

# Community Overflow Weather Shelter System (COWSS)

## 2016 Winter Report

As the cold months approached, members of the Linn County Continuum of Care came together to create a system that would help meet the need of providing shelter for people experiencing homelessness in our community. This collaborative effort, which involved **19** different organizations, created a system that focused on maximizing existing community emergency shelters and the development of temporary sheltering when shelters were at capacity. During the season, the system was put into place **42** times and served **92** unique individuals.

# 297

## Number of Nights of Shelter Provided



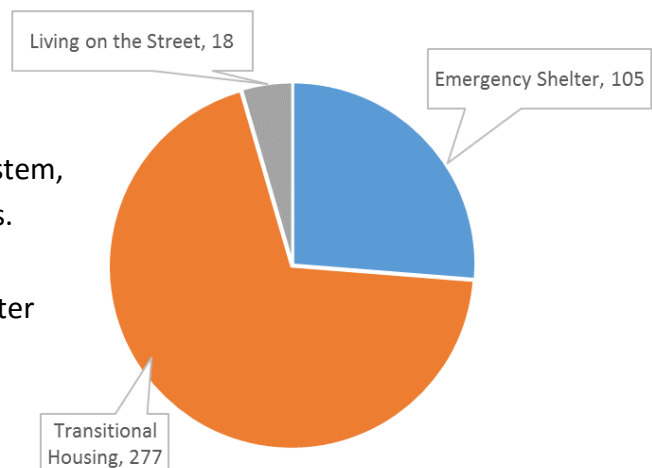
Photo Courtesy of Seth Walters

Semi-annually the community conducts a point in time assessment to identify people that are experiencing homelessness. The most recent Point In Time assessment was completed on January 27, 2016. On that date there were **400** individuals experiencing homelessness. Of those individuals, **18** were found to be unsheltered. This is a **58% decrease** from the previous Point In Time assessment in July, 2015.

Planning has already begun for next year and community support is essential. The Community Overflow Weather Shelter System is broadening the definition for when to open the overflow sheltering system, thereby, increasing the utilization of sheltering services.

Financial support is needed to provide safe, warm shelter during dangerous weather conditions.

1/27/16 Homeless Point In Time



Please contact Phoebe Trepp at 319-362-7555 for more information.

# Stories of Hope

## A Long Journey Home

On a cold night in January when the temperature dipped below 0°F, the Cedar Rapids Police Department called about an elderly man who had been sleeping in a park. This gentleman's name is Freddie and he is in his early eighties and pretty well known in the community, as he has been homeless for the majority of the last decade. Freddie is a soft-spoken man, very polite and some would say charismatic. He does not drink, smoke, or indulge in any type of drugs. As a matter of fact, Freddie doesn't even take any medications.

Through collaborative efforts within the Community Overflow Weather Shelter System, Freddie was able to sleep in a safe place that protected him from the elements. The next day work began with Freddie to identify long-term solutions for housing. He entered an emergency shelter where he received case management services that assisted with connecting Freddie to community resources and housing options. Before winter's end, Freddie has secured permanent housing and continues to receive support to meet his needs.



## A Safe Place To Call Home

One winter evening the Cedar Rapids Police Department contacted the Community Overflow Weather Shelter System Staff seeking assistance with finding safe housing for a woman that was fleeing from domestic violence. The police officer brought her to the shelter site where shelter staff assisted her with settling into a safe place to sleep for that night.

In the morning the shelter staff assisted this woman with connecting to a domestic violence service provider where she received ongoing shelter services and case management services. Through these services she was able to connect to community providers and secured permanent housing within thirty days, as well as, obtained employment to enable her to maintain housing long-term.