

Finding Stability through Housing

Interim lessons from Denver’s expansion of supportive housing

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As of July 2018, the Denver SIB project has **leased up 285 people** experiencing chronic homelessness.

85 percent of program participants **remain in housing without having ever exited the program.**

During their first year in housing, **44 percent of participants had not returned to jail.** That share is high, particularly given the historic analysis of the target population before their referral to the SIB program.

Given these outcomes, **investors have received a total of \$1,025,968 from the City of Denver to date.**

The Denver Supportive Housing Social Impact Bond (Denver SIB) initiative aims to support people struggling with homelessness, substance use, and mental health problems. This vulnerable group cycles in and out of jail, detox, and emergency medical services, which can exact a heavy toll on individual lives and come at a high cost to taxpayers.

To break this cycle, Denver SIB provides affordable housing combined with intensive wraparound services, like case management, health care, and mental health treatment. Two and a half years into the five-year initiative, interim results show that the program engaged and housed individuals experiencing chronic homelessness who frequently cycle in and out of jail, leading to high rates of housing stability and a reduced number of days spent in jail.

PARTICIPANTS ARE GETTING HOUSED AND STAYING IN HOUSING

Overall, 285 people have been leased up through the Denver SIB program, usually within six months of being referred to service providers. Most participants never exit housing once they sign their lease (table 1). These are promising results for housing stability, and they indicate strong interim outcomes for the program.

People who exited the program did so for a variety of reasons, including death, incarceration for more than 90 days, and lease violations. Eight of those who exited housing for reasons other than passing away were able reengage, bringing the total number of participants in housing as of July 1, 2018, to 249.

TABLE 1
Lease-Ups and Exits for SIB Participants

	N	Share
Housing lease-ups	285	
Individuals who remain in housing as of July 1, 2018	249	87%
Individuals who have never exited housing	241	85%
Individuals who reentered housing after an exit	8	3%
Individuals who exited housing	44	15%
Participant deaths	14	5%
Other exits	30	11%

Source: Days in housing and exit data come from the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless and Mental Health Center of Denver program data from January 1, 2016, to July 1, 2018.

PARTICIPANTS GO TO JAIL LESS THAN BEFORE

Before supportive housing, program participants' experiences of homelessness and housing instability were closely linked to their criminal justice involvement. The SIB program was designed to reduce their jail stays by providing housing stability and wraparound case management services.

After one year in housing, 44 percent of participants had not returned to jail and 56 percent of SIB participants had at least one jail stay. The average number of days in jail is lower than that of the target population before their referral to the Denver SIB program. In the first year after showing a pattern of eight or more arrests over three years (the eligibility requirement for the Denver SIB), people in the target population spent an average of 77 days in jail. Our results two and a half years into the program show that SIB participants who have been housed for at least one year spend an average of 19 days in jail. Though a large share of individuals still have gone to jail, the number is lower than what the literature points to for this vulnerable population; and when they do go to jail, it is for less time than they had previously.

HOUSING STABILITY OUTCOME PAYMENTS

Under the structure of the Denver SIB (see "What Is the Denver SIB?" box), if the program meets certain housing stability goals, the City makes outcome payments. The Urban Institute calculated these housing stability outcomes for the second success payment from the City of Denver in fall 2018. These results were further validated by an external validator. In total, 136 participants met the payment requirement of being in housing for a year or having an excusable exit from the program. They spent a combined 67,855 days in housing (which excludes days spent in jail after entering housing). As such, the total investor payment for the SIB program to date is \$1,025,968.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE DENVER SIB EVALUATION?

Beginning in 2019, the Urban team will begin evaluating the differences in jail-bed days between the control group and treatment group for the Denver SIB randomized control trial aspect of the evaluation. Urban will also continue to annually calculate housing stability payment outcomes for investors.

"Since moving him in, he has gotten himself an income. He has reconnected with a sister, [whom] he hadn't been in touch with for years. He is about to travel for a family reunion coming up out of state. He is going to travel there with his sister, which is huge that he is reconnecting with his family again after all these years on the streets."

– SIB Service Provider, speaking about a SIB participant

WHAT IS THE DENVER SIB?

In 2016, the City of Denver and eight private investors closed on the city's first social impact bond (SIB), an \$8.6 million investment to fund a supportive housing program for people who are homeless and frequently interact with the criminal justice system. Based on the SIB contract, the investors provided funding to support the program. If the program meets the goals of housing stability and decreased jail stays, the City makes outcome payments based upon program success. If the program does not meet its outcome goals, the City does not pay.

Since the project's launch in January 2016, the service providers—the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless and the Mental Health Center of Denver—have located and enrolled 285 participants. The Urban Institute acts as the evaluation partner to the SIB.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

For more information on project performance to date, see urban.is/2O0FPik.

For information on the housing stability payments provided to investors, see urban.is/2OJuLeH.