

Fall 2018 NICHE Report

In Summer 2018, NICHE started a pilot program to hire an outreach worker, our Summer Homeless Advocate for Residential Encampments. The SHARE program started with three goals: first, we want to connect people experiencing homelessness who choose to camp on public lands to existing resources, particularly through the government and non-profit programs in Boulder; second, we want to educate the homeless community on appropriate camping practices, to make themselves and the mountain community safer; third, as the country's first study that analyzes strategies and outcomes of human service to homeless campers on public lands, we intend to learn best practices that we can share with other communities that face similar situations and problems.

The initial grant from the Boulder County Community Services Department went to hire Claudia Schauffler, who was then trained by the US Forest Service, Nederland Police Department, and Boulder County Homeless Services. Through the summer she and Rev Hansen Wendlandt, of Nederland Community Church, continued to work with those agencies, as well as the Boulder County Sheriff's Office, CO Parks & Wildlife, Emergency Family Assistance Association, Clinica Family Health, Mental Health Partners, Boulder County Coordinated Entry, and the Town of Nederland.

- Claudia met 175 campers experiencing homelessness. This represented about 50% of the summer homeless population, which was lower than in any of the last several years.
- The typical contact was a 45-year old male, homeless and wandering for over a decade. We did, however, meet several younger and older men and women, as well as families that were experiencing homelessness.
- Of the 175 clients, we met only 5 who revealed that they had already interacted with Boulder County homeless services.
- Barriers to connecting them to Boulder County services were transportation, urban anxiety, and frustration with the 'system'.
- Despite that, Claudia was able to connect 64 people to various services: Coordinated Entry, healthcare, mental health, job referral/training, transitional housing, addiction recovery, childcare, and more.
- We educated 100% of our campers about fire safety, and 97% accepted further education about wildlife safety and waste management.

For Summer 2019, NICHE has received another grant from Boulder County Community Services Department! This will allow our SHARE worker, Claudia Schauffler, to expand outreach from April to October. Her objective goals this year are a) to increase contacts to 60% of the estimated homeless population, b) to increase resource connection to 40% of those we contact, and c) to increase the amount of those enlisted in Coordinated Entry by 25%. We will continue to offer education about wildfire prevention, wildlife interactions, waste management, as well as water-borne illness and weather preparation.