

Homelessness in Iowa



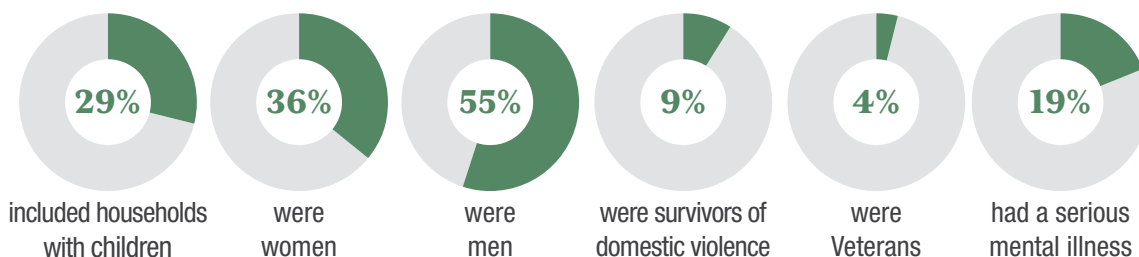
July 2026

What Does Homelessness Look Like in Iowa?

A 2026 Point-in-Time Count found:

2,481

individual Iowans were experiencing homelessness on a single night



Source: Institute for Community Alliances

DEFINITIONS

CENTRALIZED INTAKE:

The entry point for homeless services, linking individuals to the right programs at the right time. (Primary Healthcare)

CONTINUUM OF CARE (COC):

The CoC Program is designed to promote community-wide planning and strategic use of resources to address homelessness; improve coordination and integration with mainstream resources and other programs targeted to people experiencing homelessness; improve data collection and performance measurement; and allow each community to tailor its programs to the strengths and challenges in assisting homeless individuals and families within that community. (HUD Exchange)

DIVERSION/RAPID EXIT:

The goal of an effective, efficient, and equitable homeless response system is to divert people from imminent homelessness whenever possible and help them exit homelessness as quickly as possible. (National Alliance to End Homelessness)

EMERGENCY SHELTER (ES):

Emergency Shelter is an immediate and temporary place for people without a home to stay that provides support services and short-term stabilization for

individuals and families; often the first place people go to avoid experiencing unsheltered homelessness. (HUD Exchange)

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION (HP):

Homelessness Prevention activities are designed to prevent an individual or family from moving into an emergency shelter or living in a public or private place not meant for human habitation. Component services and assistance generally consist of short-term and medium-term tenant-based or project-based rental assistance, rental arrears, rental application fees, security deposits, advance payment of last month's rent, utility deposits and payments, moving costs, housing search and placement, housing stability case management, mediation, legal services, and credit repair. (HUD Exchange)

PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING (PSH):

Permanent supportive housing is an intervention that combines affordable housing assistance with voluntary support services to address the needs of chronically homeless people. The services are designed to build independent living and tenancy skills and connect people with community-based health care,

treatment and employment services. (National Alliance to End Homelessness)

POINT-IN-TIME COUNT (PIT):

A point-in-time count is an unduplicated count on a single night of the people in a community who are experiencing homelessness that includes both sheltered and unsheltered populations. (National Alliance to End Homelessness)

RAPID-REHOUSING (RRH):

Rapid-Rehousing is permanent housing that provides short-term (up to three months) and medium-term (4-24 months) tenant-based rental assistance and supportive services to households experiencing homelessness. (HUD Exchange)

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING (TH):

Transitional Housing (TH) provides temporary housing with supportive services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness with the goal of interim stability and support to successfully move to and maintain permanent housing. TH projects can cover housing costs and accompanying supportive services for program participants for up to 24 months. (HUD Exchange)

Homeless lowans, a 30-day Snapshot

In May 2026 the following lowans were served through Iowa’s Continuums of Care

	Iowa’s Balance of State*	Polk County
Entered coordinated entry	1078	302
Entered homelessness support services	672	321
Cited an eviction as the reason they needed service	122	59
First time homeless (Emergency Shelter)	46	21

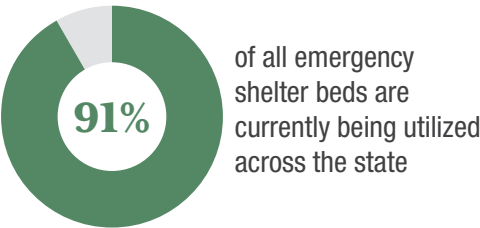
Of Clients Being Served by the Continuum of Care

Had earned income	1243	590
Were seniors aged 55+	810	393
Were transition age youth between the ages of 18-24 years old	198	198
Were veterans	428	333

* Pottawattamie and Woodbury counties are not captured within Iowa’s CoC database.
Source: Institute for Community Alliances

Need for Emergency Shelter Beds

Emergency shelters are consistently running at capacity



Source: Institute for Community Alliances

According to a 2024 assessment, Polk County needed additional spaces for:

	Individuals (including unaccompanied youth)	Families (including parenting youth)
Homelessness Prevention	43 slots	6 slots
Emergency Shelter	48 units	29 units
Diversion/Rapid Exit	43 slots	6 slots
Rapid Rehousing	333 slots	4 slots
Permanent Supportive Housing	523 units	17 units

Source: Homeward - Homelessness System Needs Assessment and Centralized Intake Evaluation

CENTRAL IOWA RESOURCES AND HOUSING SUPPORTS

Centralized Intake

WHAT THEY DO: First point of contact for individuals/families experiencing homelessness in Polk County. Offers assessments and links to shelters, housing programs, and benefits.

ADDRESS: Primary Health Care West Entrance, 1200 University Ave Suite 110A, Des Moines

PHONE: 515-248-1850
Keep calling until you reach staff

HOURS: Walk-ins M-F, 8:00AM-3:30PM

WEBSITE: phciowa.org/homeless

Iowa Housing Hotline

PHONE: 833-739-0065

EMAIL: ce@waypointservices.org

VISIT: iaboscoc.org/coordinatedentry to find services near you