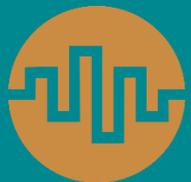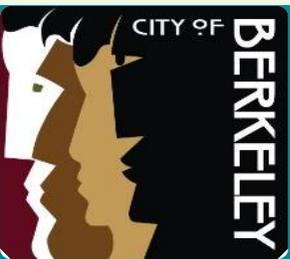# Homeless Response Team: Opportunities Exist to Strengthen Procedures and Better Track Outcomes

Special City Council Meeting

July 29, 2025

BERKELEY CITY AUDITOR

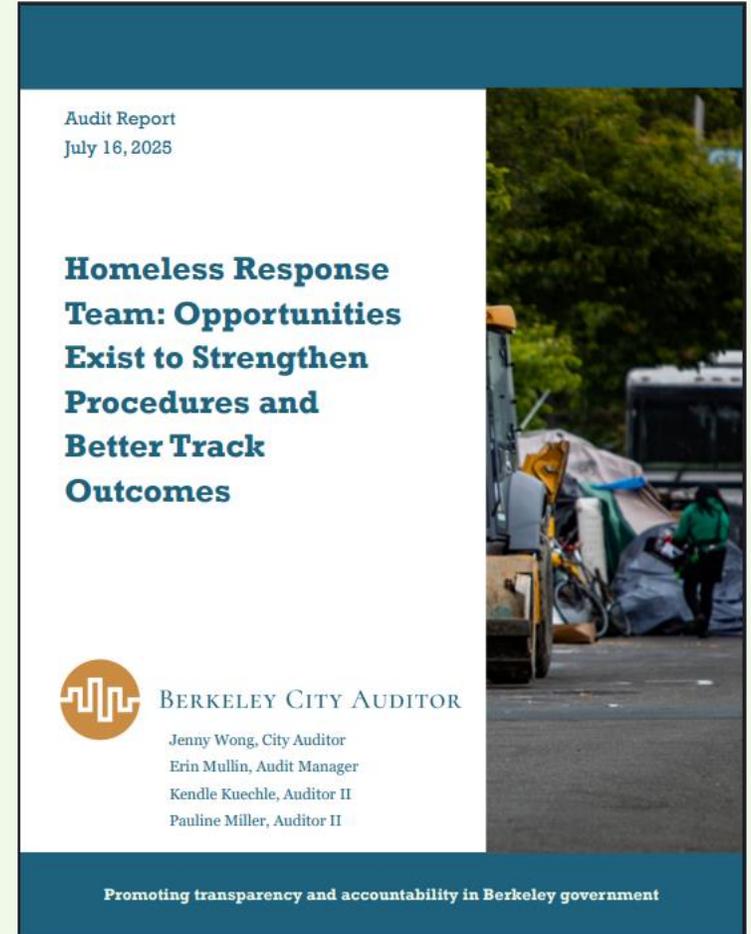# Homeless Response Team: Opportunities Exist to Strengthen Procedures and Better Track Outcomes

Overview

- Why we did this audit
- Objectives
- Findings
- Recommendations
- Management response

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Why we did this audit:

- There were community concerns over encampments and unsheltered homelessness.

- The HRT is an important touchpoint for people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in Berkeley.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology:

Objectives:

1. What role does the Homeless Response Team have in responding to encampments?

2. How does the Homeless Response Team coordinate with other organizations to respond to encampments?

3. How does the Homeless Response Team use data to measure progress toward goals and how is this communicated to the public and decision makers?

Audit Scope:

- FY 2022 – 2024

Methodology:

- Evaluated HRT operations, policies, data, outcomes and public reporting.
- Compared data and outcomes to best practices.
- Interviewed city and county officials, third-party outreach providers and homeless advocates.

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What we found:

Finding 1: The HRT conducts outreach and enforcement with limited city and county resources.

Finding 2: The HRT paused some coordination meetings and had limited access to shared information systems.

Finding 3: The HRT can strengthen its approach to using outcomes for measuring progress toward goals and keeping the public informed.

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The HRT acts in both outreach and enforcement roles.

Homeless Response Team Encampment Interventions
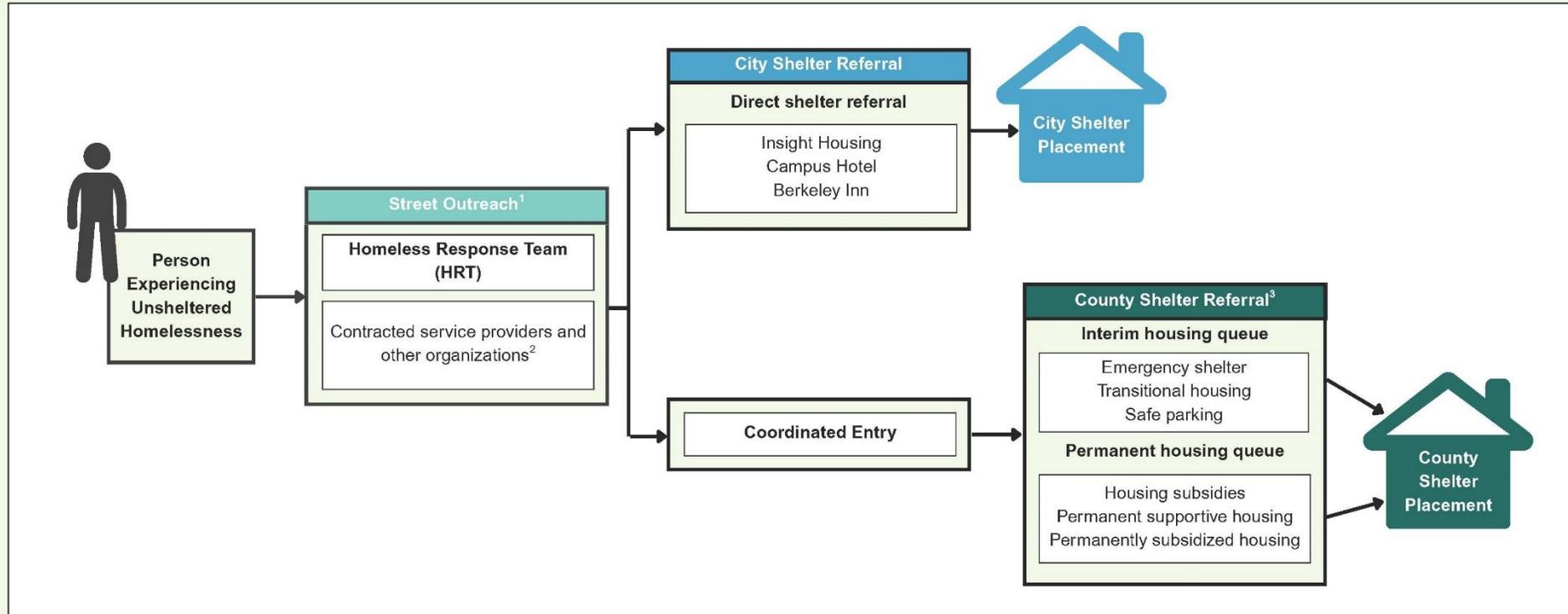
Intervention		Description
Outreach	Shelter Referrals	• Refer individuals to shelter based on availability • Perform Coordinated Entry assessments
	Health and Hygiene	• Provide dumpsters and voluntary trash removal, toilets and wash stations, mobile showers and laundry
Enforcement	Public Noticing	• Provide Berkeley Municipal Code notices • Encourage individuals to voluntarily relocate or comply with rules
	Deep Cleaning	• Remove excess debris, trash and/or hazardous materials • Provide pest control treatments • Perform street sweeping • Pressure wash sidewalks • Provide belongings storage
	Closure	• Remove debris, tents, and/or other items • Require relocation of individuals and their possessions • Provide belongings storage

Source: Homeless Response Team, City Policy. See page 13 of the report for more details.

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To access most shelter and housing resources, the HRT must navigate a complex regional system with limited resources.

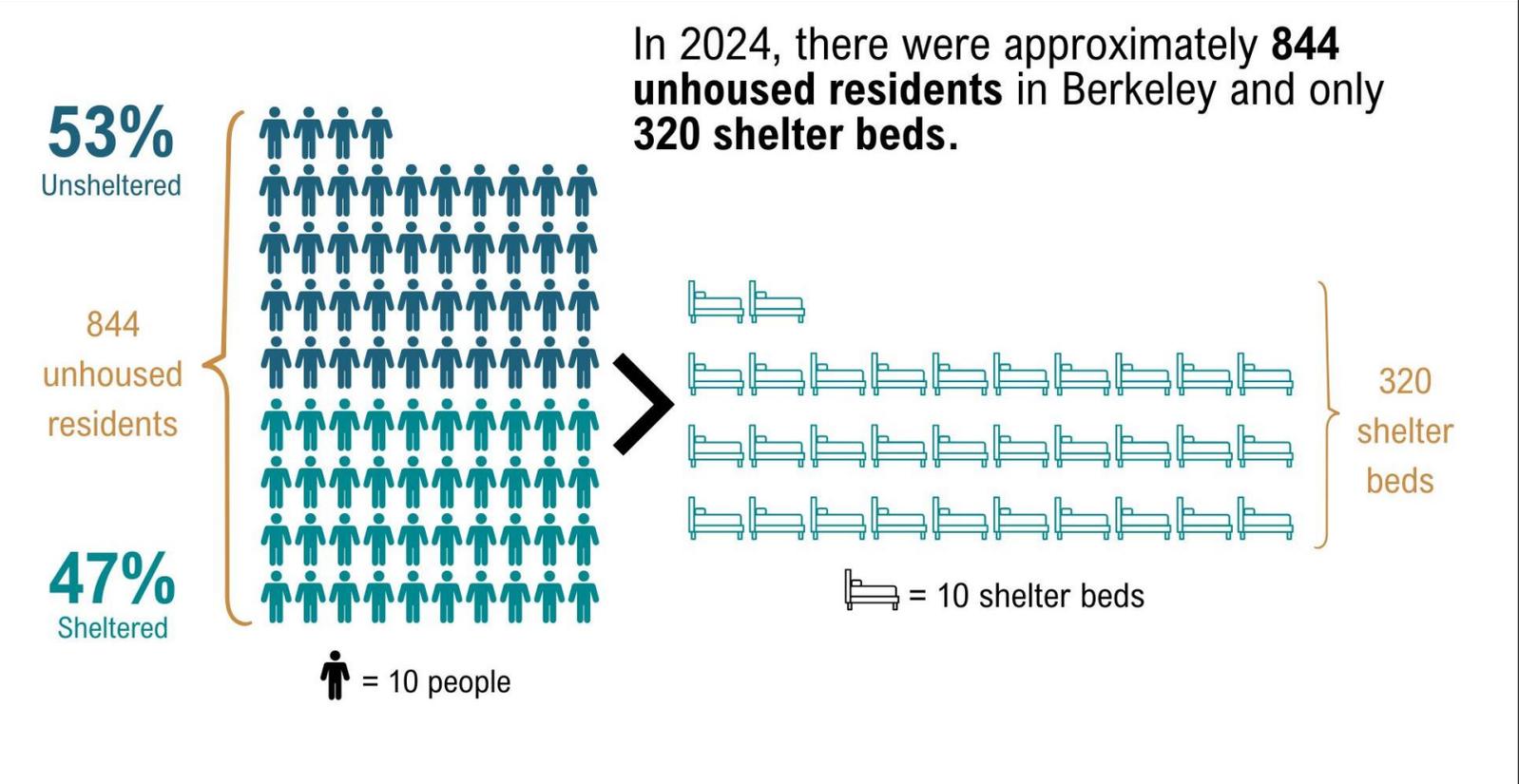## City of Berkeley Street Outreach and Shelter Referral System

Source: Auditor analysis of City of Berkeley and Alameda County resources. See page 16 of the report for more details.

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To access most shelter and housing resources, the HRT must navigate a complex regional system with limited resources.

The Number of People Experiencing Homelessness Far Exceeded the Number of Shelter Beds in Berkeley in 2024.

53% Unsheltered

In 2024, there were approximately **844 unhoused residents** in Berkeley and only **320 shelter beds.**

844 unhoused residents

320 shelter beds

47% Sheltered

🛏 = 10 shelter beds

👤 = 10 people

Source: Auditor analysis of Alameda County 2024 PIT count and Berkeley shelter data. See page 17 of the report for more details.

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To access most shelter and housing resources, the HRT must navigate a complex regional system with limited resources.

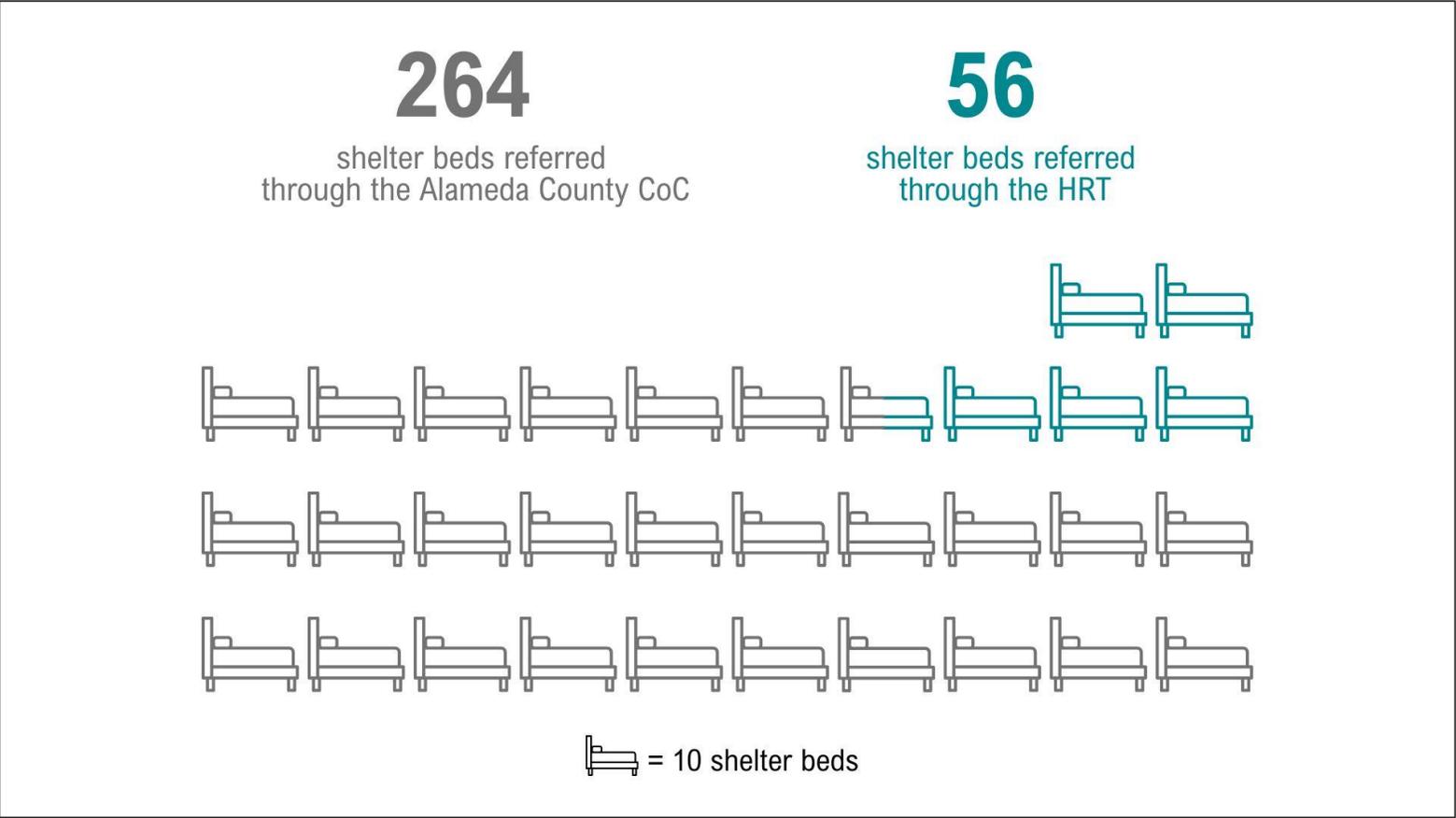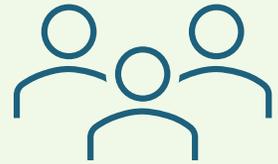**The Alameda County CoC controls referrals for most shelter beds in Berkeley.**

264 shelter beds referred through the Alameda County CoC

56 shelter beds referred through the HRT

🛏 = 10 shelter beds

Source: Berkeley shelter data. See page 18 of the report for more details.

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Limited city resources and legal issues also impact the HRT's work in encampments.

City staff

Equipment

Legal considerations

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What we found:

Finding 1: The HRT conducts outreach and enforcement with limited city and county resources.

Finding 2: The HRT paused some coordination meetings and had limited access to shared information systems.

Finding 3: The HRT can strengthen its approach to using outcomes for measuring progress toward goals and keeping the public informed.

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The HRT paused some coordination meetings with service providers for one year and did not have written procedures for communication.

During the audit period there were:

Paused coordination meetings.

No **formal procedures** for ongoing communication.

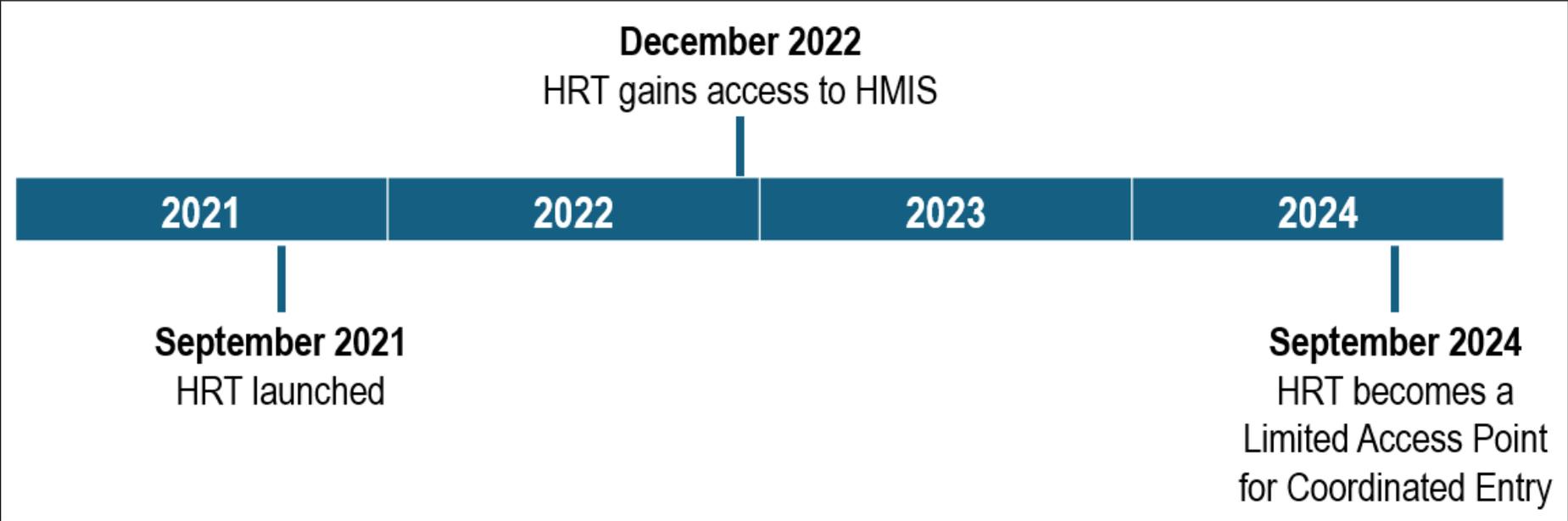However, encampment actions still took place during this time.

One medical provider reported they lost track of clients after the City's encampment actions during the pause.

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The HRT had limited access to information systems through the County, hindering their ability to effectively coordinate services.

Data Access Timeline

December 2022
HRT gains access to HMIS

| 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |

September 2021
HRT launched

September 2024
HRT becomes a
Limited Access Point
for Coordinated Entry

Source: City Manager's Office. See page 23 of the report for more details.

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What we found:

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The HRT tracked some outcomes related to their goals during the audit period.

Homeless Response Team Goals and Outcomes

Goals	Outcomes	Reported Results
Our residents are sheltered	Percentage of people connected to shelter	655 offered shelter and 303 accepted shelter (46% acceptance rate), **measured cumulatively** over the duration of the program.
	Percentage of people matched to housing resources	20% of HRT clients exit to permanent housing situations, **measured cumulatively** over the duration of the program.
Dangerous encampments are not inevitable	Number of notices given	1405 notices, **measured cumulatively** over the duration of the program.
	Number of encampment closures	59 closures, **measured cumulatively** over the duration of the program.
Our City is clean	Pounds of trash and debris removed	1 million pounds, **measured cumulatively** over the duration of the program.
	Number of storage notices given	35 storage notices, **measured cumulatively** over the duration of the program.

Source: Homeless Response Team quarterly reports to City Council. See page 26 of the report for more details.

Berkeley City Auditor

The HRT was missing some outcomes that could be useful to connect to their goal of reducing unsheltered homelessness.
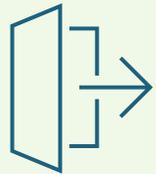
These outcomes include:

Number of **Coordinated Entry** assessments

Number of **shelter enrollments**

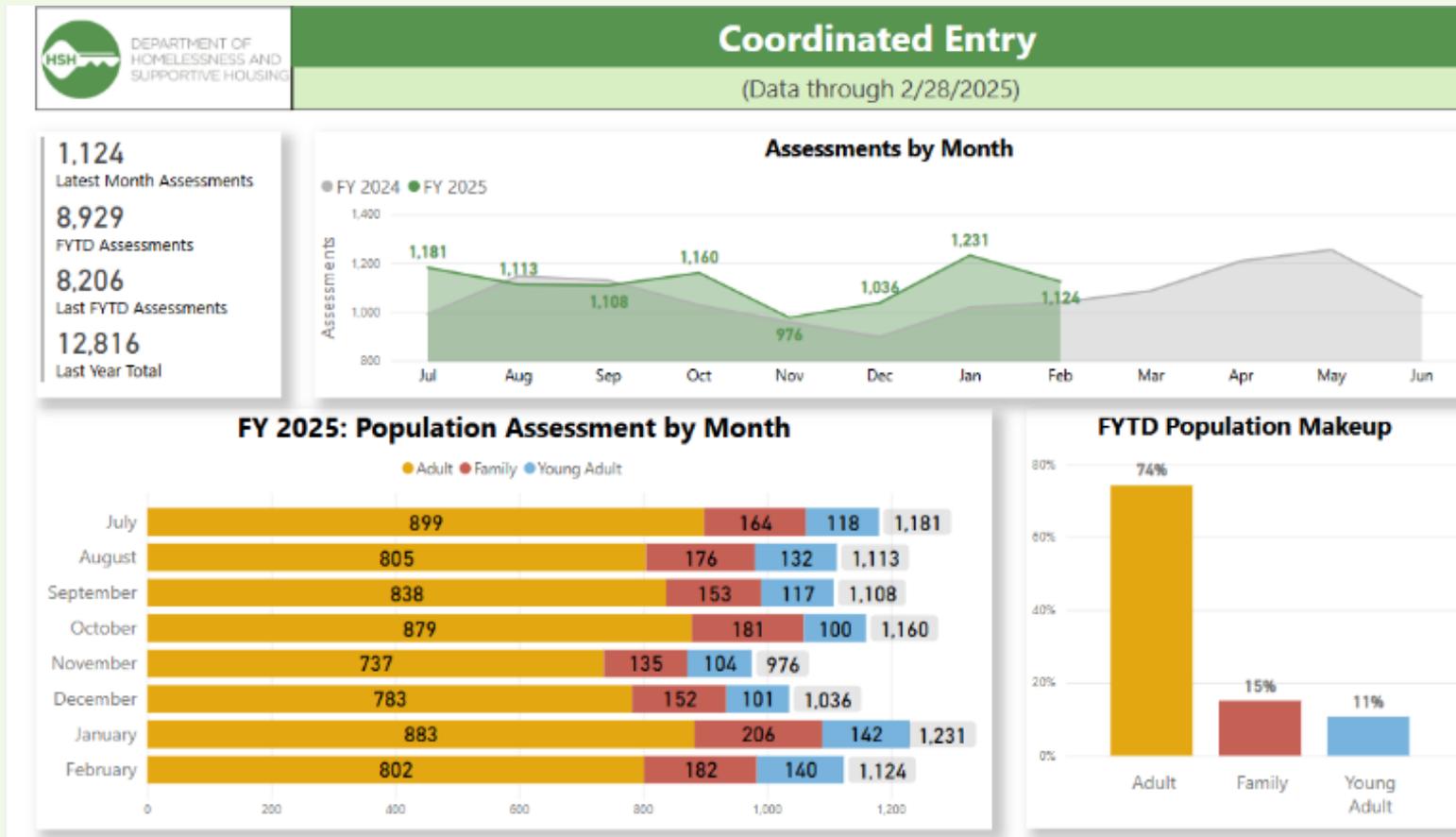Reasons why people **decline shelter**

Demographic data

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The HRT's reports were difficult to access on the City's website.

Examples of public reporting in other jurisdictions:

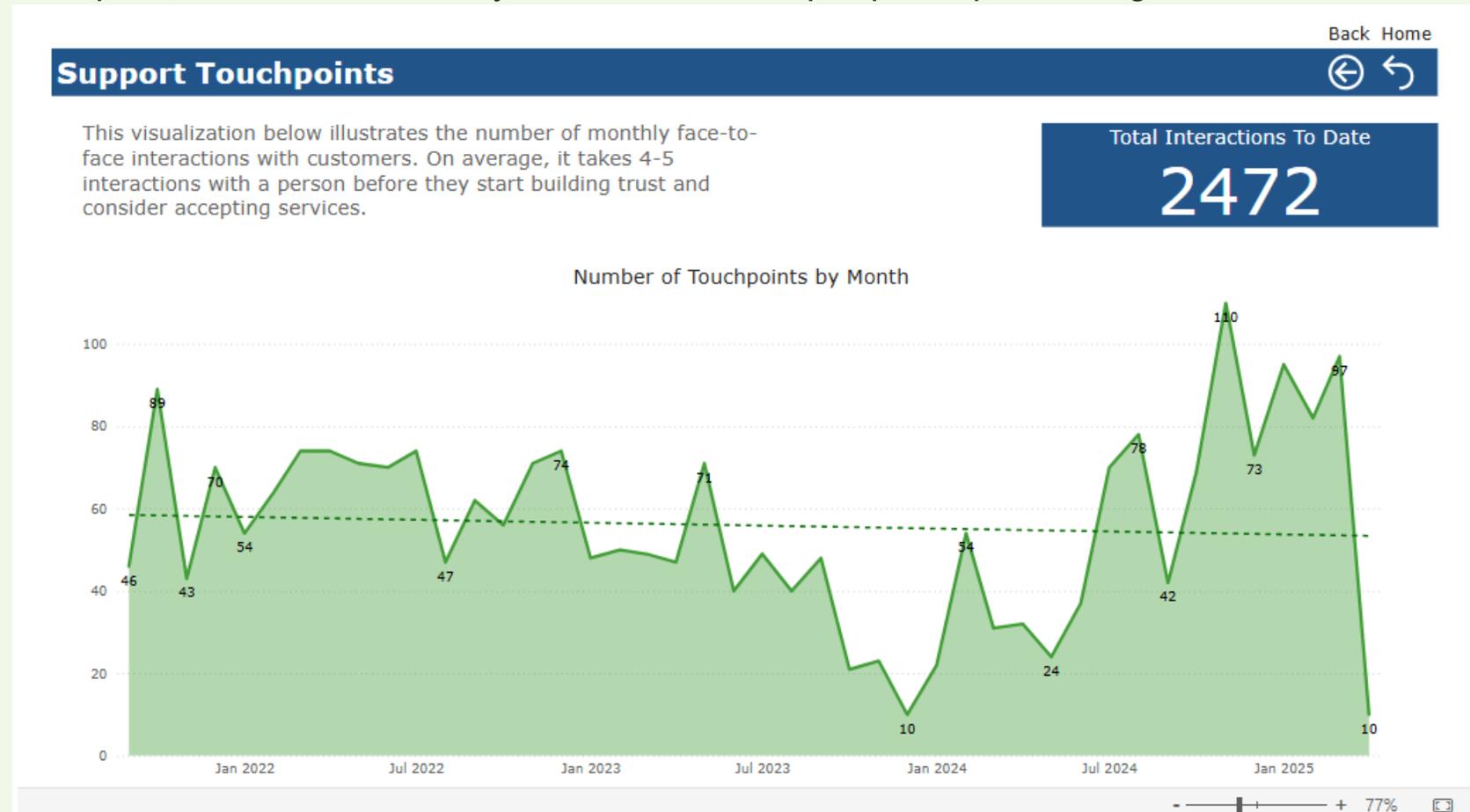San Francisco provides data on Coordinated Entry assessments.

Source: City and County of San Francisco webpage. See page 29 of the report for more details.

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The HRT's reports were difficult to access on the City's website.

Examples of public reporting in other jurisdictions:

Issaquah, WA shows monthly interactions with people experiencing homelessness.

Source: City of Issaquah webpage. See page 29 of the report for more details.

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Recommendations

We recommend that the HRT:

- Document procedures for coordination with service providers and data collection, as well as use a shared mapping tool to assist with coordination.

- Expand on their reported outcomes and consider sharing public reports in a more accessible format.

- Assess staffing resources needed to make these improvements.

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Management Response

City management and the Homeless Response Team agreed with our audit findings, conclusions, and recommendations, and provided an action plan to address our recommendations.

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We would like to thank the HRT for their cooperation with this audit.

We would also like to thank HHCS, Public Works, the City Attorney's Office, and the community members for their contributions to this audit.

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