



UNHOUSED NEIGHBORS IN BILLINGS

Yellowstone County Continuum of Care

34

Community Partners

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY CONTINUUM OF CARE

Alternatives, Inc.
Barthel Management
Besaw Integrity Consulting
Billings Clinic
Billings Community Foundation
Billings First Congregational Church
Billings Urban Indian Health
and Wellness Center
City of Billings
CLDI Billings
Community Crisis Center
District 7 HRDC
Downtown Billings Alliance
Family Promise
Gratitude in Action
Healthcare for the Homeless
HomeFront
Mental Health Center

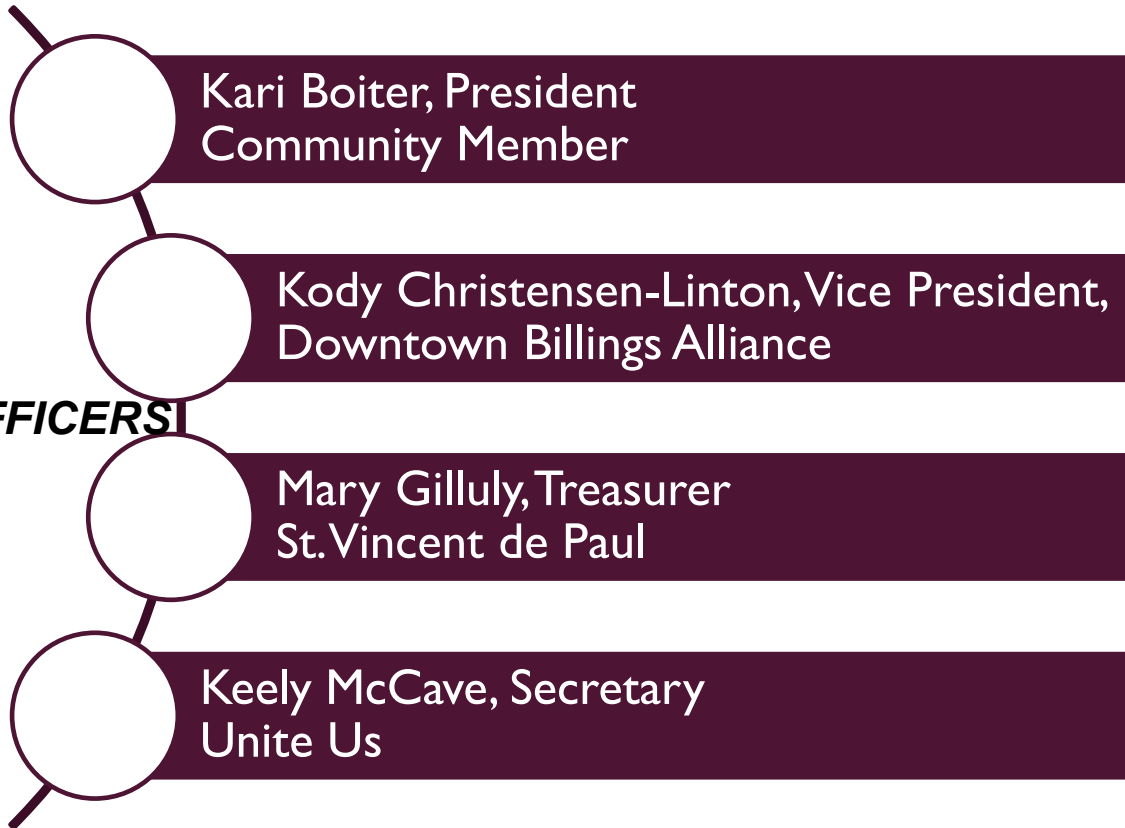
Montana Dept. of Corrections,
Probation and Parole Division
Montana Rescue Mission
My Backyard
Native American Development Corp.
Rimrock Foundation
RiverStone Health
Salvation Army
St. Vincent de Paul
St. Vincent Healthcare
STEP, Inc.
Tumbleweed
Veterans Administration
Veterans, Inc.
Volunteers of America
United Way of Yellowstone Co.
Yellowstone County
YWCA

*Collaborations with Community Innovations
and Substance Abuse Connect*

United Way of Yellowstone County provides backbone
support and serves as a fiscal agent for the CoC



YELLOWSTONE COUNTY CONTINUUM OF CARE BOARD OF DIRECTORS





Nationally, the Continuum of Care (CoC) Program is designed to:

- **promote communitywide commitment** to the goal of ending homelessness;
- **provide funding** for nonprofit providers, and State and local governments, to quickly rehouse people experiencing homelessness, while minimizing trauma and dislocation on impacted individuals and communities;
- **promote access** and increase utilization of mainstream programs by individuals and families experiencing homelessness; and
- **optimize self-sufficiency** among individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

CoC's are a requirement of HUD, and work to organize and deliver housing and services for a specific geographic region, develop a long-term strategic plan for preventing and ending homelessness, and to apply for federal resources.

Montana has a Statewide CoC, subdivided by HRDC Districts, commonly referred to as Local CoC's

Local CoC members serve on State CoC Board

State CoC manages Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program; Tumbleweed & HRDC received grants in 2020

The State CoC maintains a Coordinated Entry System (CES) that helps keep people from falling through the cracks from one community to the next

The CES aims to increase efficiency of the local homeless crisis response system and improve fairness, intentionality, and ease of access to resources

Montana's CES has four core elements:

- Access
- Assessment
- Prioritization
- Referral



YELLOWSTONE COUNTY COORDINATED ENTRY SYSTEM

Participating Agencies

Community Crisis Center
Downtown Billings Alliance
HomeFront (Municipal Housing Authority)

HRDC District 7

Mental Health Center – PATH Team

Office of Public Defender (CPS)

Rimrock Foundation – PACT Team

RiverStone Health – Healthcare for the Homeless

Salvation Army

St.Vincent de Paul

St.Vincent Healthcare

STEP, Inc.

Tumbleweed

Veterans Administration

Veterans, Inc.

Volunteers of America

Currently Onboarding:

Homeless Outreach Team in Downtown Billings

	March 2022	Year End 2021	Since 2018 Launch
Adults Enrolled in CES	541	1358	2184
Newly Assessed	68	485	1022
Individuals on By Name List	134	**	**
Successfully Housed	19	190	497
Housing without subsidy	11	59	226
Housing with Rapid ReHousing assistance	4	53	113
Housing with HUD VASH voucher	2	7	14
Housing with other ongoing assistance	1	34	47
Moved into a treatment facility	1	2	9
Moved in with family/friends	1	21	17
Temporarily housed in hotel/motel (self pay)	1	9	11
Returned to homelessness	3	71	124
Exited due to no contact for 90+ days	70	906	1495
Deceased		4	6

COORDINATED ENTRY OUTCOMES

October 2018 – March 2022

TOP 5 RISK FACTORS

Barriers to Housing Stability

Relationship Breakdown: Is your current homelessness in any way caused by a relationship that broke down, an unhealthy or abusive relationship, or because family/friends caused you to become evicted?

55%

Abuse or Trauma: Has your current period of homelessness been caused by an experience of emotional, physical, psychological, sexual, or other type of abuse, or by any other trauma you have experienced?

53%

Chronic Health Issue: Do you have any chronic health issues with your liver, kidneys, stomach, lungs, or heart?

37%

Debt: Is there any person, past landlord, business, bookie, dealer, or government group like the IRS, that thinks you owe them money?

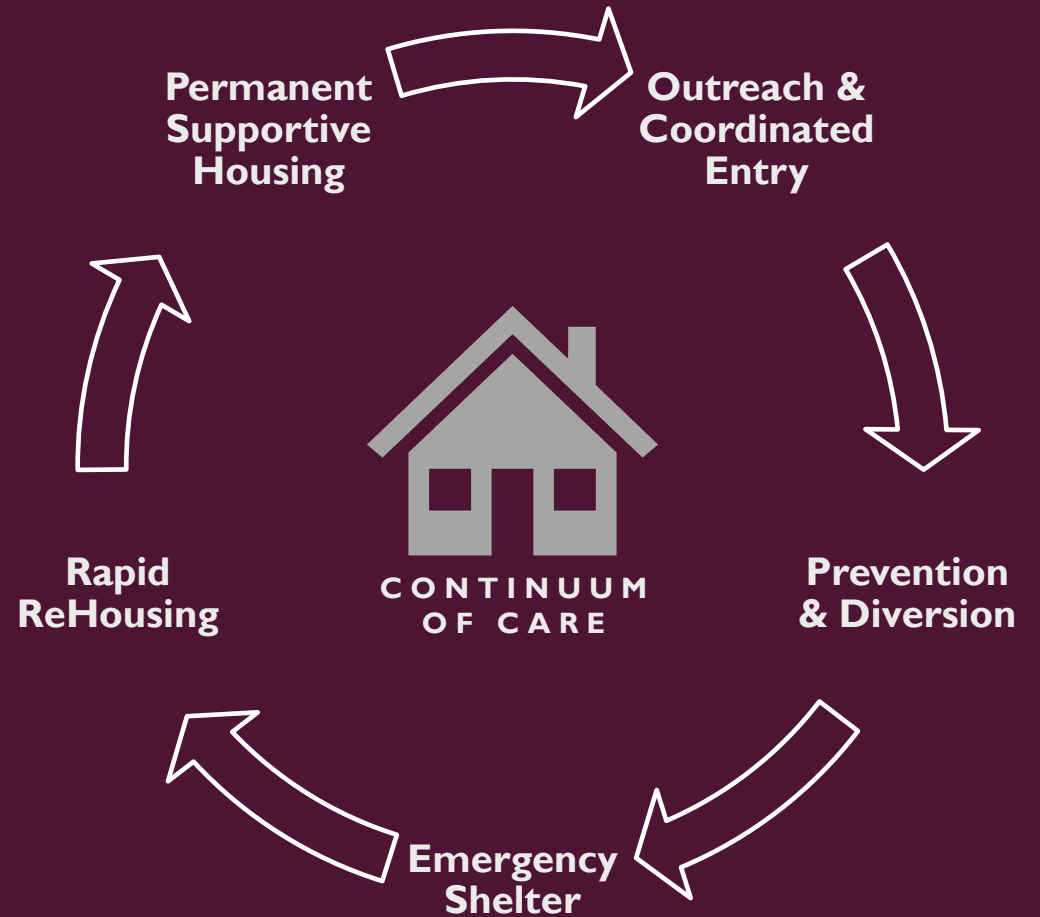
34%

Avoiding Care: When you are sick or not feeling well, do you avoid getting help?

31%

Data from 787 Coordinated Entry Assessments, Yellowstone County, 2019

COMPONENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE
HOUSING CRISIS
RESPONSE SYSTEM





OFF THE STREETS

Low Barrier Shelter and COVID-19 Isolation Site

TIMELINE

March 2020: Yellowstone County Incident Command asks CoC for help developing a quarantine/isolation (Q/I) site at MetraPark

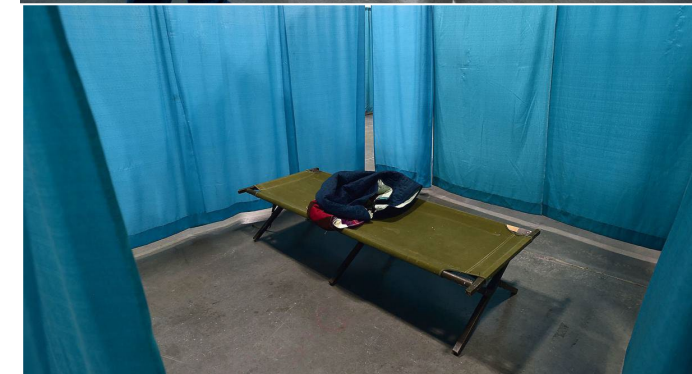
May 2020: Operational challenges (cost, staffing, guest refusal, etc.) result in Q/I site being moved from Metra to temporary facility, purchased by Riverstone Health

August 2020: Driven by need for larger Q/I space, especially for families, 12 CoC partners begin meeting to develop a temporary Emergency Shelter to respond to COVID-19

October 2020: Agreement reached to launch 12-month “Off The Streets” project; Memorandum of Agreement formalized to guide temporary operations; HomeFront purchases Western Inn for the project

December 2021: Catastrophic sewage leak forces permanent closure of “Off The Streets” with guests relocated to Billings First Church

April 2022: Seasonal sheltering efforts at Billings First Church come to a close



Q&I	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	TOTAL
Unique Individuals Served	7	29	28	18	8	5	--	--	--	--	--	7	14	15	131
24 Hour Days Stayed	9	215	207	103	57	14	--	--	--	--	--	36	102	174	917

COMMUNITY MEMBERS SERVED

October 30, 2020 – November 30, 2021

LBS	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	TOTAL
Unique Individuals Served (Cumulative)	--	29	71	122	169	230	268	313	325	336	358	366	382	401	401
Nights Stayed (Cumulative)	--	105	869	1801	2972	4332	5772	7608	9160	10385	11746	12956	14484	15848	15848

COMMUNITY MEMBERS SERVED

November 16, 2020 – November 30, 2021



REMARKABLE SUCCESS

LESSONS LEARNED FROM OFF THE STREETS SHELTER

LOCAL & STATE



MIKE CLARK PHOTOS, BILLINGS GAZETTE

Rachel Bailey tidies up a room while giving a tour of the low-barrier shelter Off The Streets in Billings on Wednesday.

Downtown low barrier shelter will stay open

Off The Streets is working better than expected

ROB ROGERS
rogers@billingsgazette.com

Off The Streets, the low-barrier shelter that opened last fall in downtown Billings, will continue operating after showing significant success and seeing a continued strong demand for services.

"This has been a really busy shelter," said Wyeth Friday, planning director for the city of Billings. "The demand has been so great in the community that it was clear it needed to operate another season."

The community groups that help run Off The Streets hope they'll get the financial support they need to keep operating.

"It's going to require community support," said Kari Bolter, executive director of Continuum of Care.

Off The Streets is a last-resort shelter set up last fall by Continuum of Care, a group of more than 20 local organizations that assist, manage or treat members of Billings' vulnerable and transient populations. The shelter is housed in the former Western Inn downtown.

Those who use Off The Streets have to check in every evening and leave every morning. When they arrive they're screened by the Community Crisis Center



Rachel Bailey shows the pajamas given to guests while giving a tour of the low-barrier shelter Off The Streets in Billings on Wednesday. Guests at Off The Streets are given pajamas to wear while their clothes are washed overnight.

ing shelters if they qualify. Since opening last October, Off The Streets has shown remarkable success.

"These guys are doing a great job deflecting, deferring and keeping problematic individuals — or people who would be out on the streets — off the streets," Billings Police Chief Rich St. John told the City Council this week.

To illustrate, St. John pointed to the low number of service calls the police department received over the last 12 months from the shelter. In all, Billings PD received 46 calls for service from Off The Streets, an average of roughly one a week, St. John said.

By comparison, St. John pointed to the high number of

calls received from two other shelters over the last 12 months. One generated 312 calls for service and the other generated 361 calls, he said.

The top three calls that originated from Off The Streets were for disturbances, suspicious activity and trespassing, and they originated from shelter staff.

"That means you've got a staff that's paying attention and holding (shelter residents) accountable," St. John said.

Initially Off The Streets was only going to be open a year. It was launched last October in part with federal COVID-19 and FEMA dollars. The community needed a place that could function as a quarantine and isolation center for members of the home-

were tested for COVID-19 and didn't have a safe place to isolate.

HAB Development, an arm of the Housing Authority of Billings, had purchased the former Western Inn on Second Avenue North prior to the pandemic and the building, with its individual rooms, seemed like the perfect place to quarantine and isolate transient and homeless COVID contacts.

Continuum of Care is still waiting for reimbursements from those federal agencies.

The rest of the space at the shelter was then designed to facilitate low-barrier housing for those who were unable to find shelter elsewhere in Billings, particularly during the winter when cold and inclement overnight weather can be deadly.

Demand for the services provided by Off The Streets is still high and community and public safety leaders see the need for it to continue operating. However, to do so it'll need some kind of funding from the community, Bolter said.

The federal dollars only support the COVID isolation operations.

To help the building remain operable, Continuum of Care will receive a \$450,000 federal Community Development Block Grant. The funds will be used to keep the shelter's aging boiler operational through the winter, install more modern heating and cooling units in individual rooms and make other repairs to

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Billings
John to
week.

...smoking contexts
over issues such as how
racial issues are taught, masks in
schools, and COVID-19 vaccines
and testing requirements.

Republicans say Garland went
too far in instructing Justice De-
partment divisions to coordinate
with local law enforcement. In
his memo Garland said there
had been "a disturbing spike in
harassment, intimidation, and
threats of violence against school
administrators, board members,
teachers, and staff who partici-
pate in the vital work of running
our nation's public schools."

An accompanying news re-
lease mentioned the FBI, the
department's criminal division,
national security division, civil
rights division and other parts.

"The obligation of the Jus-
tice Department is to protect
the American people against

Please see GARLAND, Page A9

AG confirms
his deputy was
involved in
hospital dispute

SAM WILSON AND HOLLY MICHELS
holly.michels@lee.net

Montana Attorney General
Austin Knudsen on Wednesday
confirmed Chief Deputy At-
torney General Kristen Hansen
was one of the public officials

POLICE PERSPECTIVE

CELEBRATING SUCCESS

SAFE & SECURE

Off the Streets averages less than one police call per week

Neighbors indicate there was so little disruption, they weren't sure the shelter was operating

“Cadillac of Programs”
– Chief Rich St. John



ON TIME

OTS opened within 48 hours of the targeted operational date
Transition planning is on schedule



UNDER BUDGET

Average monthly costs are lower than projected
\$80,00 vs. \$100,000

OTS operations continued even when \$400,000 in FEMA funding was not distributed



MEETING THE NEED

OTS serves dozens nightly and allows the Crisis Center to focus on high-need clients

OTS serves medical needs beyond Q&I

OTS moves people into housing, community programs, treatment, and employment

CELEBRATING SUCCESS

FACILITY ACQUISITION

Western Inn purchased with 100% private funds by HAB Development (HomeFront subsidiary)

From buy/sell to operational in less than 60 days!



DONOR SUPPORT

St. Vincent Hospital, Foundation & Mission Fund

RiverStone Health

HRDC District 7

Travis Dimond/
Spare Change for Real Change



CRITICAL STAFFING

RiverStone funds OTS Director

HRDC funds CoC Director

JCV Housing Navigator

United Way of Yellowstone
County serves as CoC Backbone
& Fiscal Agent



COORDINATED ENTRY

Increased provider participation in Coordinated Entry System, improving overall coordination of services in the community and quality data for the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)



Overnight Stays	Billings First Church	MRM Emergency Shelter	Community Crisis Center
December 30 – January 31	1052	143	1113
February 1 – February 28	748	114	1027
March 1 – April 2	645	36	1063
TOTAL	2444	293	3203

NIGHTLY CLIENT FLOW

December 30 2021 – April 3, 2022



Continuum of Care Strategic Plan



Continuum
of Care

Our **VISION** is a thriving community with

- Accessible, safe shelter
- Affordable housing
- Compassionate neighboring
- A dedication to hope, unity, and equity

where homelessness is brief, rare and non-recurring
and no one faces housing instability alone.

The **MISSION** of the Continuum of Care is to create sustainable pathways to safe and stable housing for people who are at risk of or actually experiencing homelessness in Yellowstone County.

CORE VALUES

Leadership
Dignity
Accountability
Innovation
Trust

PREVENTION:

Identify the root causes of homelessness in Billings & implement targeted prevention strategies to reduce new incidences of homelessness by 25% between 2021 and 2025.

SYSTEMS

ALIGNMENT:

Support the development and implementation of a coordinated Crisis Continuum for all persons at risk of or actually experiencing homelessness by December 2025.

INFRASTRUCTURE:

Invest in 1-2 critical infrastructure projects in the community to prevent and reduce homelessness.

CAPACITY BUILDING:

Build and enhance the community capacity to tackle homelessness and housing issues so that comprehensive housing policies and equitable employment practices can be adopted and implemented by critical stakeholders in the community.

OPERATIONS:

Formalize and strengthen Continuum of Care structures so that the coalition can sustain operations over time.

HOUSING IS PUBLIC SAFETY

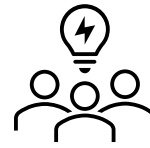
HOUSING IS INFRASTRUCTURE

HOUSING IS HEALTHCARE

STRATEGIC STEPS TO REDUCE
HOMELESSNESS

In recent years, significant work has been done in Yellowstone County by the CoC and SAC to develop an operational crisis continuum – bringing relevant agencies together to ensure that crisis response is delivered without significant gaps or overlaps in service.

Reducing homelessness in our county will require both an operational crisis continuum and a physical continuum of housing facilities that respond to crisis. These critical investments will provide a bridge out of homelessness, transition people into permanent housing, and provide ongoing support to vulnerable populations.



Off the Streets was a temporary project, borne out of a global pandemic, that served as an important prototype for developing a community-wide response to homelessness in Yellowstone County



Low/No Barrier Shelter and Permanent Supportive Housing are identified as top priorities in the CoC Strategic Plan



A longer term or permanent low/no-barrier shelter will require a different staffing and operational model than Off The Streets, as well as stable funding



Capital improvements or new construction will be needed to continue a low/no-barrier shelter in the community