



Homelessness PDX Connection

Fall 2021



Director Zapata to join National Research Council

Center Director Dr. Marisa Zapata will serve on the Research Council for the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) to help inform public policy.

The goal of the council is to bring together researchers and think tank professionals to strengthen the connection between policy and research. Members often meet with policymakers to learn more about pressing policy questions, and they also identify future research needs. Dr. Zapata presented at the NAEH's national conference last month, after which the nonprofit asked her to join the council. She is slated to serve a two-year term starting this month.

"I look forward to joining researchers from across the country to inform national public policy on preventing and ending homelessness. We are at a pivotal moment where investments have the potential to make a significant impact, but we're also seeing movements to direct our focus away from the only proven solution to homelessness - housing. What we do now could shape the future of this issue for generations" she said.

Homelessness, Housing Insecurity, and Racial and Ethnic Equity during COVID-19

A symposium hosted by the OHSU-PSU School
of Public Health and the PSU Homelessness
Research & Action Collaborative

SEPT. 13, 2021
9:00 am PST

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

Rashida Crutchfield, Ed.D. and Margot Kushel, MD



National research symposium offers insights

Researchers, practitioners, and elected officials gathered virtually in September for our national symposium: *Homelessness, Housing Insecurity, and Racial and Ethnic Equity during COVID-19*.

A [recording of the virtual symposium](#) is available and includes two keynote speakers (Dr. Margot Kushel and Dr. Rashida Crutchfield), three sessions on new research from around the country, and insightful questions and answers. We are grateful to all the speakers, participants, and our team. The event was made possible through the generous support of Richard Royse and Rocky Blumhagen.

[Watch the symposium](#)



The first six months of Portland Street Response

Portland Street Response (PSR), the city's new first-response unit, demonstrated success in meeting outcome goals during the first six months, according to an evaluation by PSU's Homelessness Research & Action Collaborative presented to the Portland City Council.

The program's goals include reducing the number of calls typically responded to by police; reducing the number of behavioral health and non-emergency calls responded to by police and fire; and reducing the number of non-life threatening 911 calls that are transported to the ER.

Key findings (All from PSR's service area in Lents neighborhood and during hours of operation):

- 4.6% reduction in total calls traditionally responded to by police
- 22.5% reduction in police response on non-emergency welfare checks as well as dispatches coded as "unwanted persons" and "suspicious persons" calls
- 11.6% reduction in fire department activity on behavioral health calls and illegal burn calls.
- Only 14 calls (3.7%) required transport to ER.
- Clients rated PSR 5 on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the best.

The evaluation included a survey of people experiencing homelessness on their interactions with PSR. A few of their comments: “They were friendly, treated me like a human being;” “They were loving and talked with my friend who needed help”; “They put medicine on a wound, gave me food and water, and asked if I needed anything else”; “My friend lived because of them.”

The PSR team made 44 referrals in the initial contact and community health workers made another 125 referrals for everything from housing and financial benefits to medical treatment and pet care. The team also helped six people find permanent housing.

Recommendations include expanding the program citywide 24/7, expanding call criteria, keeping the program within Portland Fire & Rescue, and tracking data by race. The program is limited to Portland’s Lents neighborhood and surrounding areas with plans to scale up citywide in 2022.

"Based on the findings of our program evaluation, we feel very optimistic about the future of Portland Street Response and believe it is well on its way to becoming a citywide solution to responding to 911 and non-emergency calls involving unhoused people and people experiencing a mental health crisis," said Center Research Director Greg Townley.

[Read the full report](#)

New report provides template for racial equity and community-centered research and governance

Health Share of Oregon contracted with Portland State University’s Homelessness Research & Action Collaborative and Providence CORE to answer the question: What does it look like for homelessness research and evaluation practices to be centered on or rooted in racial equity and people who have lived experience with homelessness?

Through our research, we found broad agreement on how to engage in community-centered, participatory research and governance. We shared our findings in this report, which can serve as a template for other organizations seeking to uplift racial equity and community-centered governance.

[Full Report](#)



PSU survey asks about safety

PSU students, employees, and nearby community members are encouraged to fill out a survey about safety shared by the Reimagine Campus Safety Committee.

This is not an HRAC survey, and our center is not involved in its interpretation. However, we encourage those with lived experience of homelessness and members of the BIPOC community in particular to make their voices heard as this survey could shape campus security decisions in the future. The survey is open through Friday, Oct. 29.

[Take the Survey](#)

CHECK OUT OUR NEW PODCAST!

Listen to *Understanding Homelessness* on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Amazon Music, Google Podcasts, and iHeartRadio.



[UnderstandingHomelessness.org](https://www.understandinghomelessness.org)

A closed-caption version is available on our YouTube channel: @Homelessness PDX



New podcast features conversations with experts

Understanding Homelessness is a podcast that illuminates the underlying causes of homelessness, explains systems that perpetuate it, explores innovative solutions, and shares stories from those with lived experiences. Portland State University Associate Professor Dr. Marisa Zapata talks with experts, including those with lived experience, on how to better understand and address homelessness.

The podcast was ranked #11 in the country for nonprofit podcasts by Apple Podcasts. Please listen, like, and subscribe wherever you get your podcasts (Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Amazon Music, Google Podcasts, and iHeartRadio). The [website](https://www.understandinghomelessness.org) includes original art and recommended reading.

[Listen/Learn](#)



Faculty researchers seek survey participants

Help HRAC faculty research members understand the benefits and barriers that people experience when choosing transportation options by participating in their study.

It is part of a larger project to better understand the effectiveness of the low-income transit fare program in reducing homelessness. Researchers are seeking input from all TriMet riders.

[Take the Survey](#)



Homelessness Research & Action Collaborative / www.pdx.edu/homelessness / homelessness@pdx.edu

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