



Myths vs. Facts About People Experiencing Homelessness in Atlanta

MYTH 1:

Most people experiencing homelessness are chronically homeless which is defined as people who have experienced homelessness for at least a year — or repeatedly — while struggling with a disabling condition such as a serious mental illness, substance use disorder, or physical disability.



FACT:

Chronic homelessness makes up 30% of the overall homeless population. In Atlanta, most individuals experiencing homelessness are temporarily homeless due to lack of deeply affordable housing, economic challenges, job loss, or unforeseen crises.



MYTH 2:

Homelessness in Atlanta is primarily caused by substance abuse.



FACT:

While substance use can contribute to homelessness, it is not the primary cause. Economic instability, a lack of affordable housing, unemployment, and systemic inequities are significant drivers of homelessness.



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MYTH 3 :

People experiencing homelessness choose to live on the streets



FACT :

Most people experiencing homelessness would prefer safe, stable and affordable housing. Many face barriers such as lack of affordable housing, mental health challenges, or limited access to necessary support services. Many individuals sleeping outside are not interested in traditional shelter due to high barriers to access, and concerns for safety and privacy.



MYTH 4 :

Homelessness only affects single adults.



FACT :

Homelessness affects families, children, and youth. In the 2024 PIT Count, there 115 households experiencing homelessness in Atlanta include parents with children.



MYTH 5 :

Homeless individuals do not work.



FACT :

Many people experiencing homelessness do work but struggle to find stable housing due to the high cost of living and stagnant wages. Low-income jobs often do not cover housing expenses.



MYTH 6 :

Homelessness is only a big city problem.

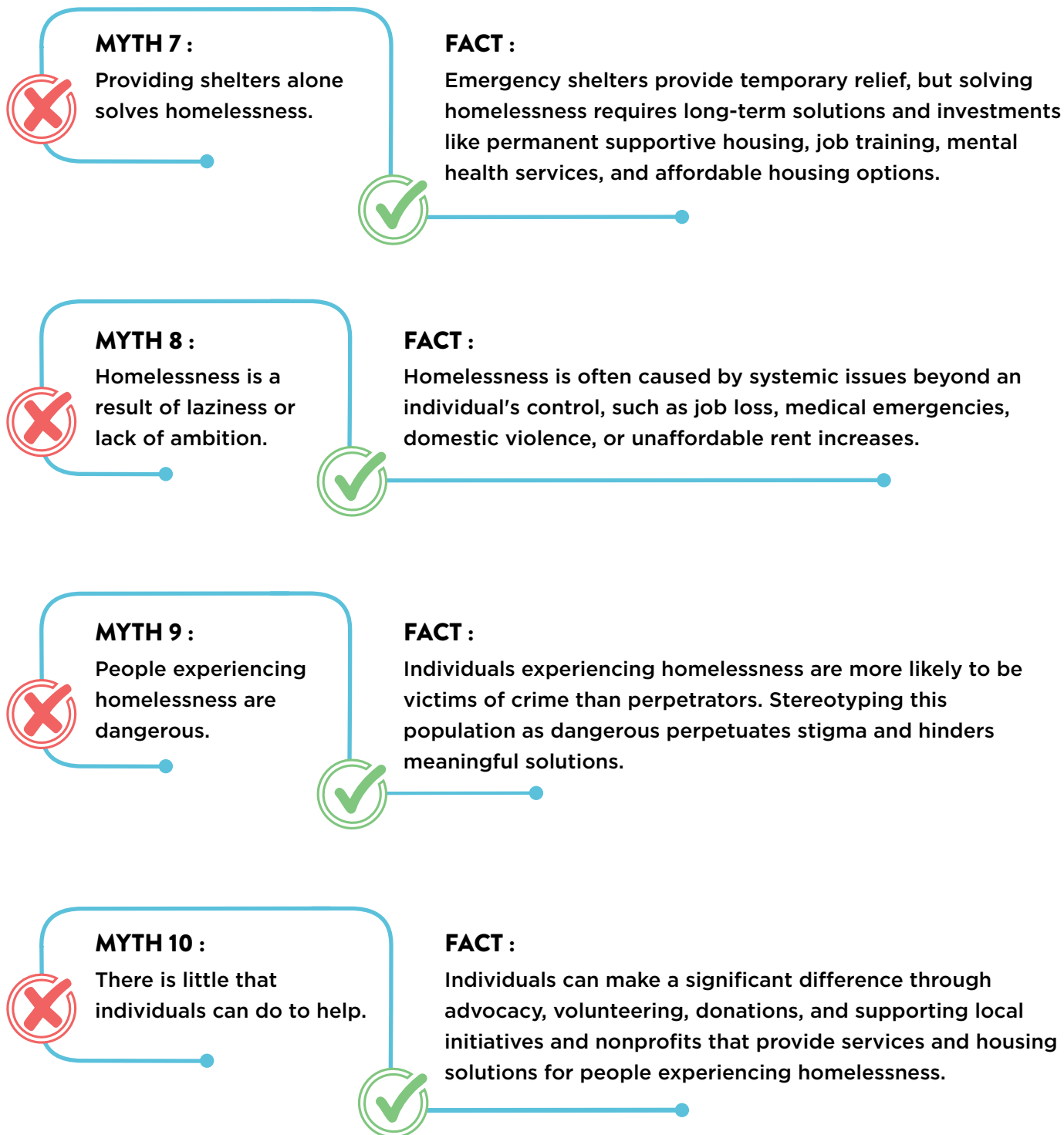


FACT :

Homelessness is a nationwide issue that affects urban, suburban, and rural areas, though it may look different in each setting.



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GLOSSARY AND ACRONYMS

CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS – an individual who has a disabling condition AND has been homeless for the last 12 months or had 4 episodes in last 3 years that equal 12 months or more.

CONTINUUM OF CARE, OR COC – Regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

COORDINATED ENTRY – A process through which people experiencing or at risk of homelessness access resources in the homeless assistance system. It includes access points for all types of assistance, a standardized assessment process, and referrals to appropriate housing and community services. Coordinated entry is required by HUD of every CoC.

DIVERSION – one-time shallow subsidy plus problem solving/case management support to exit people out of homelessness immediately upon entry and is best suited for those with strong supports, employment and first time homeless.

DEEPLY AFFORDABLE HOUSING – Rental housing that is subsidized to be affordable to households earning 30 percent or less of the area median income.

EMERGENCY SHELTER – short term bridge housing to other assistance; for **all**

HOUSING FIRST – evidence-based practice and philosophical approach to housing individuals experiencing homelessness without preconditions and barriers to entry such as sobriety, treatment or service participation requirements

HUD HOMELESS DEFINITION – individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:

1. Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation; **or**
2. Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs); **or**
3. Is exiting an institution where (s)he has resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution.



PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING – evidence-based housing intervention that combines non-time-limited housing assistance with intensive wrap around supportive services. Ideal for **chronically homeless**

PREVENTION – rental, utility and eviction assistance designed to keep people from entering homelessness and is suited for those who are still in housing but at risk of losing their housing.

POINT IN TIME COUNT – an annual survey of people experiencing homelessness which includes those who are unsheltered, in emergency shelter and in transitional housing.

RAPID REHOUSING – Time-limited rental assistance and case management to help people experiencing homelessness find private-market housing & quickly re-house and stabilize **individuals and families**

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING – long term temporary housing (6-24 months) with intensive services. Ideally suited for **domestic violence, youth, and substance abuse**



Key Acronyms:

- **AHA:** Atlanta Housing Authority
- **CDBG:** Community Development Block Grant
- **CoC:** Continuum of Care
- **DBHDD:** Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
- **DFCS:** Department of Family and Children Services
- **ES:** Emergency shelter
- **ESG:** Emergency Solutions Grant
- **HMIS:** Homeless Management Information System
- **HOPWA:** Housing Opportunities for People with AIDs
- **HUD:** Department of Housing and Urban Development
- **PIT:** Point in Time Count
- **PSH:** Permanent supportive housing
- **RRH:** Rapid rehousing
- **SSVF:** Supportive Services for Veteran Families
- **TANF:** Temporary Assistance to Needy Families
- **TH:** Transitional housing
- **USICH:** United States Interagency Council on Homelessness

