



Central Arizona Shelter Services

SHELTER. SUPPORT. CHANGE LIVES.



Compassionate Community Solutions to End Homelessness



IMPACT REPORT 2023



Our mission is to prevent and end homelessness among individuals and families while advancing compassionate community solutions.

Our vision is a community where everyone has a home.

New Era, New Solutions

Dear Friends and Partners:

CASS was founded in 1984 in response to a burgeoning homeless crisis in the City of Phoenix. The 1984 crisis was fueled by a decline in affordable housing, rising rents, inflation, and failing safety nets for vulnerable citizens.

Today, we find ourselves in a remarkably similar situation as 1984, requiring us to think more deeply about current homeless service models and where we can begin to pivot in order to address root causes and stem the tide of a growing crisis.

Three years ago CASS established lofty goals for expansion and for deepening our work for vulnerable populations, especially seniors and those with behavioral health or serious mental illness (SMI) challenges. We have accomplished all major goals in our 2020-2023 Strategic Plan. Of greatest note, we have, and are, expanding regionally with two new locations:

- The Glendale Norton and Ramsey Social Justice Empowerment Center opened in December 2020 and CASS now serves as the City of Glendale's Master Services Homeless Provider, leading collaborative efforts among homeless providers.
- The CASS 170-bed Senior Haven will open in 2024 to serve people 55 and older.

Over the last two years we have also expanded services with a cumulative 35% growth in service numbers. This included adding 130 new adult shelter beds to our main adult shelter where we shelter an average of 600-630 individuals nightly. It also included expanding our housing and flexible financial assistance programs to reach more people. And it included adding new and deepening existing collaborative partnerships.

As we enter our 40th year of service, we are again gearing up to reinvent ourselves and create a five-year strategic plan. Some of the critical questions we must answer include:

1. Are today's emergency shelter models the most effective models for people to permanently end their homelessness? If not what models should be pursued?
2. What lessons can we apply from the COVID-19 pandemic to build better models for the future?

Prior to the pandemic CASS had already begun to pivot towards more upstream prevention to keep people housed, especially first time homeless seniors on fixed incomes. We had also begun to pivot towards non-congregate models of housing for people, targeting those who do not do well staying in mass shelters like our 600-bed adult shelter.

We are excited to begin planning our next five years and welcome your input and ideas. This work is complex and takes a village. We are grateful for your continued partnership and support.



Sincerely,
Lisa Glow, J.D.
President & CEO





CASS Locations & Services

1

CASS' Downtown Single Adult Shelter, Phoenix

Since 1984, we have worked tirelessly to end homelessness by providing shelter, case management, and housing services to more than 175,000 people. Each night, CASS provides 600 beds to our neighbors in need. CASS' shelters are low-barrier, operating 24/7 under the Housing First model, meaning there are few preconditions to entry. CASS uses a progressive engagement case management model that delivers different levels of services and support depending on need.

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2

CASS' Family Shelter, Phoenix

CASS has been serving homeless families since 1984. Our Vista Colina Family Shelter is a 30-unit converted apartment complex that shelters up to 30 families, or 120 to 150 adults and children, each night. We utilize a low-barrier shelter model and a Housing First case management model. All families participate in case management services designed to address barriers to permanent housing. This includes help obtaining housing, employment, benefits, mental health services, healthcare, substance abuse services, pensions, legal assistance, advocacy, transportation, and more.



3

CASS' Norton and Ramsey Social Justice Empowerment Center, Glendale

Our Norton and Ramsey Social Justice Empowerment Center (NREC) operates as a hub for homeless, housing, and related service providers to work collaboratively and coordinate resources. We provide individualized solutions and support services to more than 500 people monthly with a 'no wrong door' solution. We also operate a 24/7 hotline with a 100% response rate. Through a partnership with the City of Glendale as their Master Service Provider, our collaborative providers bring their resources to support West Valley residents at risk of losing or having lost their homes.





4

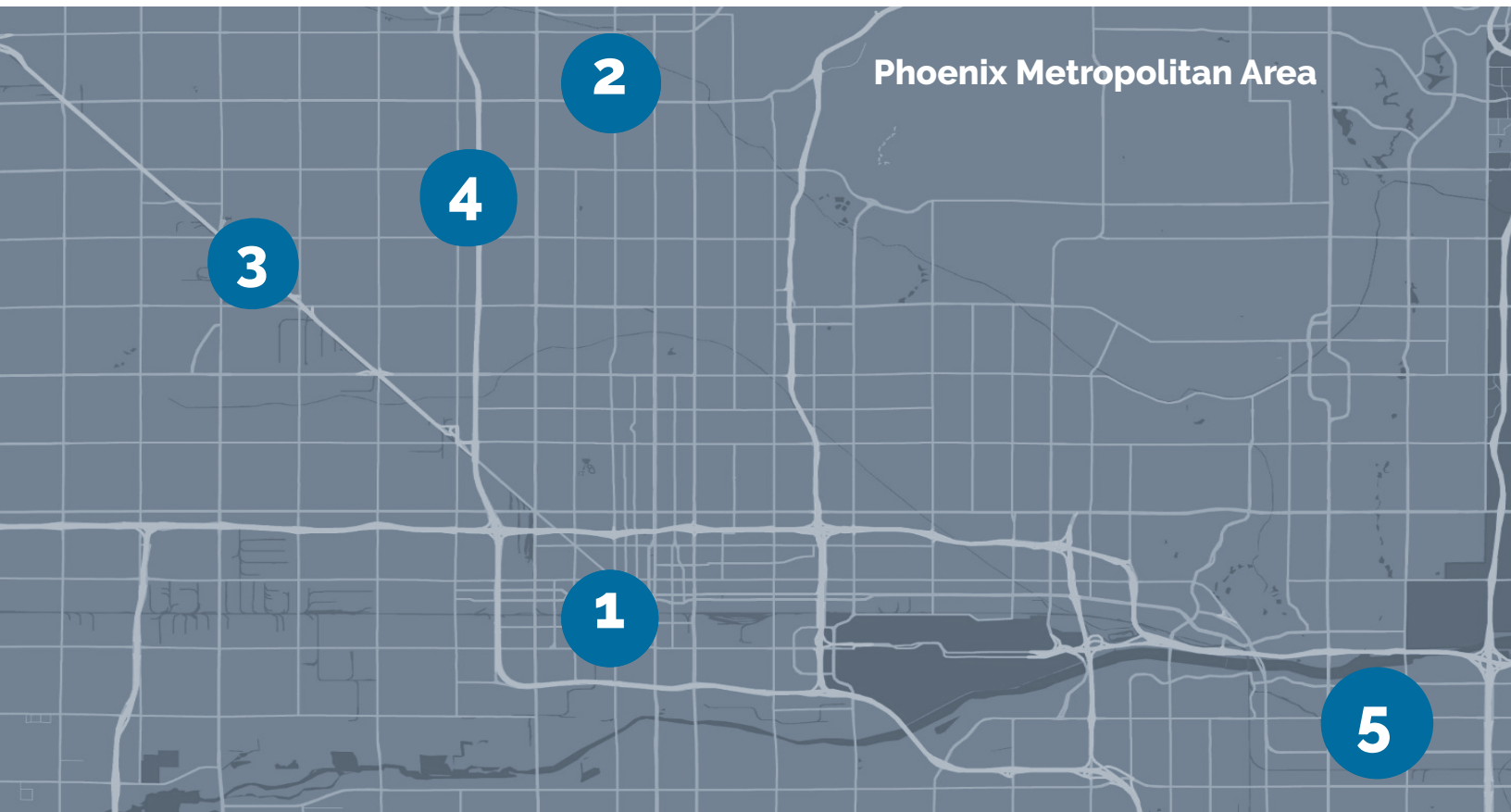
CASS' Senior Haven – Opening 2024, Phoenix

The need for senior-specific services is growing, and CASS strives to ensure that underserved homeless seniors 55+ are supported in the greater Phoenix community with dignity, honor, and respect. Our new, permanent emergency senior shelter is in the process of major renovations, with a target of opening in 2024. The Haven will serve up to 170 seniors each day and night.

5

East Valley Housing Navigation, Mesa and Gilbert

In partnership with the Cities of Mesa and Gilbert, CASS Case Managers help clients who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness to navigate resources available. Services are provided at various locations.



An Update: Homelessness in Maricopa County



Homelessness has reached crisis levels in Arizona, and people experiencing homelessness continue to be disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. According to the 2023 Maricopa Regional Point-In-Time Homeless Count (MAG PIT Count), the **unsheltered count in Maricopa County increased 30% between 2020 and 2023. Since 2017, homelessness has increased 72%!**

How did we get here? Arizona has one of the highest housing loss rates in the country and Maricopa County has an eviction rate of nearly twice the national average (ASU, 2022). Rental costs have increased dramatically along with the meteoric rise in

housing prices - median rental prices shot up almost 46% in the Phoenix area from 2021 to 2022 (Phoenix Business Journal). **This affects a large percentage of Arizona residents, with 12.8% of individuals living in poverty** (US Census, 2021). The Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity reports that 22% of jobs in Arizona are low wage, meaning that many Arizonans are unable to make a living wage. Because so many of our neighbors were already one emergency or rental increase away from homelessness, the need for emergency shelter has increased dramatically in Maricopa County.

72%

The number of unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness in Maricopa County has increased 72% from 2017 to 2023 (MAG PIT).

80%

The number of extremely low-income renter households with severe cost burden - meaning more than 50% of their income goes to rental costs (Nat'l Low Income Housing Coalition, 2022).

50%

Over half of the unhoused individuals in Arizona are over the age of 50 (AZ DES, 2020).

The Top 5 Reasons for Homelessness:

- 1 Lack of affordable housing
- 2 Unemployment
- 3 Poverty
- 4 Mental illness and lack of needed services
- 5 Substance abuse and lack of needed services

*National Law Center on
Homelessness & Poverty*

EVERY NIGHT, MORE THAN 9,500 PEOPLE EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS*

This last year, CASS provided beds and services for over 6,900 adults and family members, and more than 1,500 of those individuals were helped to either remain in their housing or be rehoused or reunited with family.

**MAG Point-in-Time Count 2023*



CASS' Community Impact 2023

From July 2022 to June 2023, CASS provided the following shelter and supportive services for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness:

6,902

unduplicated individuals served,

an increase of 4% over the prior year

5,071 utilized our shelter services, for a total of

253,302 bed nights provided

2,649 utilized case management support

6,104 created a housing plan

1,587 utilized Rapid Rehousing, eviction prevention and financial assistance support services

Founded in 1984 to address a homelessness crisis in Phoenix, CASS is Arizona's largest, longest-serving, and most experienced emergency shelter provider, annually serving thousands of adults and families with shelter, a case management, and a full array of housing services (eviction prevention, rapid rehousing, and flexible financial assistance). **Our adult and family shelters operate at full capacity 24/7, 365 days a year.**

Because our mission is to end homelessness, our shelter model is much more than just a place to sleep. Our trauma-informed model is effective because we provide wrap-around support services to stabilize our clients, help them find employment, address their health care and/or disability needs, and move into permanent housing. Our intensive case management services help our clients secure critical resources such as housing, employment, benefits, mental health services, health care, substance abuse treatment, and legal assistance. Additional services provided include Rapid Rehousing

assistance, flexible financial assistance, employment support, assistance with finance and budgeting, hygiene kits, a clothing bank, and move-out kits.

There is no stereotype for homelessness. Our neighbors experiencing homelessness come from a vast diversity of life experiences. Here is an overall picture of the neighbors we cared for this last year:

25% were first-time homeless

24% were 55 years or older

31% were chronically homeless (according to HUD definition)

62% were male, **37%** female and **1%** transgender/nonbinary

57% were White, **36%** Black, **6%** American Indian, **1%** Asian,

1% Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; **26%** of all clients were Hispanic

51% reported one or more disabling condition

21% reported a history of or were fleeing domestic violence

42% stayed in hotels or places not meant for habitation

Older Adults

The need for senior-specific services is growing, and CASS strives to ensure that underserved homeless seniors are supported by our community with dignity, honor, and respect. In the early 1990s, only 11 percent of the adult homeless population was age fifty and over. The 2020 Homelessness in Arizona Annual Report published by the Department of Economic Security reported that **50% of individuals who are experiencing homelessness in Arizona were over the age of 50.**

Many of our community's homeless seniors are first-time homeless and in most cases they 'did everything right' prior to their retirement, but their dollars aren't stretching far enough as inflation and rental costs drastically increase. Waiting lists for senior-subsidized housing have 2–3-year waits, and many elderly women coming into our shelter are facing additional challenges, such as abuse and extreme poverty.

CASS has created senior-focused programming, enhancing our service model for senior citizens experiencing homelessness,



with new screening tools and new partnerships, all of which has resulted in a stronger safety net for this population. **CASS is on track to open Haven senior shelter in 2024, which will serve up to 170 seniors nightly.**

1,672 seniors served (ages 55+)

1,419 seniors utilized our shelter services, for a total of **82,049** bed nights provided

Of those served, **838** were 62 years or older and **77%** had a disabling condition



27% were first-time homeless

47% were chronically homeless (according to HUD definition)

52% utilized case management support

67% were male, **32%** female and **1%** transgender/nonbinary

77% reported one or more disabling condition

20% reported mental health issues

47% reported chronic health conditions

28% reported physical disabilities

18% reported a history of or were presently fleeing domestic violence

45% stayed in hotels or places not meant for habitation

55% were employed or had some form of income upon arrival

72% graduated high school or equivalent



Families

Children face devastating challenges when they lose their home. The resulting fear and unpredictability can damage their development and ability to learn (Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness). Children impacted by homelessness also have higher levels of behavioral problems, increased risk of health problems, and are more likely to show lower academic performance, repeat a grade, or drop out of school. Family homelessness disproportionately impacts women and people of color, who also face additional societal and cultural challenges.

CASS' Family Shelter is the second largest family shelter in the Phoenix Metropolitan area. All families participate in case management services designed to address barriers to permanent housing. Our 30 apartment units were recently renovated thanks to the City of Phoenix.

269 family members served from a total of **70** families

32,297 nights of shelter provided

- 100%** utilized case management support
- 33%** of heads of household reported one or more disabling conditions
- 60%** of heads of household graduated high school or equivalent
- 69%** of heads of household were employed or had income upon arrival
- 47%** reported a history of or were presently fleeing domestic violence
- 70%** stayed in hotels or places not meant for habitation prior to their arrival

Of **175** children served, **55** were under the age of **5 years old**.



Veterans

In Arizona, more than 34,000 veterans live in poverty and are at an elevated risk of homelessness (Housing Assistance Council). As the lowest barrier veteran's shelter program in the community, CASS shelters many of the most elderly and disabled veterans. CASS' veterans' program is designed to help veterans move from homelessness to self-sufficiency by obtaining needed benefits, employment and job training, and permanent housing.

In the last year, we served the following veterans with shelter and supportive services:



320 veterans served – an increase of **11%** over the prior year
13,674 nights of shelter were provided to our veterans
40% were chronically homeless and **54%** were 55 years or older



89% were male, **11%** female

26% were first-time homeless

41% utilized case management support

62% reported one or more disabling condition

17% reported mental health issues

15% reported chronic health conditions

18% reported substance abuse issues

15% reported physical disabilities

47% stayed in hotels or places not meant for habitation

11% reported a history of or were fleeing domestic violence

86% graduated from high school or equivalent



Young Adults

Young adults, ages 18-24, experiencing homelessness, particularly those who are unaccompanied or who have run away, continue to be a significant concern in the face of homelessness. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, 50% of homeless youth are unsheltered—sleeping outside, in a car, or places not meant for human habitation. Young adults need stable housing, supportive connections to caring adults, and access to services that will help place them on a path to long-term success. At CASS, specially trained case managers provide services and resources with the goal of getting them on their feet and out of homelessness as quickly as possible.

In the last year, we served the following young adults with shelter and supportive services:

522 young adults served — an increase of **23%** over the prior year
35% were first-time homeless
15% were chronically homeless* (*according to HUD definition*)

- 29%** utilized case management support
- 61%** were male, **38%** female and **1%** transgender/nonbinary
- 47%** reported one or more disabling condition
- 39%** stayed in hotels or places not meant for habitation prior to their arrival
- 20%** reported a history of or were presently fleeing domestic violence
- 53%** graduated from high school or equivalent
- 26%** were employed or had some form of income upon arrival

*Defined as having a disability combined with 12 months or more of homelessness in the past 3 years. Quite a high number for such a young population.



Chronic Homelessness

An individual is considered chronically homeless when they have experienced homelessness for at least a year — or repeatedly — while struggling with a disabling condition such as a mental illness, substance use disorder, or physical disability.

According to the Morrison Institute, mental illness, substance use, and homelessness often exist in a vicious cycle, where one contributes to the others, making escape very difficult.

CASS is now a behavioral health licensed outpatient clinic which will allow the agency to bill for some of our case management care coordination, as well as offer new counseling services. These services will be especially helpful for our chronically homeless population.



2,137 chronically homeless individuals served
 Of those, **790** were senior citizens (age 55+)
42% utilized case management support



In the last year, we served the following chronically homeless individuals with shelter and supportive services:

66% were male, **33%** female and **1%** transgender/nonbinary

100% reported one or more disabling condition

31% reported mental health issues

23% reported chronic health conditions

25% reported substance abuse issues

21% reported physical disabilities

53% stayed in hotels or places not meant for habitation prior to their arrival

25% reported a history of or were presently fleeing domestic violence

69% graduated from high school or equivalent



CASS Stories of Success

CASS's Glendale Center Assists a Single Father in Need

Brevin is a 26-year-old single father of a 2-year-old daughter, Katherine. They had been living in the apartment of Brevin's father until Brevin's father sadly passed away. The apartment property manager refused to transfer occupancy to Brevin and he and his daughter were left without a home.

In need of a safe place for him and his child, Brevin found a friend who agreed to share their home for a short period of time. Fortunately, Brevin was approved for tenancy at another apartment during that time. He did not, however, have enough money saved to pay the initial deposit and fees. Though he receives assistance with childcare expenses and picks up as much day labor work as he can to earn a living, Brevin was still short of covering the full move-in costs.

Caught in a bind, Brevin heard about CASS Norton and Ramsey Empowerment Center (NREC) in Glendale and reached out to request one-time financial assistance. His request was reviewed to ensure that his housing would remain stable beyond the one-time move-in cost assistance, Brevin was soon approved and granted housing assistance with case management support to ensure long-term stability. He was able to secure the apartment that he and his daughter now call home.

Move-In Kits Help Senior Settle into New Home

67-year-old Sandra lost her home after a divorce. For five years, she bounced around and ended up living in a weekly-rate motel. After the hotel transferred ownership, the new owners instituted changes in the booking and payment policies that made it unmanageable to stay. She was forced to leave and live in her car. Sandra also used her car for a delivery job, and was not making enough to keep up on the payments. She ended up staying three nights on the streets after losing the vehicle. Not feeling safe on the streets, Sandra soon learned about CASS from a friend.

Within weeks of arriving at CASS, a CASS senior client advocate helped Sandra obtain a copy of her birth certificate and apply for subsidized housing. Sandra waited patiently until her name reached the top of a property wait list. Sandra moved into her new one-bedroom apartment within a couple months of applying. Because Sandra had hardly any belongings, CASS was able to provide her with a City of Phoenix-funded move-in kit full of household essentials that would help her settle into her new home. Sandra was so excited to have her first stable housing in almost seven years!

In appreciation of
our wonderful supporters



Special thank you to Scott Seligman for the design of this report.

Family of 8 Gets Housed

Delia, mother of seven, became homeless due to the pandemic. Though Delia was working, and even had small savings, she was having trouble finding a place for her large family. For several months, she and her children had been staying in her car, in hotels, and, occasionally, with friends. Delia eventually lost her job and spent all of her savings trying to stay afloat.

When Delia and her family came to CASS' Family Shelter, the case management team was able to refer them for an Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV). It would be difficult for a single mother to afford the rent for an apartment with three bedrooms, so securing an EHV voucher became a critical focus of Delia's case plan. They also helped her apply for DES childcare subsidies so that she could enroll the younger children in childcare. After enrolling the children, Delia was able to start working and saving money again. Delia was also able to utilize Homeless I.D. Project to obtain all of her family's vital documents.

Delia searched tirelessly for housing, helped along the way by the CASS case management team. Though she encountered many denials, Delia kept her head up, and she became approved for a three bedroom house in a good neighborhood. CASS was able to help Delia with her initial move-in costs, and going forward Delia will only have to pay a fixed percentage of her income for her share of the rent.

CASS Guides Veteran to a New Start in Phoenix

Aaron is a 60-year-old veteran who arrived in Phoenix from San Diego, where he had lost his home and ended up living on the streets. Aaron entered the VA Bridge Program there, but later decided that he wanted to move to Phoenix to get a fresh start in life. After completing his intake to enter the CASS single adult shelter, Aaron met with the senior client advocate to conduct a specialized assessment for seniors. They were able to educate him on the breadth of providers available on campus and he soon was able to meet with VA representatives who connected him with the VA Community Resource and Referral Center (CRRC).

Aaron made use of a staffing agency resource through which he secured a temporary job starting immediately. Only two weeks later, Aaron was approved for the housing assistance program Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), and then he began submitting apartment applications. The process proceeded rather swiftly, and Aaron received notification that he was approved for tenancy at an apartment and could move in within a month. CASS helped Aaron prepare by providing him with a move-in kit filled with all the essential household items he needed to get settled in his apartment while beginning a new chapter of his life in Phoenix.



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CASS
Central Arizona Shelter Services

How You Can Help

DONATE

- Online at cassaz.org, or mail your donation to CASS (P.O. Box 18250, Phoenix, AZ 85005)
- Choose CASS for your Arizona Charitable Tax Credit (up to \$421 for individuals, \$841 per couple)
- Become a monthly donor
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- Transfer cryptocurrency or stock donations online

LEAVE A LEGACY and choose CASS as a beneficiary of your will or estate plan

ENCOURAGE your company or foundation to make a donation or match your gift

LIKE US on Facebook, X, LinkedIn and Instagram

HOST a drive or purchase items from our wishlist

VOLUNTEER or TOUR any of our shelters

www.CASSAZ.org

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