



NATIONAL SURVEY OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR HOMELESS FAMILIES

MONTANA
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from the INSTITUTE FOR CHILDREN AND POVERTY

Montana had an estimated 154 homeless families on a single night in 2008, with providers serving 20% more than their bed capacity over the course of the year.¹ This brief summarizes some of the state's public and private initiatives to assist these families.

State Taskforce on Homelessness

Taskforce: The Montana Council on Homelessness (established in June 2004 and renewed in December 2006 by executive order) has been inactive since the latest executive order expired in December 2008. The council was tasked with identifying resources, goals, and priorities to reduce homelessness.

Governor's Appointee: None.



Demographic Summary and Overview of Regional Organization

	Montana	Billings ²
Persons in homeless families ³	449	85
Number of family shelter beds ⁴	630	98
Persons in homeless families (per 10,000 population in families) ⁵	15	n/a
Percent of families in poverty ⁶	16.13%	12.38%
10-Year plan date approved or implemented	2008	2009
10-Year plan target population	All	All
Point-in-time count frequency	Annually	Annually
Point-in-time count managing agency	Montana Continuum of Care Coalition	Montana Continuum of Care Coalition
Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) managing agency	Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services	Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services
Main organizing agency or Continuum of Care (CoC) lead applicant	Montana Continuum of Care Coalition	City of Billings Community Development Division

Meeting Family Shelter Needs in Montana

Montana is a vast, sparsely populated state with few resources for homeless families in rural areas. Even some of the largest population centers lack sufficient family shelter beds. In 2010, Montana identified 441 persons in homeless families staying in shelters or on the street and an additional 619 primarily living doubled up, while reporting only 630 family shelter beds.⁷ Furthermore, many facilities that do assist families often exclusively serve victims of domestic violence.⁸ In response, localities across Montana are implementing strategies to meet immediate need for family shelter. For example, facilities for homeless single men in Helena provide motel vouchers for homeless families with no alternative emergency shelter options. Local advocates, however, report that the voucher system is expensive and unsustainable over the long term.⁹

Responding to the need for family shelters in Billings and Bozeman, area churches have formed Family Promise affiliates. Family Promise, a nationwide organization through which local congregations alternate hosting families for a week at a time, provides lodging, meals, case management, and day centers. Participating families

The *National Survey of Programs and Services for Homeless Families* is an online resource for service providers, advocates, researchers, and public policy makers working in the field of family homelessness. The Web site provides a state-by-state snapshot of the interconnections between governmental and nonprofit work to end family homelessness. For additional information on Montana and other states, visit www.icprwb.org



are required to seek employment and save 80% of their earnings. In 2009, the Bozeman chapter served 25 adults and 33 children in homeless families, 45% (14) of whom were under the age of five. Ninety percent of Bozeman households utilizing Family Promise's case management services obtained permanent housing upon exit.¹⁰ Affiliates are currently in development in Helena and Missoula.¹¹

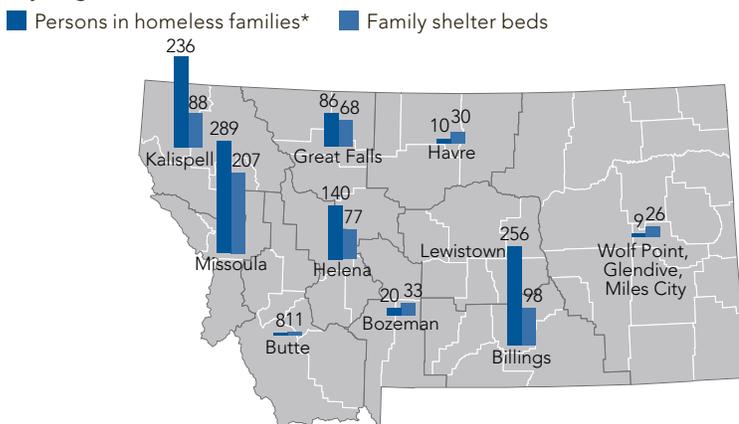
Billings Mayor's Committee on Homelessness

In 2005, the now-inactive Montana Council on Homelessness (MTCoH) chose Billings as a site to develop a homeless planning and service delivery model that other Montana localities could emulate. As a result, the Mayor's Committee on Homelessness was established to coordinate and promote initiatives to end homelessness in Billings. To address the needs of homeless families and chronically homeless individuals, the committee developed *Welcome Home Billings*, the city's ten-year plan to end homelessness. To support the implementation of *Welcome Home Billings*, the city formed the Billings Metro VISTA Project, which connects AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers to initiatives such as the Billings Area Resource Network (BARN), a group promoting collaboration between local service providers.¹²

Additionally, the committee collaborates with local businesses in its efforts to end homelessness through the Council of Visionary Companies. Local businesses on the council employ homeless and at-risk individuals while providing job development support.¹³ The council provides managers with training to foster successful relationships with their homeless employees. According to the council, participating employers have found that the skills investment and support they provide to their employees results in high levels of loyalty and productivity and low turnover rates.¹⁴

The active involvement of the private sector in Billings locally addresses a state-wide need for job training and employment among homeless families. In 2010, only 13% of families cited income from full-time employment, with 19% reporting income from a part-time job. This represents a decrease of 38.1% and 39.4%, respectively, since 2008. The 2008 state point-in-time survey suggests that these levels of unemployment represent a need for employment services, as 22% of responding families cited employment loss or inadequate job skills as a primary reason for their homelessness.¹⁵

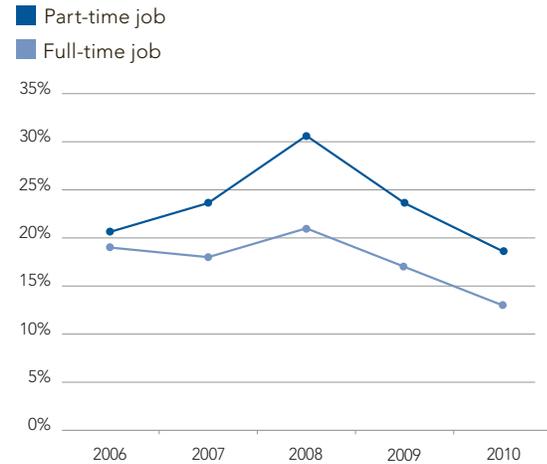
Number of Persons in Homeless Families and Family Shelter Beds (by region)



*Data include persons staying in shelters; in places not meant for human habitation; doubled up with a friend or family member; or in a motel, hotel, local jail, treatment facility, or hospital. Locations for six respondents were unknown.

Source: Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, 2010 Montana Homeless Survey; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD's 2008 CoC Homeless Assistance Programs—Housing Inventory Chart Report.

Percent of Homeless Families with Wages (by year and employment type)



Source: Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Montana Homeless Surveys 2006–2010, <http://www.mthomeless.org>. Data include families earning income from both employment types.

Endnotes

- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD's 2008 CoC Homeless Assistance Programs—Homeless Populations and Subpopulations; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, AHAR Exchange Public Reports: 2008 Comprehensive Report of Sheltered Homeless Persons.
- Statistics for Billings include Big Horn, Carbon, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, and Yellowstone counties.
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2008 Homeless Populations and Subpopulations; Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, 2008 Montana Homeless Survey.
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD's 2008 CoC Homeless Assistance Programs—Housing Inventory Chart Report.
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2008 Homeless Populations and Subpopulations; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates.
- U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2008 American Community Survey.
- Homeless individuals not living doubled up include those staying in a motel, hotel, local jail, treatment facility, hospital, or in places not meant for human habitation. Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, 2010 Montana Homeless Survey; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2008 Housing Inventory Chart Report.
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2008 Housing Inventory Chart Report.
- Martin J. Kidston, "Advocates seek shelter for homeless local families," (Helena, MT) Independent Record, January 7, 2010.
- Family Promise of Gallatin Valley, 2009 Annual Report.
- Family Promise of Gallatin Valley, <http://www.familypromise.org>
- City of Billings Department of Community Development, *Welcome Home Billings*, 2009; City of Billings Department of Community Development, "Billings Metro VISTA Project (MVP)," <http://ci.billings.mt.us/index.aspx?NID=1442>
- City of Billings Department of Community Development, *Welcome Home Billings*, 2009.
- Michael Dummeyer (AmeriCorps VISTA Liaison, Council of Visionary Companies), interview with ICP, May 28, 2010.
- Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, 2008 Montana Homeless Survey; Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, 2010 Montana Homeless Survey.