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# Homelessness in Denver

Presented to the Board of Public Health & Environment  
*April 8, 2021*

# Introduction

## *Meeting purpose and plan*

### City efforts to address homelessness

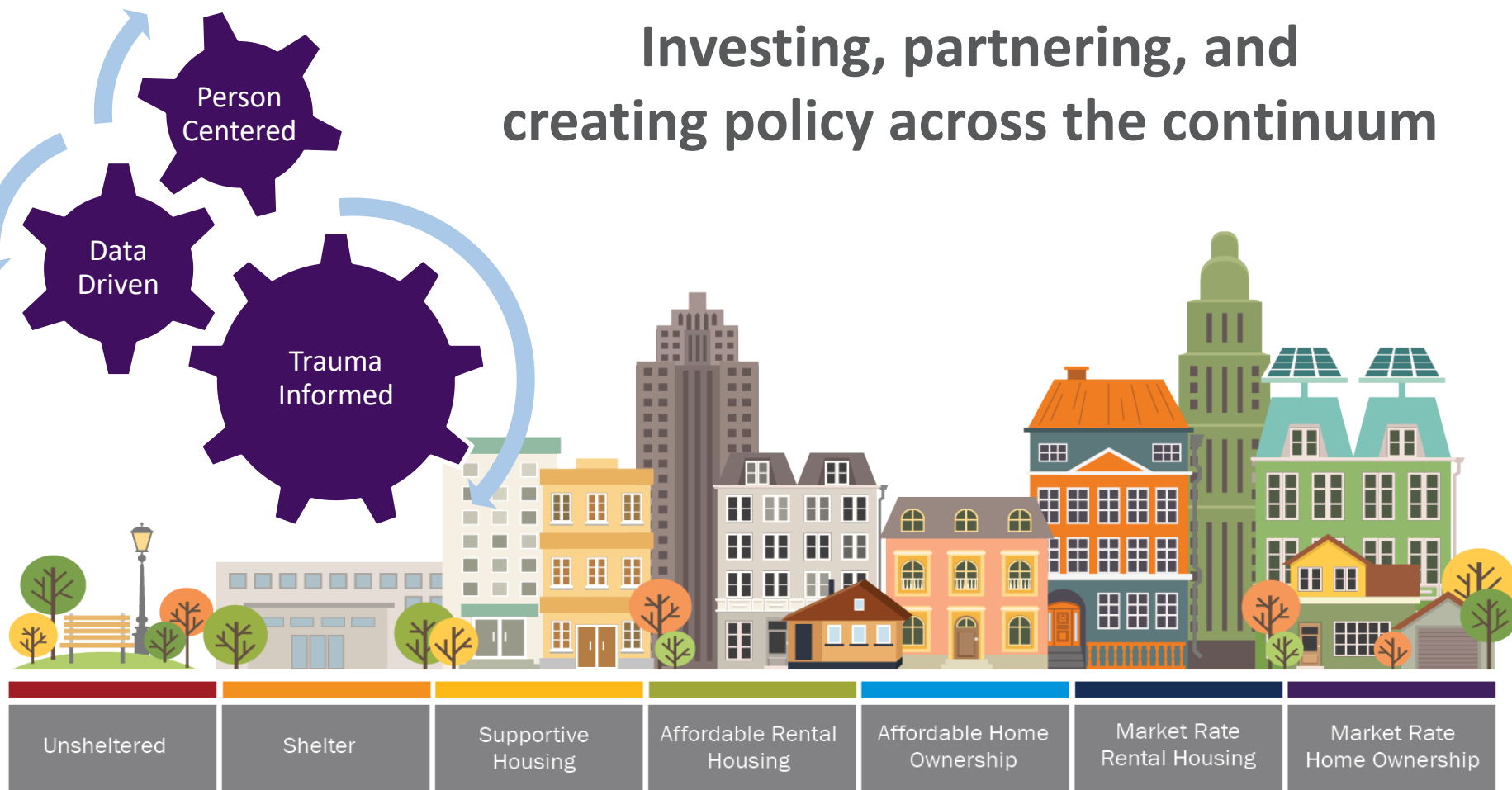
*Not meant to be inclusive of all City efforts;  
presentations will be given by:*

- The Department of Housing Stability (HOST)
  - Denver Parks & Recreation
- The Department of Transportation & Infrastructure (DOTI)
  - Denver Public Health & Environment (DDPHE)

*Please hold questions until the end of the presentation*

# HOST's Approach to Our Work

Investing, partnering, and creating policy across the continuum



# Homelessness is a Symptom

Housing is out of reach: high cost, mismatched stock

Incomes largely stagnant: gap in affordability

Health Problems

Escaping Violence

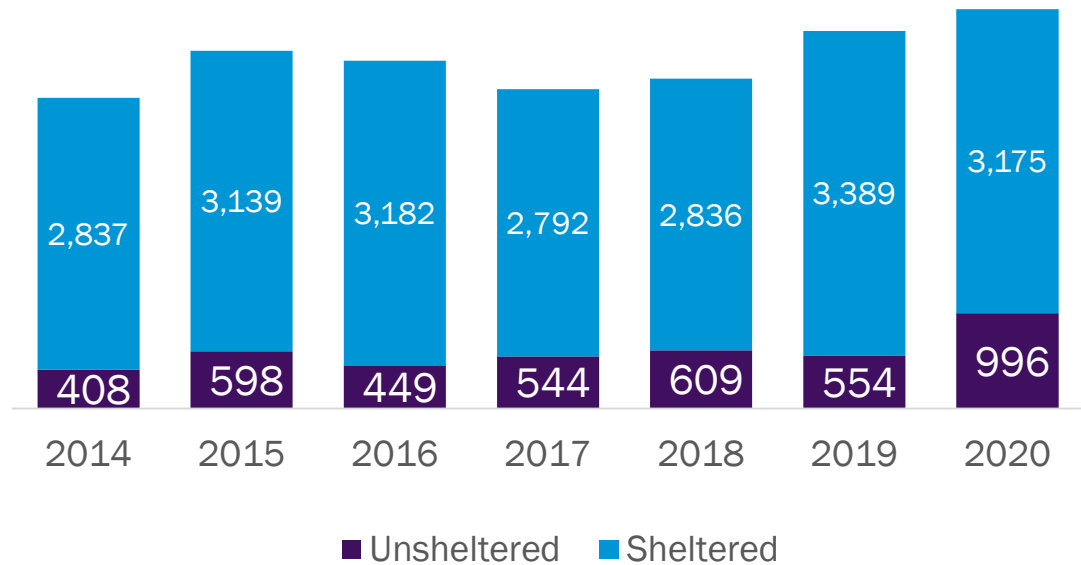
Impact of Racial Disparities

Housing that is affordable, safe, and healthy provides a stable platform to address what contributed to experiencing an episode of homelessness.

# Homelessness in Denver: Point in Time Survey 2020

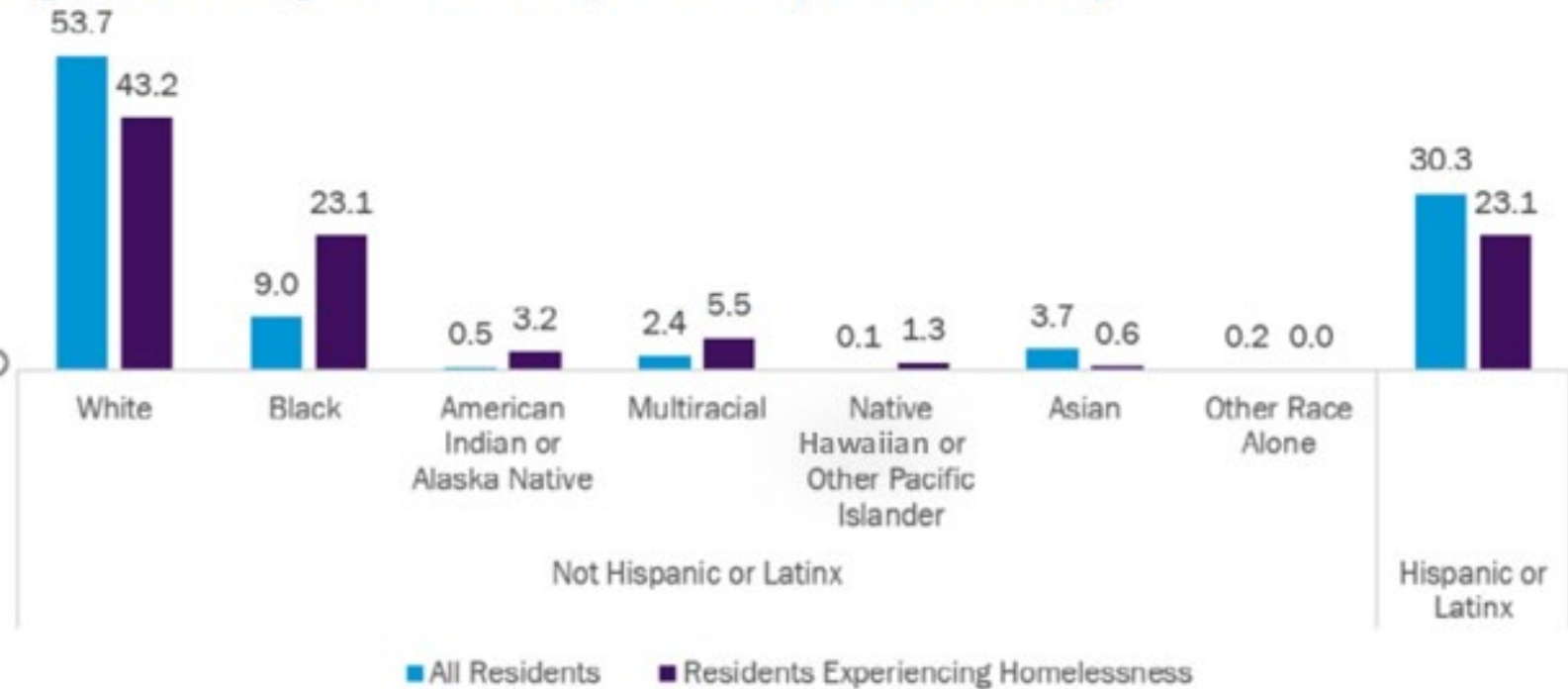
- About 51 out of 10,000 Denver residents experience homelessness on a given night

Number of People Experiencing Homelessness in Denver



# Denver County Residents by Race and Ethnicity

Figure 5. Percentage of Denver County Residents by Race and Ethnicity



Source: Data for all Denver residents is from the [U.S. Census Bureau](#) 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-year estimates; Data for residents experiencing homelessness is from the [2020 Point-in-Time Count](#). Note: Data are for Denver County.

# Shelter Access Points

(found at [denvergov.org/emergencysHELTER](https://denvergov.org/emergencysHELTER))

## For Families

## For Individuals

- **Lawrence Street Community Center (*transportation to men's shelter*)**  
2222 Lawrence St.  
Buses are departing nightly, at approximately 6 p.m., to transport men to different shelter sites.
- **Denver Coliseum (*single men*)**  
4600 Humboldt St.  
For access to reserved and overflow beds, individuals should go to the Lawrence Street Community Center, 2222 Lawrence St., for possible assignment. Lottery for reserved beds is held at 1 p.m., and overflow beds are assigned from 5-6 p.m.
- **Samaritan House, Holy Rosary Emergency Shelter (*single women*)**  
2301 Lawrence St.  
Limited beds are available for walk-ins. Women in need of shelter can begin lining up at the designated area outside of Samaritan House on Broadway at 4:30 p.m. Beds are assigned each night through a lottery at 5 p.m. Shelter operates from 5 p.m. to 7:30 a.m.
- **Elati Shelter (*single women; transgender individuals 18+*)**  
1370 Elati St.  
Access will be provided from this site to additional overflow shelter, as needed.
- **Delores Project (*single women; transgender individuals 18+*)**  
Call for address.  
303-534-5411
- **Urban Peak Overnight Shelter (*youth ages 15-20*)**  
303-974-2908
- **Salvation Army Crossroads (*Single men*)**  
1901 29th St.  
720-305-4640  
Entry between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.

## For Families

## For Individuals

- **Samaritan House**  
2301 Lawrence St.  
303-294-0241  
Seven days a week  
5 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
- **The Gathering Place**  
1535 N. High St.  
303-321-4198  
Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday  
1 – 4 p.m.
- **The Volunteers of America Mission**  
2877 Lawrence St.  
303-295-2165  
Monday through Thursday  
1 – 4 p.m.

# Outreach Efforts

Denver Street  
Outreach  
Collaborative (DSOC)  
and Strategic  
Outreach to Large  
Encampments (SOLE)

SOLE workers  
are embedded with  
DSOC team



Large encampment outreach focused on:  
\*Primary and behavioral health support  
\*Peer navigation



Other outreach teams  
beyond HOST





## Temporary Managed Campsites

*SOS is a temporary solution*

"What is a Safe Outdoor Space"?

"SOS Impact"

(Videos courtesy of Colorado Village Collaborative)



Tents at a Temporary Managed Campsite in Denver

## Tiny Home Villages

Two villages:

- Beloved Community Village
- Women's Village at Clara Brown Commons

\$1 million+, three-year contract with Colorado Village Collaborative

Meant to be a temporary stop on the housing continuum

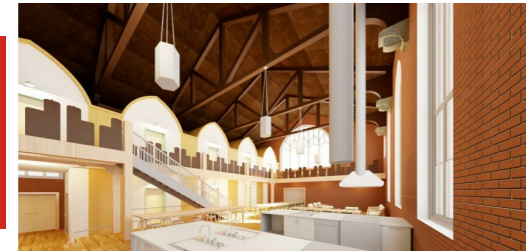
# Supportive Housing Projects

## Legacy Lofts



Legacy Lofts rendering

## Warren Residences



Rendering of the renovated Sanctuary at Warren Residences

## Charity's House



Charity's House rendering

## Valor on the Fax



Valor on the Fax rendering

# What Can You Do?

- Join a charitable organization's board
- Volunteer:
  - Spark the Change:*  
<https://www.sparkthechangecolorado.org/calendar>
  - MHUU:* <https://unitedwaydenver.org/volunteer/>
- Employ people in a housing crisis / facing housing instability in meaningful work
- Partner in policy review and changes; data-driven solutions
- Help shape and support the Five-Year Housing Stability Strategic Plan
- Help change the conversation

# DDPHE Public Health Investigations: Timeline

Pre-2009	Food safety inspections & complaints
2009	Suspended inspections
2012	<i>S. aureus</i> outbreak & resume shelter inspections
2014	Licensing of nonprofits/develop inventory
2017	Interagency shelter inspection process
2018	Response to complaints about encampments
2018	First DDPHE area restriction
2018	Syringe access regulation transitioned to PHI
2018	Tiny home village project
2018	Infection prevention engagement
2019	Hepatitis outbreak
2019	Charitable food service guidance & regulation
2020	COVID response
2020	Safe outdoor spaces
2020	Systems-level support, resources & development

# DDPHE Public Health Investigations: Service Provider Support

## Regulations:

- *Denver Rules and Regulations Governing Food Establishments*
- *Denver Rules and Regulations Governing Residential Health*

<b>Food Safety Program</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
<b>Full Inspections conducted</b>	19	103	19
<b>Limited Inspections conducted</b>	17	6	0
<b>FTA Visits to Shelters</b>	35	20	0
<b>Food Safety/FBI Complaints received</b>	13	9	2
<b>Residential Housing Program</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
<b>Inspections conducted</b>	17	48	51
<b>Complaints received</b>	8	23	10

# DDPHE Public Health Investigations: Hepatitis A Response

Statewide & Denver outbreak affecting people experiencing homelessness:

**October 2018 – February 2021**

- 418 cases (71% hospitalized); 2 deaths
- 108 Denver cases
- 2,760 hepatitis A vaccines; 632 meningococcal vaccines
- DOC activation October 2019
- 1300+ DDPHE staff hours



# *DDPHE Public Health Investigations:* COVID-19 Response

- Added DDPHE position to support systems-level improvement and ongoing advocacy with partners through Denver Joint Task Force, Homeless Leadership Council, and HOST
- Supported opening of de-densified 24/7 shelters and provided daily onsite staffing
- Worked with HOST, CCH to establish activated respite processes for jail & shelters; supported protective action sites for at-risk people experiencing homeless

# DDPHE Public Health Investigations: COVID-19 Response

Established Resource Library on shared drive for Homeless Leadership Council Members:

The screenshot shows a Google Drive interface with a folder named "HLC COVID-19 Resources". The folder contains several PDF documents:

- COVID-19 Vaccine Facts**: A document titled "VACCINE FACTS VIRAL VECTOR (J&J) VACCINE" with sections for "MYTH-BUSTING" and "Get your COVID VACCINE".
- 1\_CDC\_Interim Public He...**: A document titled "ACT NOW! Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People".
- 1\_CDC- Spanish\_Myths & ...**: A document titled "Mitos y datos acerca de las vacunas contra el COVID-19".
- 1\_CDC-Myths & Facts\_Co...**: A document titled "Myths and Facts about COVID-19 Vaccines".
- 1\_CoVID-19 PEH Dashbo...**: A document titled "1\_CoVID-19 PEH Dashbo...".
- 1\_DeathsInPopExpHemel...**: A document titled "ths in the Population Experi Homelessness in Denver (2019-2021)".
- 1\_Denver CDPEH Report ...**: A document titled "Communicable Diseases Affecting People Experiencing Homelessness".
- 1\_Interim Guidance for H...**: A document titled "Interim Guidance for Homeless Service Providers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)".

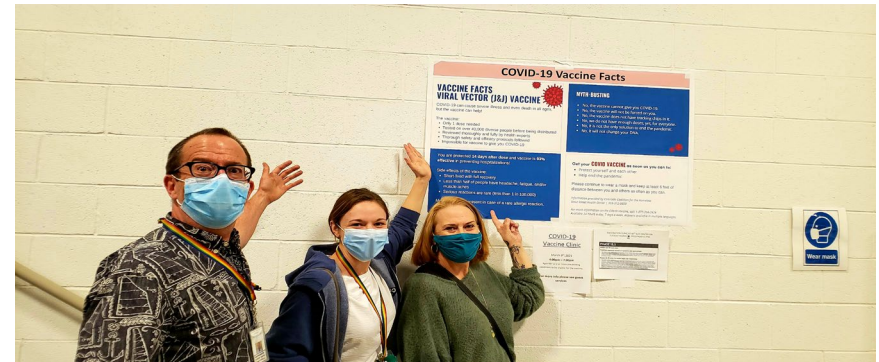


# DDPHE Public Health Investigations: COVID-19 Response

Distribution of supplies: masks, hand sanitizer, and signage

- 36,500 masks
- 494 personal-size hand sanitizers
- 120 containers of 16 oz hand sanitizer

Surveys conducted with Peer Navigator Collaborative to develop person-centered information for vaccination strategies and education.



# DDPHE Public Health Investigations: COVID-19 Response

Total # of testing events= 272+

Total # tests= 16,500+

DDPHE 10,000

DPH 5500

CCH 1000+

## Vaccinations for People Experiencing Homelessness:

- **1,411** vaccinations provided by DPH/DDPHE/CCH mobile teams were administered to guests at shelters and in protective action motel sites coordinated through EOC/Denver Joint Task Force.



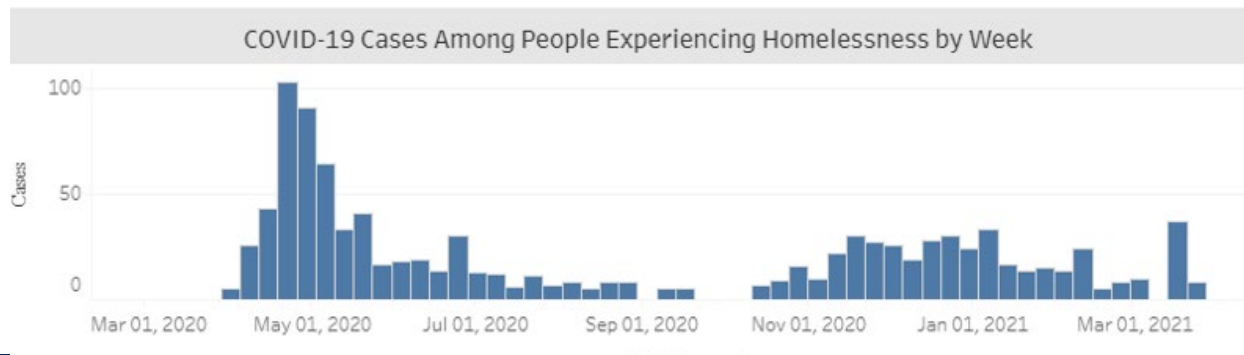
# DDPHE Public Health Investigations: COVID-19 Response

## COVID-19 Infection Among People Experiencing Homelessness in Denver

Overall			
Total Cases	Total Hospitalizations	Total Deaths (with COVID-19)	Total Deaths (Due to COVID-19)
1,046 (1.7% of all cases in Denver)	283 (27.1% of cases in people experiencing homelessness have resulted in hospitalization, compared to 8.0% among people not experiencing homelessness)	15 (1.4% of cases in people experiencing homelessness have resulted in death, compared to 1.4% in people not experiencing homelessness)	9

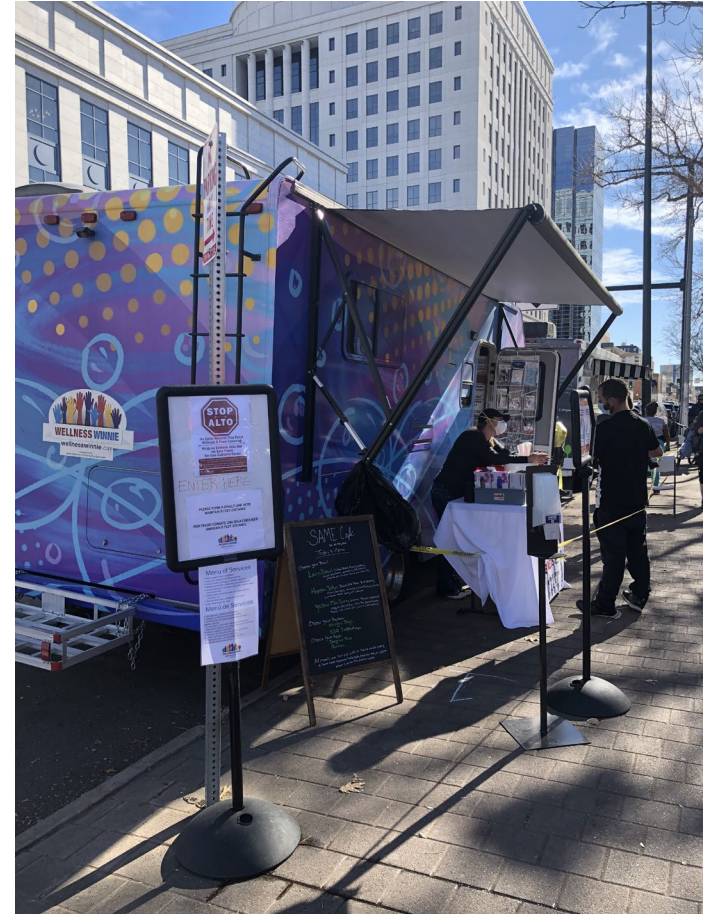
Deaths with COVID-19 = all deaths among persons with COVID-19; Deaths due to COVID-19 = COVID-19 documented as primary or secondary cause of death.

Week of March 28, 2021	
Cases	Hospitalizations
Less than 5	0



# DDPHE Community & Behavioral Health: Wellness Winnie

- Mobile unit offering support, assistance, and resources to those in need by serving them where they are.
- Winnie travels through Denver to provide equitable access to behavioral health resources and support services.
- Winnie is staffed with mental health counselors and peer navigators.
- Winnie serves housed and unhoused individuals



# DDPHE Community & Behavioral Health: Wellness Winnie

Services include (but aren't limited to):

- Providing the essential supplies needed for daily living; offering information about available resources; listening
- Behavioral health screening and assessment
- Active referrals to services (medical, legal, social services, etc.)
- Distribution of socks, gloves, and toiletries



# *DDPHE Community & Behavioral Health: Wellness Winnie*

*From August 2020 through February 2021:*

- Engaged with **over 2,000 people**, with 20% returning 2 to 5 times for a service
- **99** one-on-one peer support and navigation sessions
- **41** one-one-one clinical case management sessions
- **69%** of those in one-on-one sessions reported unstable housing
- Provided **20 people** with naloxone and the training to administer it



**WELLNESS WINNIE**

[www.wellnesswinnie.com](http://www.wellnesswinnie.com)

# *DDPHE Community & Behavioral Health: Substance Use Navigators (SUN)*

- Clinical Navigator
- Peer Navigators
- Co-respond multiple times per week with a variety of City agencies, including DPD's Homeless Outreach Team and Denver Human Services



# *DDPHE Community & Behavioral Health: Substance Use Navigators*

## Monthly Snapshot: March 2021

- 264 total contacts
- 118 total engagements
- 112 total referrals
- 26 follow-up/subsequent contacts
- 7 hotel vouchers
- 58 encampments visited

## 2021 year to date (thru 3/31)

- 215 engagements; 200 referrals

## 2020 totals

- 130 engagements; 90 referrals





# *DDPHE Community & Behavioral Health: Harm Reduction Services*

## **Syringe Services Programs (SSP):**

- Reduce the harms of drug use
- Community-based prevention programs
- Funding for three syringe services programs
- Serve housed/unhoused populations via static sites and mobile outreach efforts

## *Services include:*

- Linkage to substance use disorder treatment
- Access to/disposal of sterile syringes, injection equipment
- Access to naloxone

# DDPHE Community & Behavioral Health: Harm Reduction Services

- People experiencing homelessness are disproportionately impacted by fatal and non-fatal overdoses
- Denver's Chief Medical Examiner issued a standing order making it possible for trained DDPHE staff and Park Rangers to carry, administer, and disseminate naloxone.
- In 2020, overdose made up 42% of deaths of those experiencing homelessness in Denver\*
- Overdose fatalities reversed by participants of SSP's increased by 57% from 2019 to 2020
- Expanding access to free naloxone via peer-to-peer distribution, online portals, and communal kits for agencies and businesses

*\*Total deaths reported for 2020 includes cases still pending investigation and are subject to change*

# *Denver Parks and Recreation*

## Denver Park Rangers

- 18 Urban Park Rangers employed citywide
- Maximize public safety, protect Denver resources, provide education to patrons
- Provide outreach materials, connections to local services
- Provide emergency support for individuals in crisis
- Act as liaisons for HOST, Substance Use Navigators, Shelter Outreach, Denver Police
- Reversed seven opioid overdoses in Civic Center Park since being provided with and trained to administer naloxone in 2020

# *DDPHE Public Health Investigations:* Prevention and remediation of deteriorating conditions in encampments

- Chartered responsibility to keep Denver clean, safe, and free of hazards that cause harm
- In describing the work and responsibilities performed by various City agencies, the term “sweeps” is not only inaccurate in describing the work, but it also perpetuates an image of a person that is not in alignment with our values.
- Demeaning and dehumanizing and does not reflect the incredibly challenging work by our employees and partners to connect people experiencing homelessness with housing, with care, with supportive services, and with stability.

# *DDPHE Public Health Investigations:* Prevention and remediation of deteriorating conditions in encampments

- Our shared goal as a city is to ensure the health of all of Denver's residents, including people experiencing homelessness, through the least restrictive means possible, such as a large-scale encumbrance cleanup conducted by DOTI.
- Working towards the least restrictive means to protect all people is top of mind when DDPHE evaluates encampments; Enacting a temporary area restriction is a last resort.

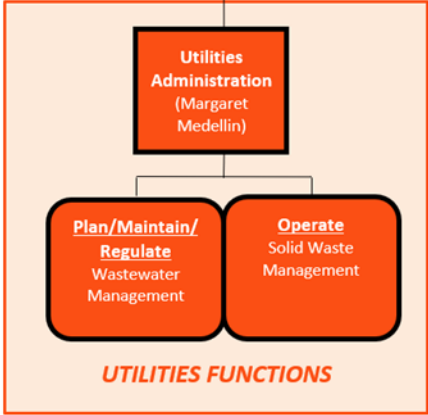
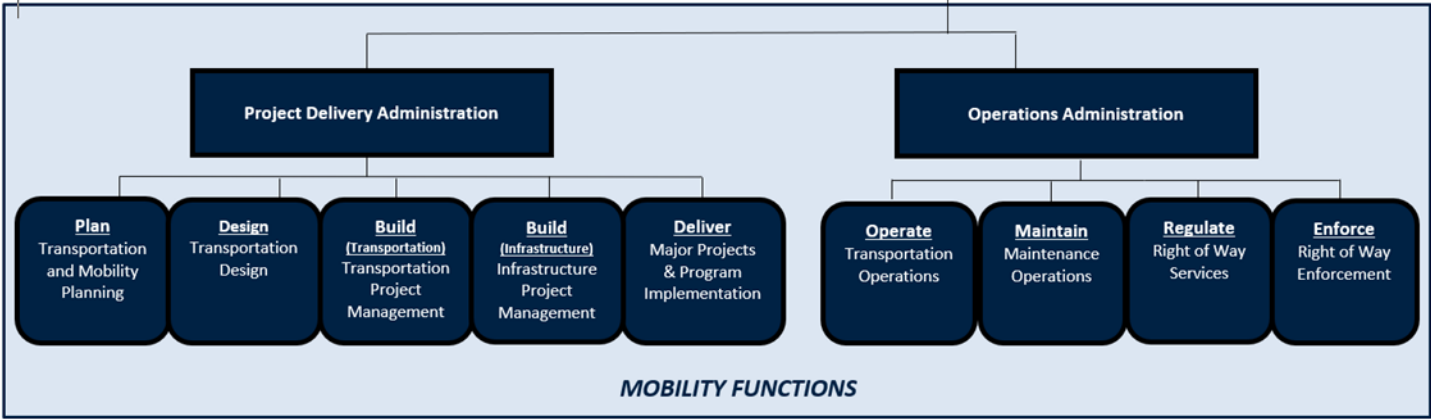
# The Department of Transportation & Infrastructure (DOTI)

- DOTI was formed in 2020 to expand efforts around transportation and mobility.
- We serve our community through planning, design, construction, and maintenance of the City's infrastructure.
- Solid Waste Management is a Division of the Utilities Administration.

# The Department of Transportation & Infrastructure (DOTI)

- Office of the Chief Financial Officer
- Office of the Chief of Staff
- Performance Office
- Public Information Office
- Safety & Industrial Hygiene Office
- Office of Community and Business Engagement

**Office of the Executive Director of the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure**



# The Department of Transportation & Infrastructure (DOTI)

Involvement with encampment cleanups:

- DOTI is charged by the City Charter to remove encumbrances.
- Through our Division of Solid Waste Management, we support Citywide efforts by removing trash, cleaning sidewalks, streets and other rights-of ways, including sanitization, when necessary and facilitating no-cost storage of personal belongings, including unattended personal belongings that do not pose a public health or safety risk.



# The Department of Transportation & Infrastructure (DOTI): *Public Restroom Project*



Fixed Unit – 16<sup>th</sup> and Champa

## Mobile Trailer-Based Pilot Program



# DDPHE Public Health Investigations: Encampments (DDPHE involvement)

- A DDPHE Area Restriction (AR) may be used when environmental and/or public health factors present imminent hazards.
- The program began in 2018 as alleyway sanitation inspections.
- October 2018 DDPHE implemented its **first Area Restriction** for severe health and safety conditions around Samaritan House (severe rodent infestation, feces accumulation, trash, debris, sharps, propane tanks, and other fire hazards).

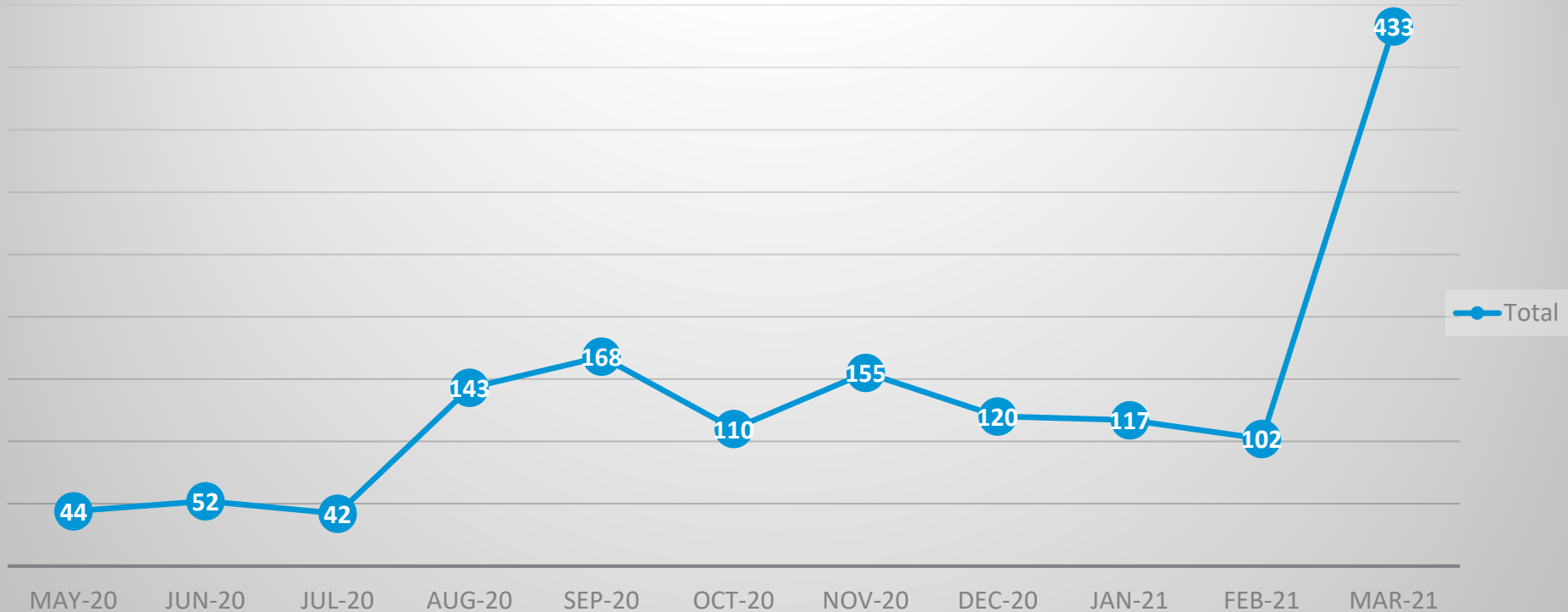
Number of ARs Implemented	
2018	0
2019	3
2020	12
2021	0

# *DDPHE Public Health Investigations:* Encampments

- 2020: addition of Investigator III position focused on environmental/public health complaint response, including encampment complaints.
- Complaints regarding encampment conditions are one of the most common complaints received by 311.
- PHI works collaboratively with other agencies to connect people with available services and support interventions.
- Most encampment clean ups are done under DOTI authority and do not rise to the level of a DDPHE Area Restriction.

# DDPHE Public Health Investigations: Encampments

Complaints regarding encampment conditions  
received by DDPHE



# DDPHE Public Health Investigations: Encampments – Public & Environmental Risks



# *DDPHE Public Health Investigations:* Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

- CDC guidance contemplates factors impacting people experiencing homelessness absent any other public health or environmental considerations and provides broad guidance.
- The City invests extensive resources towards shelter, interim, and long-term housing solutions.
- Unauthorized camping presents safety and health concerns for people camping, the surrounding community, and environment.

# *Questions from the Board*