

Members of the Interagency Advisory Council on Homelessness to Housing:

Elko F.I.S.H. respectfully asks the Council to ensure that rural and frontier communities are distinctly represented in Nevada's homelessness strategy, data collection, funding priorities, and outcome measures. F.I.S.H. operates northeastern Nevada's primary multiservice safety-net organization, including a food pantry, soup kitchen, case management, the 20-bed Samaritan House emergency shelter, and the Rural Nevada Continuum of Care Coordinated Entry access point for Elko and Eureka Counties.

Rural homelessness is routinely undercounted because people are widely dispersed across vehicles, motels, encampments, temporary arrangements, and remote locations that are difficult to identify during a single Point-in-Time Count. Nevada's 2026 rural data nevertheless identified 791 people experiencing homelessness, including 721 who were unsheltered, while only 121 people were housed in permanent supportive housing across the entire Rural Nevada CoC. Samaritan House remains consistently full and regularly must turn people away.

We recommend region-specific reporting that measures unsheltered homelessness, shelter turnaways, Coordinated Entry wait times, discharges into homelessness, housing placements, and long-term housing stability by county or rural service region. Statewide totals alone can obscure the distances, severe winters, transportation barriers, and limited service capacity confronting northeastern Nevada.

We also urge Nevada to require stronger discharge-planning partnerships among hospitals, behavioral-health and treatment providers, correctional facilities, homeless-service organizations, and Coordinated Entry access points. Local providers should be involved before discharge when a person lacks safe housing, subject to appropriate consent and confidentiality protections. This would reduce repeated movement among shelters, hospitals, treatment programs, jails, and unsheltered settings.

Elko F.I.S.H.'s proposed Northeastern Nevada Supportive Housing Initiative offers a concrete response to this cycle. The initiative would create 23 permanent supportive-housing units in Elko and connect eligible residents with coordinated treatment, recovery, healthcare, benefits, employment, and stabilization services. It would also create badly needed permanent-housing exits from Samaritan House for people who cannot regain stability through emergency shelter alone.

We respectfully ask the Council to recognize northeastern Nevada as a distinct service region, incorporate rural-specific performance measures, strengthen coordinated discharge requirements, and support permanent supportive-housing development where regional capacity is currently inadequate.

Grateful to Serve,

Pastor Tim Royal
Executive Director
Elko F.I.S.H.