

MACCH PREVENTION TASK FORCE



COST STUDY – ALL DATA

In March 2008, the Prevention Task Force engaged in a cost study with the purpose of assessing the cost of supporting individuals and families in homelessness in relation to the cost of housing in a Fair Market Rent apartment.

The Prevention Task Force created a worksheet that gathered data in a number of areas. They include the size of households, the number of days in shelter, frequency of emergency room visits, and number of arrests. The Cost Study Worksheets were distributed to all Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing Providers in Douglas, Sarpy and Pottawattamie Counties. The provider agencies were asked to randomly select one family and one individual they were currently serving to complete the worksheet. The participating agencies include Catholic Charities (Omaha and Council Bluffs), Heartland Family Service, MICA House, Siena-Francis House, and The Salvation Army (Omaha).

In addition, emergency shelters, metro area hospitals, and correctional facilities were queried about emergency room visit and correctional stays information. Below are the costs generated from that research:

- Average cost of a night in an emergency homeless shelter: \$12.54
- Average cost of a visit to a hospital emergency room: \$2,156.45
- Average cost of a day spent in a correctional facility: \$82.00
- Average cost of an arrest: \$179

The data below represents each of the scenarios collected, using the costs above as an illustration for a homeless household.

FAMILY DATA

Expenses for Emergency Services	Estimated Cost	Fair Market Rent
Family #1: 60 Days in Shelter for Four People	\$3,009.60	
12 Visits to the Emergency Room	\$25,877.40	
3 Days in Jail	\$425	
Expenses versus Housing Costs for Family #1	\$29,312.00	\$2,022*
Family #2: 367 Days in Shelter for Three People	\$13,806.54	
11 Visits to the Emergency Room	\$23,720.95	
Expenses versus Housing Costs for Family #2	\$151,871.94	\$9,084*
Family #3: 15 Days in Shelter for Three People	\$564.30	
1 Visit to the Emergency Room	\$2,156.45	
1 Day in Jail	\$261	
Expenses versus Housing Costs for Family #3	\$2,981.75	\$378.50*
Family #4: 120 Days in Shelter for 3 People	\$4,514.40	
25 Visits to the Emergency Room	\$53,911.25	
1 Day in Jail	\$261	
Expenses versus Housing Costs for Family #4	\$58,686.65	\$3,028*
Family #5: 368 Days in Shelter for Three People	\$13,844.16	
Expenses versus Housing Costs for Family #5	\$13,844.16	\$9,084*
Family #6: 175 Days in Shelter for 6 People	\$13,167.00	
3 Visits to the Emergency Room	\$6,469.35	
Expenses versus Housing Costs for Family #6	\$19,636.35	\$6,066*
Total spent on Emergency Services for Families in Homelessness	\$276,332.85	\$29,662.50*

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COST STUDY – ALL DATA, CONTINUED

INDIVIDUAL DATA

Expenses for Emergency Services	Estimated Cost	Fair Market Rent
Individual #1: 119 Days in Shelter	\$1,492.26	
5 Visits to the Emergency Room	\$10,782.25	
Expenses versus Housing Costs for Individual #1	\$12,274.51	\$1,602*
Individual #2: 211 Days in Shelter	\$2,645.94	
1 Visits to the Emergency Room	\$2,156.45	
7 days in Jail	\$932	
Expenses versus Housing Costs for Individual #2	\$5,734.39	\$3,738*
Individual #3: 6 Days in Shelter	\$75.24	
4 Visit to the Emergency Room	\$8,625.80	
8 Days in Jail	\$2,088	
Expenses versus Housing Costs for Individual #3	\$10,789.04	\$106.80*
Individual #4: 30 Days in Shelter	\$376.20	
Expenses versus Housing Costs for Individual #4	\$376.20	\$534*
Individual #5: 41 Days in Shelter	\$514.14	
5 Visits to the Emergency Room	\$10,782.25	
Expenses versus Housing Costs for Individual #5	\$11,296.39	\$729.80*
Individual #6: 3-years in Shelter	\$13,731.30	
11 Visits to the Emergency Room	\$23,720.95	
7 days in Jail	\$932.00	
Expenses versus Housing Costs for Individual #6	\$38,384.25	\$19,224*
Total spent on Emergency Services for Families in Homelessness	\$78,854.78	\$25,934.60*

While having a home does not automatically result in an individual or family having less trips to emergency rooms or arrests, housing stability does help families to more effectively deal with other crisis that arise. Research tells us that families who are appropriately housed have increased access to supportive services, mainstream resources, and have less arrests and nights in jail than those who are homeless (Culhane, Metraux, Hadley, 2002).

*This cost of Permanent Housing does not include Supportive Services which can be variable depending upon the household composition and needs.

Questions or comments can be directed to:

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