

A Comparison of Homeless Services Among Five Cities Utilizing Existing Data: Austin, Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, and Seattle

Austin/Travis County Health & Human Services Department
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I. Data

A. Data Source:

Most of the data used for the comparisons are from each city's Continuum of Care for Homeless Assistance Grant application. The Continuum of Care (CoC) funding is administered by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Through the Continuum of Care planning process, each city/community tries to develop a comprehensive system of effective services for homeless people; evaluate programs and assist providers with service improvements; support strategies to increase the supply of affordable housing; promote partnerships and collaborations among public, private, non-profit and faith-based entities; and develop short-and long-range capital and operational funding strategies for the continuum of services for homeless people.

The HUD Continuum of Care grant application requires communities to describe the fundamental components of their "Continuum of Care" system for homeless services, including a housing "gaps analysis" that shows their inventory of emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing as well as the "gaps" between the inventory and the need or demand for each type of shelter/housing. Communities must also describe the services in their CoC, including homelessness prevention activities, outreach to persons in homeless situations, and supportive services to help persons exit homelessness.

B. Data Limitations:

The data used for the comparisons in this report may vary among the cities in methodologies, presentation, and interpretation. Therefore, the data can most appropriately be used for basic comparison, not for statistical evaluation.

- This report presents information from a comparison using an existing document that is common to all five cities instead of a document created specifically for this study; therefore, the research was comparative rather than evaluative.

- Among the CoC applications, there are inconsistencies in how cities presented or categorized data. For example, in the section where “Outreach services” are described, Dallas categorized those activities by type of service while the other cities categorized those activities by target population.
- Homeless services data in this report are quantitative, not qualitative. The number of services does not indicate the type or intensity of services, which could vary considerably among the cities.
- Some communities supplement their Continuum of Care funding with other funding for homeless services. In other words, the Continuum of Care funding amount may not reflect the total funding for homeless services in a community.
- HUD defines “homeless” and “chronically homeless” situations, and each community is expected to use those definitions when completing the grant application. This report assumes that each city did, in fact, use the following definitions:
 - **Homeless:** The term “homeless” means a person is sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., living on the streets or in an emergency shelter), or residing in an emergency shelter, transitional housing, or other supportive housing program.¹
 - **Chronically Homeless:** The term “chronically homeless” means “an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.” (Note: HUD’s definition of chronic homelessness *does not* include families. Also, an individual must have a *disabling condition*².)

¹ According to HUD, a person is considered homeless **only** when he/she resides in one of the places described below:

An *unsheltered* homeless person resides in a place not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, abandoned buildings, or on the street.

A *sheltered* homeless person resides in: 1) an emergency shelter; or 2) transitional housing or supportive housing for homeless persons who originally came from the streets or emergency shelters

² A disabling condition can be a diagnosable substance use disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability, or chronic physical illness or disability, or the co-occurrence of two or more of these conditions.

C. The Lead entity for each city’s Continuum of Care Grant Application

Austin: Community Action Network’s Homeless Task Force (Resources and Programs Committee) / the City of Austin

Dallas: Metro Dallas Homeless Alliance (their community-wide partnership) / the City of Dallas

Houston: the Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County, Inc./ City of Houston/ Harris County Collaborative (the Collaborative)

San Antonio: the City of San Antonio’s Department of Community Initiatives’ Community Action Division (CAD) / CoC Planning Committee

Seattle: King County/ the City of Seattle / suburban cities

D. Populations

Table 1. Population Statistics³

	Austin	Dallas	Houston	San Antonio	Seattle
Total Population	656,562	1,188,580	1,953,631	1,144,646	563,374
Total Number of Homeless Persons ⁴	3,789	6,933	8,334	3,306	9,877
Total Number of Chronically Homeless Persons	569	1,181	1,440 ⁵	672	3,027
Ratio of Homeless per 1,000 Population	5.77	5.83	4.27	2.89	17.53

³ Population data for each city is from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2000. Homeless/chronically homeless population data is from each city’s 2004 HUD Continuum of Care Grant applications.

⁴ Total number of homeless persons includes total number of chronically homeless persons in each city.

⁵ Only the number of chronically homeless persons residing in shelters is reported.

Chart 1-1

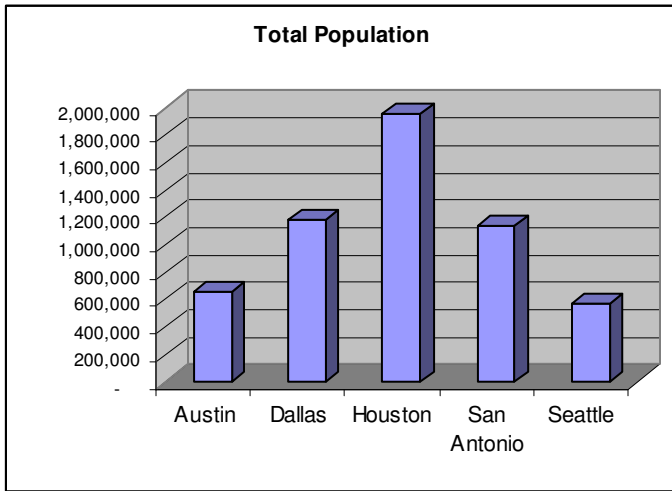


Chart 1-2

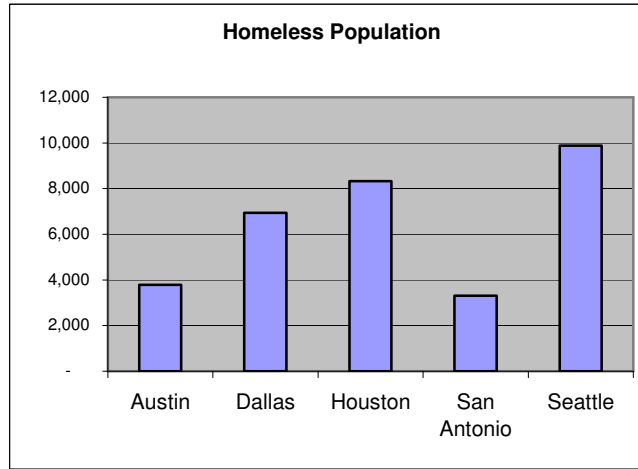
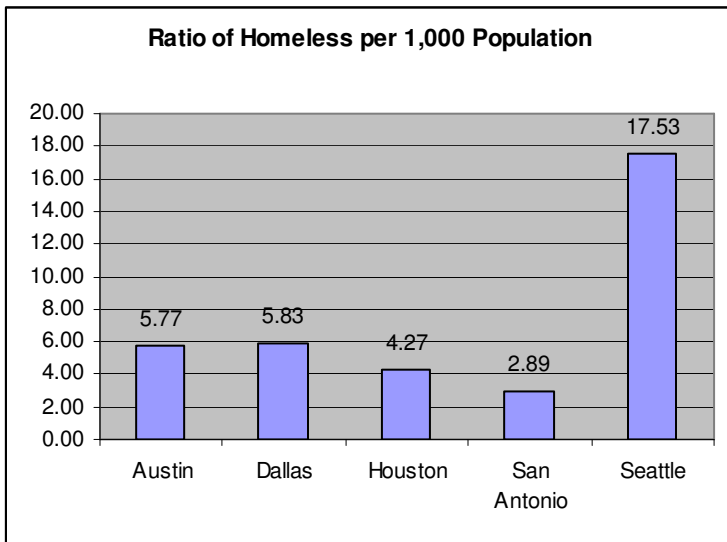


Chart 1-3



II. Shelter and Housing

Table 2-1. Austin*

	Beds/Units	Inventory in 2004	Number of Homeless Persons	Unmet Need/Gap	Unmet Need: % of Total Hmls
Individuals	Emergency Shelter	388	2,073	1,395	-
	Transitional Housing	153			
	Permanent Supportive Housing	137			
	SUBTOTAL	678			
Persons in Families With Children	Emergency Shelter	273	1,716	913	-
	Transitional Housing	453			
	Permanent Supportive Housing	37			
	SUBTOTAL	803			
TOTAL		1,481	3,789	2,308	61%

* Source: The Austin/Travis County 2004 HUD Continuum of Care for Homeless Assistance Grant application, 2004

- A “count” of homeless persons was conducted in January 2004
- The inventory of emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing was updated based on the number of beds/units available on July 7, 2004
- The inventory does not include 50 beds available in the “Day Sleeping” program at the Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH), which became operational in October 2004. Capacity could expand to 100 beds, if demand warrants and funding allows. Current utilization averages 20 beds daily.

Table 2-2. Dallas*

	Beds/Units	Inventory in 2004	Number of Homeless Persons	Unmet Need/Gap	Unmet Need: % of Total Hmls
Individuals	Emergency Shelter	2,331	5,037	403	-
	Transitional Housing	340		529	
	Permanent Supportive Housing	372		1,062	
	SUBTOTAL	3,043		1,994	
Persons in Families With Children	Emergency Shelter	493	1,896	50	-
	Transitional Housing	746		84	
	Permanent Supportive Housing	168		405	
	SUBTOTAL	1,407		489	
TOTAL		4,450	6,933	2,483	36%

* Source: The Dallas 2004 HUD Continuum of Care for Homeless Assistance Grant application, 2004

Table 2-3. Houston*

	Beds/Units	Inventory in 2004	Number of Homeless Persons	Unmet Need/Gap	Unmet Need: % of Total Hmls
Individuals	Emergency Shelter	1,261	4,431	616	-
	Transitional Housing	922		646	
	Permanent Supportive Housing	391		595	
	SUBTOTAL	2,574		1,857	
Persons in Families With Children	Emergency Shelter	714	3,903	476	-
	Transitional Housing	1,362		713	
	Permanent Supportive Housing	468		170	
	SUBTOTAL	2,544		1,359	
TOTAL		5,118	8,334	3,216	39%

* Source: The Houston/Harris County 2004 HUD Continuum of Care for Homeless Assistance Grant application, 2004

Table 2-4. San Antonio*

	Beds/Units	Inventory in 2004	Number of Homeless Persons	Unmet Need/Gap	Unmet Need: % of Total Hmls
Individuals	Emergency Shelter	401	1,913	671	-
	Transitional Housing	309		296	
	Permanent Supportive Housing	28		208	
	SUBTOTAL	738		1,175	
Persons in Families With Children	Emergency Shelter	215	1,393	321	-
	Transitional Housing	624		202	
	Permanent Supportive Housing	40		125	
	SUBTOTAL	879		514	
TOTAL		1,617	3,306	1,689	51%

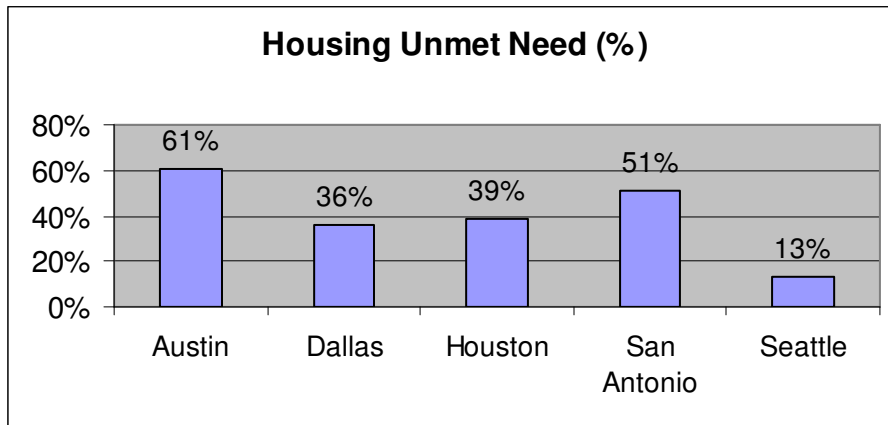
* Source: San Antonio/Bexar County Continuum of Care 2004 Consolidated Proposal

Table 2-5. Seattle*

	Beds/Units	Inventory in 2004	Number of Homeless Persons	Unmet Need/Gap	Unmet Need: % of Total Hmls
Individuals	Emergency Shelter	2,232	6,333	195	-
	Transitional Housing	1,374		257	
	Permanent Supportive Housing	1,855		421	
	SUBTOTAL	5,461		872	
Persons in Families With Children	Emergency Shelter	769	3,544	63	-
	Transitional Housing	1,863		127	
	Permanent Supportive Housing	523		219	
	SUBTOTAL	3,135		409	
TOTAL		8,596	9,877	1,281	13%

* Source: "Seattle's 2004 Update to the Consolidated Plan," 2004

Chart 2.



III. Services

The HUD Continuum of Care requires communities to provide the information about the services, including homelessness prevention activities, outreach to persons in homeless situations, and supportive services to help persons exit homelessness. The following table shows the number of *service providers* that provide such services as prevention, outreach, and supportive services.

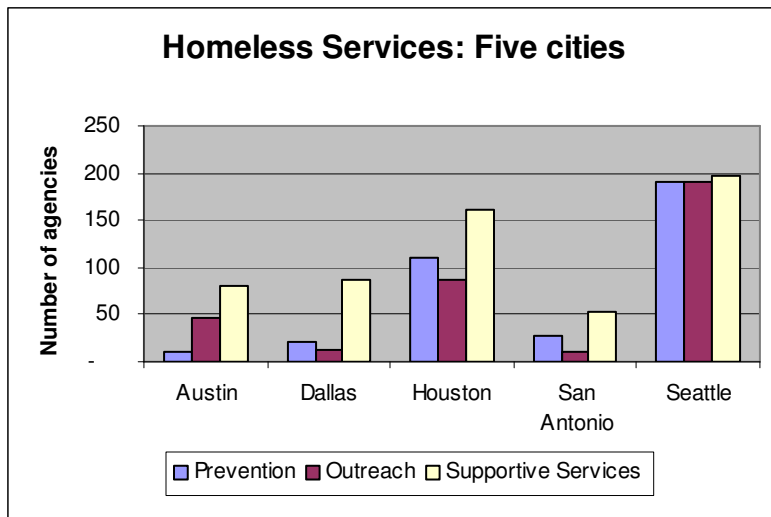
Service categories presented are different from city to city.

- In prevention services, for example, Austin presents two categories (emergency assistance / tenant counseling and legal assistance) whereas Seattle presents fourteen categories for the same services (adult day health/ mortgage, rental assistance and other housing-related financial assistance/ housing stability case management / payee programs/ tenant programs and legal assistance/ utility assistance/ hotlines / computerized eligibility and application tools / resource manuals/ youth-specific prevention efforts/ immigrant and refugee service organizations/ refugee resettlement agencies/ specialized programs for youth to prevent domestic violence/ mental health and drug courts)
- Outreach efforts and locations, many of which target more than one subpopulation, include street canvassing, mobile vans, drop-in and hygiene centers, hot meal programs, emergency shelter dispatch sites, encampment response programs, day labor dispatch sites, food banks, health care sites, educational institutions, criminal justice system sites, and education via literature, websites, and presentations. Austin, Houston, San Antonio, and Seattle present data by focusing on subpopulation, but unlike the other cities, Dallas focuses on services such as clothing distribution, food/meal distribution, healthcare, and intake
- As for supportive services, the CoC application requests that communities report data about the following categories of supportive services, at a minimum: Case management, Life Skills, Alcohol and drug abuse treatment, Mental health treatment, AIDS-related treatment, Education, Employment Assistance, Child Care, and Transportation.

Table 3. Summary Information⁶

	Austin	Dallas	Houston	San Antonio	Seattle
Prevention	11	21	110	28	190
Outreach	46	13	87	11	191
Supportive Services	81	87	162	54	196
Total ⁷	138	121	359	93	577
Service Ratio ⁸	0.04	0.02	0.04	0.03	0.06

Chart 3. Summary of the Number of Providers of Homeless Services



⁶ The numbers in the table represent the total number of service providers reported for each city.

⁷ The numbers of service providers in this table are duplicated. For example, an agency that provides prevention services may also provide outreach and/or supportive services and would be counted (and, therefore, “duplicated”) in each of those categories.

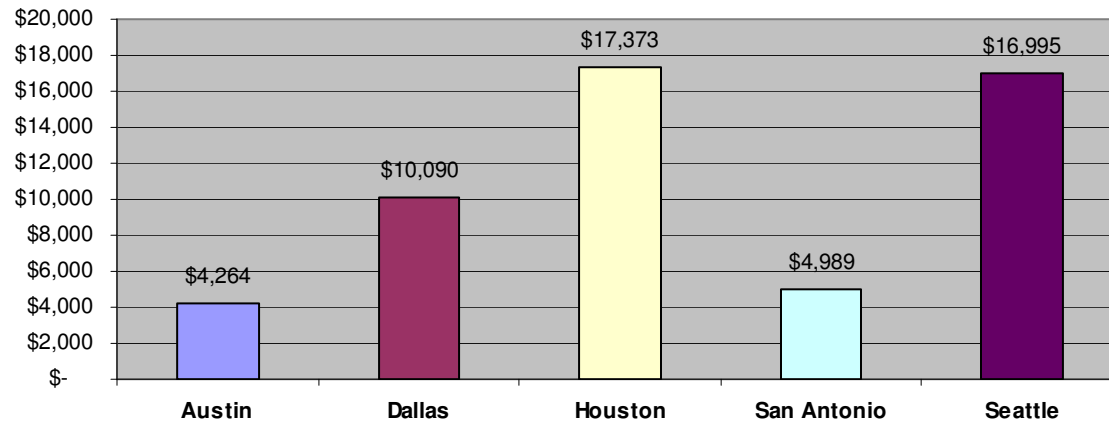
⁸ Ratio of services provided by agencies per homeless person.

IV. 2003 Continuum of Care Grant Awards⁹

	Austin	Dallas	Houston	San Antonio	Seattle
FY 2003 Continuum of Care (Unit: \$1,000)	\$ 4,264	\$ 10,090	\$ 17,373	\$ 4,989	\$ 16,995
PCHP¹⁰	\$ 1,125	\$ 1,455	\$ 2,085	\$ 1,509	\$ 1,721
PCTP¹¹	\$ 6	\$ 8	\$ 9	\$ 4	\$ 30

HUD Continuum of Care

2003 Competitive and FY 2004 Grant Awards among five cities
(unit: \$1,000)



⁹ Source: 2003 Competitive and FY 2004 Formula Grant Award at <http://www.hud.gov>

¹⁰ Continuum of Care dollar amount per capita for homeless population

¹¹ Continuum of Care dollar amount per capita for total population

If you have any questions, please contact Gilja Koo, HHS Planner II, at gilja.koo@ci.austin.tx.us or 972-6156