
23	93950
242	93955

## Homeless Females, County Clinics Services by Age—Peninsula



► **26% of homeless women served by County Clinic Services and 28% of those served by County Behavioral Health live on the Peninsula**

## Homeless Student Data



## Service Needs on the Peninsula

- Easily accessible place to apply for services with support, and to meet daily needs
- Lockers and mail boxes
- A centralized resource for services for homeless women
- Easily accessible mental health screening and referrals, and preventative health services
- Free or very low-cost childcare and free or low-cost transportation
- Legal services for women of all ages
- Financial counseling and training
- Job counseling and advocacy with employers and job training to update basic skills
- Greater availability of safe shelters, transitional housing and affordable permanent housing, particularly for single women.



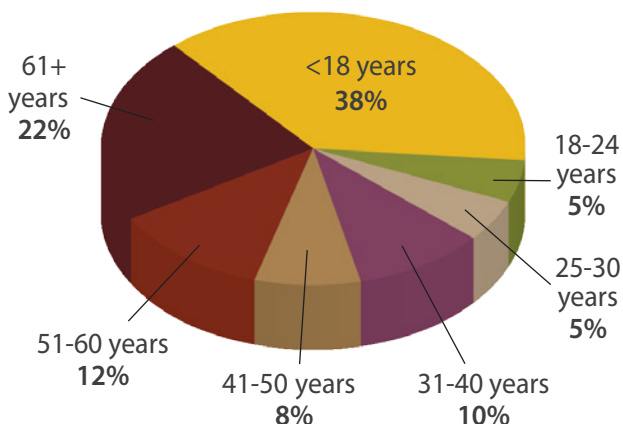
# Regional Snapshots—North County

## Homeless Women Receiving Government Benefits through MCDSS (620)

# of Women	Zip Code
589	93907*
17	95012
5	95039
5	95076
4	95004

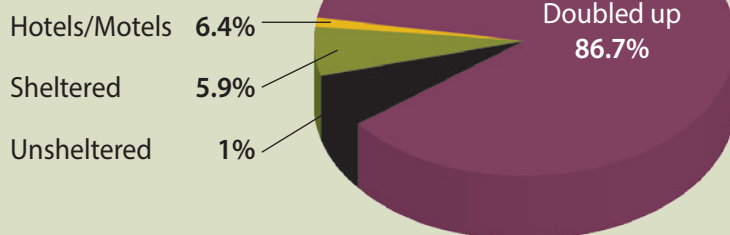
\*93907 includes parts of Salinas

## Homeless Females, County Clinics Services by Age—North County



► **5% of homeless women served by County Clinic Services and County Behavioral Health live in North County.**

## North Monterey County School District



## Service Needs in North County

- Warming or other shelters (closest shelters and transitional housing in Monterey County are in Salinas and Marina)
- Free facilities in North Monterey County to shower, do laundry, or store belongings
- Free clothing services; (women often try to find affordable clothes for them and children at garage sales)
- Hot meals for the homeless or families living in poverty
- Refrigeration for perishable foods
- Affordable childcare
- Pre-school in Pajaro
- Low-cost housing
- Many families work seasonal jobs and may need support to keep their housing in the off-season

## Family Resource Center

As reported by FRC Staff in Pajaro

- 661 homeless children in 272 families (Part of Pajaro Unified School District)
- Most homeless women are single mothers under the age of 30 who have been left by husbands or who had to leave due to domestic violence
- Few older women, often living with daughter and her children
- Some women come from indigenous communities, speak mostly Mixteco Bajo and are under 25 years of age
- Lack of low-income housing and other support services force women to live in violence or in unstable situations
- Some women live in vans or hotels with their children; most in a room in someone's house
- Income: Some have seasonal work in agriculture and/or have public assistance (CalFresh) for children born in US

As reported by FRC Staff in Castroville

- There are few known single women who are homeless
- FRCs support homeless families
- 2015-16 – 54 cases
- 2016-17 to date – 29 cases; 24 in case management (95% include mothers)
- Many families are undocumented; if the father is deported, mother is left with children
- Ages of mothers: 30 to 50 (older tend to be grandmothers)
- High number from the Oaxacan community

## Observations

### Offered by Service Providers and Public Officials

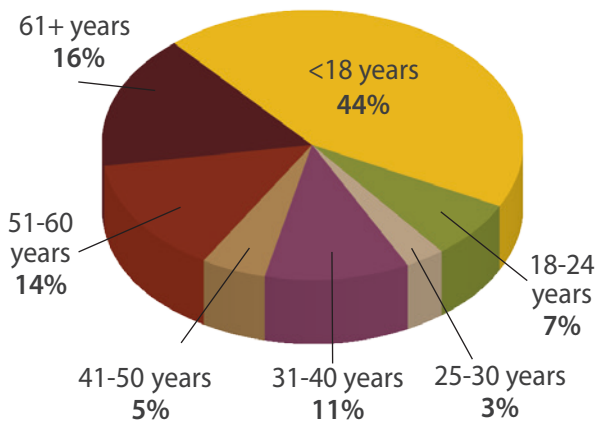
- Most homeless women are single mothers with children, not on the streets; living with other families or friends (one room, sheds or garage) or in cars (school parking lot or near convenience stores.) Police indicated finding homeless women in abandoned houses on rare occasions.
- Homelessness is seasonal. Most families work in agriculture but don't migrate in winter when jobs are scarce.
- Immigrant families: if the husband/provider is arrested and incarcerated or deported, woman and children are left without resources.
- Women with children are not known to have addiction or mental health issues.
- Some women have children but not with them, often due to addiction.
- On a case by case basis, resource people in Greenfield indicate they may be able to secure hotel vouchers, bus passes or some financial help from churches, but there is no organized program.
- Providers often reach women with children through CalWorks referral.
- In King City, only a few are living in the streets and cars (San Lorenzo Park, river; under bridges.)
- Churches in some communities provide food and clothing but resources are limited.
- There are Food Bank distribution centers in all communities between Chualar and King City, and in San Ardo.
- Police indicate they receive emergency calls after hours but often don't know where to call for help at that time, or cannot secure a safe place to take women. There are few or no options for transporting them to shelters in Salinas or outside the County. Transportation or some form of taxi service on contract is needed to take women to shelters in the middle of the night.

## Regional Snapshots—South County

### Homeless Women Receiving Government Benefits through MCDSS (118)

# of Women	Zip Code
1	93450
3	93925
10	93926
40	93927
30	93930
1	93932
1	93954
32	93960

### Homeless Females, County Clinics Services by Age—South County



► **4% of homeless women served by County Clinic Services and 6.3% served by County Behavioral Health live in South County**

### Homeless Student Data

- Greenfield Union Elementary has 388 recorded homeless children. Of those, 92.3% are doubled up, 5.4% are in temporary shelters, 2.1% are unsheltered and 0.03% are in motels/hotels
- Gonzales and Soledad – 111, all “doubled-up”
- King City Union has 277 recorded homeless children. Of those, 96.4% are doubled up, 2.2% are in motels/hotels, 1.4% are unsheltered, and 0% are in temporary shelters

### Service Needs Identified by Service Providers

- Shelters or day centers in South County
- Place for homeless women to shower or do laundry
- Transportation
- A resource directory for food, showers or churches that provide services in South County
- Easily accessible services and support for families that are seasonally homeless or in danger of becoming homeless
- Counseling and other mental health services for the women and their children

## Recommendations

Gathered in surveys, interviews and group conversations with homeless women, public officials, service providers, and advocates.

## Remove Barriers to Services

Streamline eligibility requirements and the complexity of systems, referrals and application processes that are difficult to understand and navigate.

## Safety Net for Homeless Women

- Establish centrally-located one-stop resource centers in key communities and support family resource centers
- Access to more therapeutic services that meet women where they are in their journey
- Trauma-informed approaches in all programs
- Programs that consider generational differences in their design
- Housing accessible to very low income individuals
- Housing with flexibility for those with unresolved credit issues
- Alternative models for securing housing for women (e.g., “master lease”) and for women who may not be able to work
- Greater transitional housing options for youth formerly in foster care and who identify as LGBT
- Rent deposits, first and last month payments, and other related support
- Rental and other assistance for women who are seasonal workers to stay in their home during the off-season
- Relationships with apartment managers that help connect landlords with women who are ready for housing
- More attention to and public education on the prevalence of domestic violence and the options women have to stay safely in their homes and to secure child support
- More education for providers and law enforcement about domestic violence, sexual abuse and mental illness
- Legal services: credit issues, child support, documentation, etc.
- Transportation/rides services
- Assistance for women who have lost their documentation and need help replacing it
- More targeted services for older and disabled homeless women
- Mentors for homeless young women
- Greater support in high schools to help homeless youth connect to services, particularly housing options
- Parenting classes appropriate for homeless population (their own children or younger siblings they care for)

**"There are many reasons and stories for why women become homeless. Different programs are needed to serve different needs."**

—Focus group participant



## Recommendations, continued

### ► Health & Safety

- Greater capacity in alcohol or drug (AOD) treatment facilities for women ready to accept services and to transfer directly from the hospital to a residential recovery center
- Greater availability of prevention/wellness services, including family counseling and more access to AOD and mental health treatment
- Affordable dental and vision care
- Expanded options for preventing women from having to return to unhealthy and unsafe environment after hospitalization
- Access to food, particularly warm meals in North & South County
- Transportation to the hospital and other services
- More protection to reduce women's exposure to violence
- More safety and support options for women experiencing domestic violence. A larger "safety net" for women afraid to leave an abusive situation without the necessary supports. One-Stop Centers for domestic violence with greater service capacity

### ► To Improve Availability and Access to Housing

- **Monitor the implementation of new, dedicated funding sources for low-income housing**
- **Educate, advocate and coordinate with landlords** to increase acceptance of renters with housing vouchers
- **Increase pool of rental assistance subsidies** and of funds for rent deposits, first and last rent, and moving costs (for women whose belongings are in storage)
- **Provide support for transitional housing with flexible terms for exiting the program**, based on the circumstances of the individual, and for supportive housing with no requirement for eventual self-sufficiency, particularly for older women or women unable to work
- **Monitor the implementation of housing-first models in Monterey County and other communities**, assess their successes and challenges, and identify a model that could be implemented successfully and sustainably in our community
- **Advocate for permanent, very low-income housing options for single women or women living together** and for permanent supportive housing for women with a mental illness and their children

**"I was broken physically and mentally. I just sat in my car and cried. Get the word out that help is available; they are not alone."**

—Survey Participant

### Public Policies and System Strategies

- A sustained focus on homeless women through data collection and reporting, forums, etc., particularly to educate system leaders and to support service planning and advocacy
- Women-focused collaboration among multiple agencies to increase client opportunities for success
- Coordination among public institutions: more clearly articulated strategies for homeless-related policies and actions between county and city jurisdictions beyond funding
- Innovative housing alternatives for homeless individuals and families
- Allocation of local or other funding for low income housing to replace funding that may have been lost with the closure of the Redevelopment Agency
- Greater system-wide coordination and community-wide education and reporting on the implementation of the "Lead Me Home" Plan.



## Recommendations, continued

### ► Path to Self-Sufficiency

#### Easily Accessible and Life Experience-Appropriate Path to Jobs:

- Comprehensive support in preparing to reenter the workforce (researching job openings, filling out applications, gathering needed documentation, preparing resumes, preparing for interviews, clothing, reliable transportation, access to childcare, etc.)
- Training for developing or upgrading skills that meet employment market demands
- Opportunities for microenterprise development and self-employment
- Advocacy with employers and supportive employment services
- Business coalition that employs women, where employer helps with career development.
- Training/mentoring in financial literacy, planning & budget management; opening and maintaining bank accounts; setting financial goals for housing
- Professional support for rebuilding credit history
- Assistance in securing child support
- Meaningful employment opportunities for homeless youth

### Potential Next Steps

- ✓ **Establish centrally-located one-stop resource centers in key communities and support family resource centers**
- ✓ **Improve collection and community-wide dissemination of data** about homeless women to support planning, advocacy, funding and to inform policy
- ✓ **Support the creation or expansion of “Day Centers”** in downtown Monterey/ Seaside and in downtown Salinas where women can meet basic daily needs, and as entry points for services
- ✓ **Create a team of system navigators/advocates and increase capacity of case managers** to support women
- ✓ **Create opportunities for peer mentorship and advocacy** that acknowledge the skills and experience of women who have or are experiencing homelessness
- ✓ **Provide sustained, long-term funding** for comprehensive approaches for ending homelessness among women
- ✓ **Support community education and advocacy to eliminate stigma and increase support** for public policies addressing homelessness



**“60% of women in our residential programs leave ready to get a job, but what is available is mostly minimum wage work in service industries, ag packing or retail. They usually need transitional or Section 8 housing to afford a place to live.”** —Service Provider

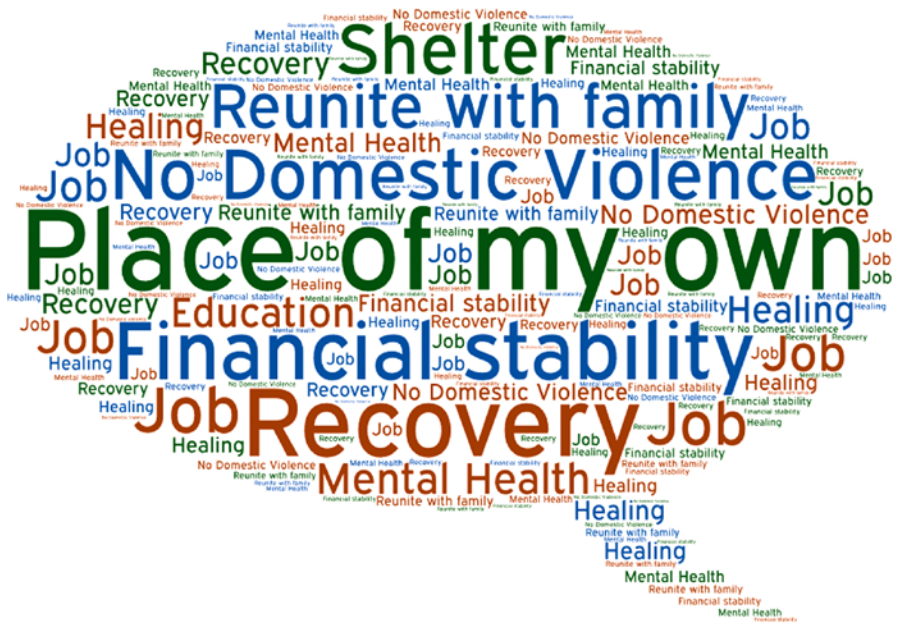
### Women know their personal gifts:

- Work ethic
- Strength
- Determination
- Adaptability
- Dedication
- Problem solving
- Experience
- Resourcefulness
- Kindness /compassion /able to relate to others in similar circumstances

# Conclusion

Data provided by the Monterey County Health Department indicated that 2,722 females who used clinic services in 2015-16 were identified as experiencing homelessness. 56.4% of them were over age 18.

The challenges faced by homeless women are complex and diverse. At a personal level, challenges are shaped by life experiences, generational differences, socio-economic/class status, knowledge of systems and ability to navigate services, and physical, mental health and substance abuse issues. But lasting solutions to homelessness among women must take into consideration the socio-economic environment in which those issues exist.



## ► Few options exist for residents who can't afford the increasing market rates for home ownership and rental due to:

- **A limited job market**, particularly for older women or women who have been unemployed for some time
- **Complex service structures** and regulations that, through eligibility and application requirements, limit or inhibit access to services
- **Limited allocation of resources** for the expansion of agency capacity to provide more space and more flexible options to meet the needs of a very diverse homeless population
- **The stigma** associated with homelessness interferes with decisions about allocation of public resources and location of services, including shelters, and low-income housing, whether transitional or permanent

As a community, our highest priorities in addressing homelessness among women are to increase the availability of very low-income housing and ensure stable income for women so they can feel secure and stay in their home. This will require shifts in policies regarding low-income housing, wage and employment equity for women, and robust funding aimed at preventing homelessness among single women as well as women with children.

Immediate action and short-term solutions are also needed to reduce the harm of homelessness and protect the safety, dignity and path to stability of women in all parts of our county who are currently experiencing homelessness. We need to focus particular attention on the "safety net" of services that protect women experiencing domestic violence and prevent them from becoming homeless. Our community also needs a new approach to addressing the needs of the "hidden" homeless women; those living with their children in unstable and sometimes unfit housing conditions due to the lack of sufficient income. Some of these women may be undocumented and their options for receiving shelter or qualifying for services are further limited.

# Acknowledgments

## Research Team

**Judy Sulsona**, Lead Researcher  
**Brooke Silveria**, Action Council  
**Larry Imwalle**, Action Council

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## Planning Team Members

**Jill Allen**, Franciscan Workers of Junipero Serra  
**Yuri Anderson**, United Way Monterey County  
**Carmen Gil**, MC Health Department  
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**Marian Penn**, Fund for Homeless Women  
**Michael Reid**, Fund for Homeless Women  
**Glorietta Rowlands**, Community Action Partnership  
**Janet Shing**, Community Foundation for Monterey County  
**Kathy Whilden**, Fund for Homeless Women  
**Margarita Zarraga**, Community Action Partnership

## Contributing Organizations

The following organizations supported this effort by facilitating contacts, providing data, completing surveys, sharing experiences, participating in interviews, providing recommendations, convening focus groups and/or encouraging women to meet with us or to complete our surveys.

1. ACTION, Greenfield Services
2. Alisal Union Elementary School District, Family Resource Center
3. Catholic Charities
4. Community Housing Improvement Systems and Planning Association (CHISPA)
5. City of Gonzales Police Department
6. City of Greenfield Police Department
7. City of Monterey Staff and Managers
8. City of Pacific Grove Staff and Managers
9. City of Salinas Staff and Managers
10. City of Seaside, Police Department
11. Clínica de Salud del Valle de Salinas, Mobile Clinic
12. Coalition of Homeless Services Providers
13. Community Action Partnership
14. Community Homeless Solutions
15. Community Human Services, Safe Place and Safe Passage Programs
16. Door to Hope
17. Epicenter
18. Food Bank for Monterey County
19. Gathering for Women
20. Housing Authority of the County of Monterey
21. Housing Resource Center
22. Interfaith Homeless Emergency Lodging Program (I-HELP) for Women
23. Interim, Inc.
24. Legal Services for Seniors
25. Mid-Peninsula Housing
26. Monterey County Behavioral Health Bureau
27. Monterey County CAO Office
28. Monterey County Department of Social and Employment Services
29. Monterey County District Attorney's Office
30. Monterey County Health Department
31. Monterey County Office of Education
32. Monterey County Probation Department
33. Monterey County Rape Crisis Center
34. Natividad Medical Center, Case Management Services
35. North Monterey County Unified School District, Family Resource Center
36. Our Lady of Solitude Church, Soledad
37. Our Lady of Refuge Church, Castroville, I-Help
38. Pajaro Valley Unified School District, Pajaro Family Resource Center
39. Peacock Acres
40. Pass the Word Ministry, One Starfish Program
41. Salinas City Elementary School District, Family Resource Center
42. Salinas Valley Community Church
43. Salvation Army (Seaside and Sand City staff)
44. St. Mary's By the Sea Episcopal Church, Christian Social Concerns
45. Sun Street Centers
46. United Way Monterey County
47. Veterans Transition Center
48. YWCA of Monterey County

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**"My hope is that  
I get indoors ASAP.  
My health is  
deteriorating.  
We need immediate  
housing."**

—Survey Participant

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