

# THE DIGNITY BUS REPORT

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## Community Care Alliance

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## What is the Dignity Bus?

The Dignity Bus is an emergency shelter option offering 20 individual sleeping compartments for unhoused and vulnerable individuals. This has included those who are medically fragile, elderly, and disabled. It is open every night from 9:00 PM - 7:00 AM and is staffed by two skilled professionals who monitor the space, ensuring participants' safety.

The City of Woonsocket purchased the 45-foot coach bus from The Source, a Florida-based organization, which redesigned its interior into a miniature shelter. The bus features: double-decker individual compartments, privacy curtains and phone chargers, as well as storage for belongings. Woonsocket is the third community in the country that owns a Dignity Bus.

## Why is this important?

Shelter is a crucial basic human need. The human impact of the Dignity Bus cannot be overstated. It provides year-round security, personal safety, and protection from the weather, and promotes improved physical and emotional well-being.



Shelter is critical to an individual's health and well-being. It is the most essential form of healthcare. There is no acceptable season in which a person can be homeless and healthy. Good nutrition, adequate sleep, management of chronic health issues, medication adherence - all of these depend upon a safe, reliable place to lay one's head at night.

## Safeguarding the Vulnerable: Who are they?

Homelessness is not a lifestyle choice but a failure to provide adequate and affordable housing for the most vulnerable members of our community. The Dignity Bus serves as an intermediary for the most vulnerable among us who are at higher risk for poor physical, psychological, or social health. Some of the most at-risk served include the elderly, those who are disabled or with complex medical illnesses, individuals fleeing domestic violence, and recently discharged hospitalized persons with no place to go who are waiting for permanent housing. The clients we serve vary in age, education, socio-economic status, and health status.

# Service Connections

In addition to emergency temporary shelter, clients are connected to Community Care Alliance and community programs and supportive services to help them address their specific needs so they can eventually transition to safe, sustainable, permanent housing:

- Basic Needs
- Mental Health and Substance Use Treatment
- Health Care Services
- Housing Search Assistance and placement

# Dignity Bus Utilization Data Trends

Figure 1. Unduplicated Client Count (per month)

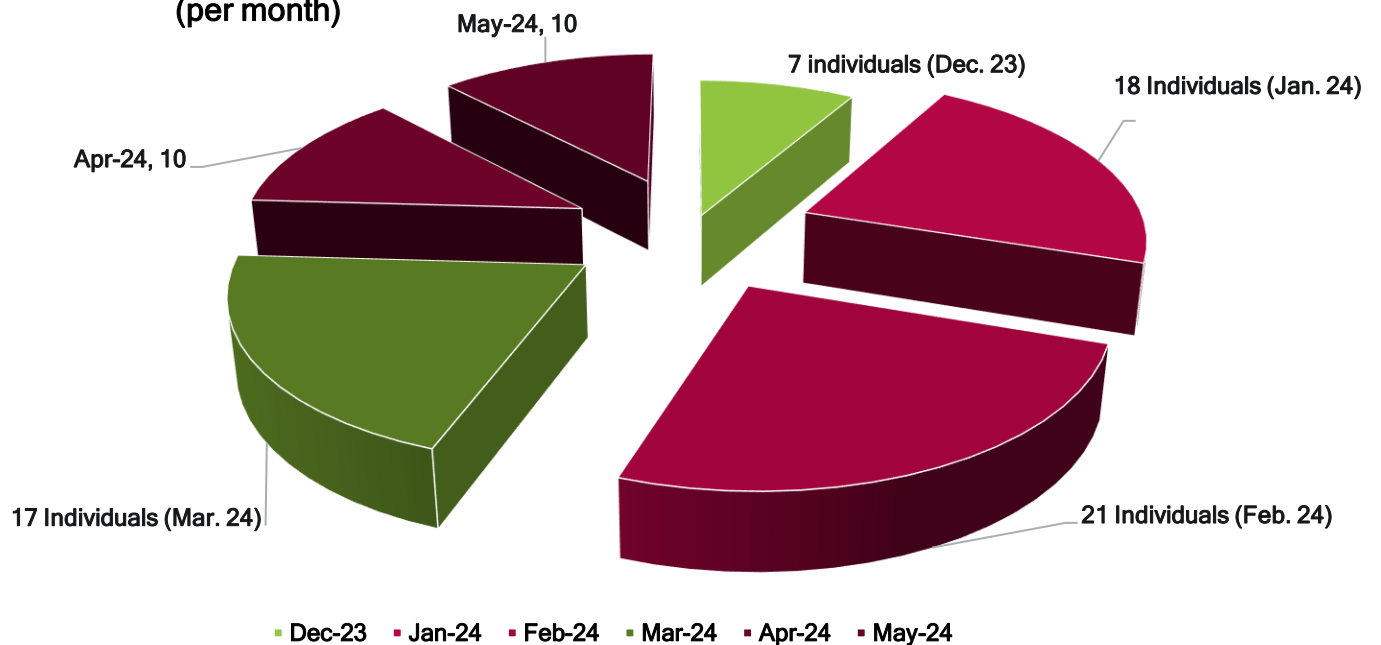
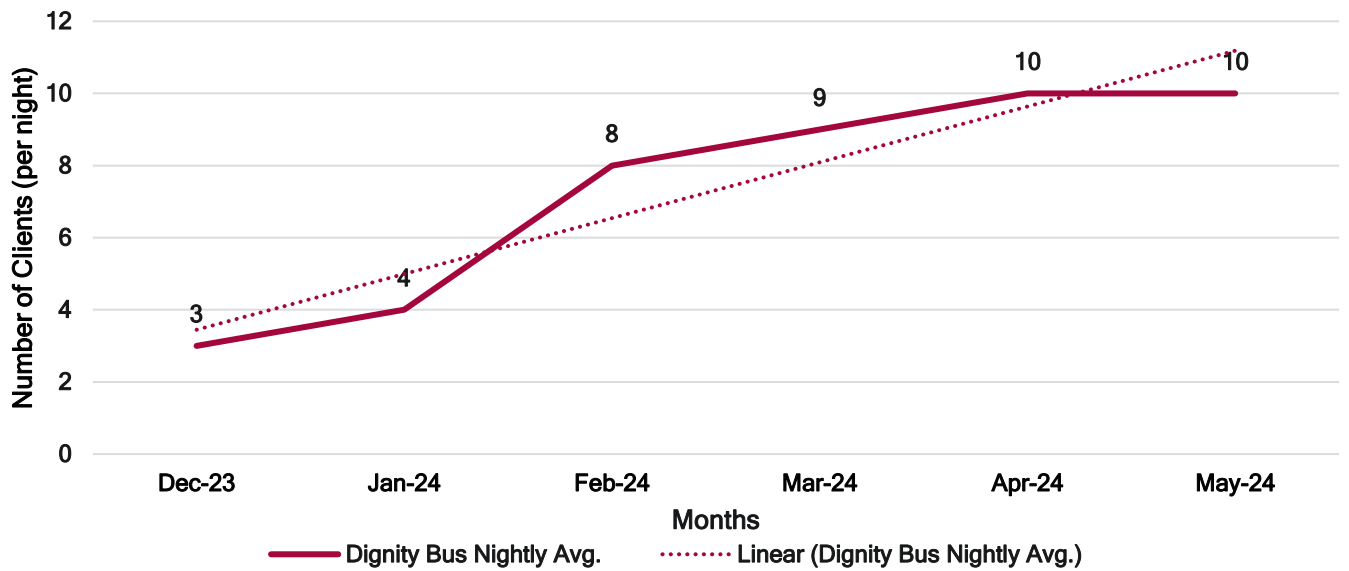


Figure 1, 86 individuals have been served since December 2023.

1,082 bed nights have been provided.

Figure 2. Dignity Bus Nightly Attendance Avg.



As shown in Figure 2, The Dignity Bus has seen a steady utilization rate increase since December 2023. \*Range 1- 14 Sleepers per night\*

## Our Client Stories

\*Names changed for privacy.

*John is an older, single, male who has been sleeping in his pickup truck parked at his storage unit. He was one of the first individuals to use the Dignity Bus upon its arrival. John often expressed his gratitude by keeping the living quarters clean and safe for others. He even cleared the snow and ice surrounding the bus for others to safely access the bus. Unfortunately, John was diagnosed with terminal cancer with a poor prognosis. He was eventually relocated to the Scattered Sites Program and then to another shelter.*

*Amy is a single female in her 30s who found herself homeless after escaping an abusive ex-spouse. She stays on the bus frequently as this is the only safe and secure housing option for her. She has an associate's degree and is looking to further her education once she has found suitable, safe, and permanent housing.*

*Lisa & Tim are an elderly couple who presented to the Dignity Bus in early February. Both suffer from serious, chronic medical issues that have severely impacted their quality of life. One night on the bus, Tim began to experience chest pain and required immediate emergency medical attention. He was admitted to the hospital for a lengthy stay due to a heart attack. While he was in the hospital, Lisa was able to stay on the bus until his release. Both were transferred to the Scattered Sites Programs, which will close June 30<sup>th</sup>.*

*Karen and Mark are a couple in their 30s. One is a trained, working mechanic and a Veteran who served in the Middle East, and the other holds an undergraduate and master's degree. Because of their traditional socioeconomic status, they are considered "too healthy and far*

*above the Federal Poverty Guidelines” to qualify for temporary housing. They use the Dignity Bus frequently for a secure place to stay while they try to get back on their feet.*

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These are just a few examples of the nearly 86 unique clients we have had staying with us on the Dignity Bus in the last few months. The clients use this temporary shelter option as a means to regain their footing and get back on their feet. Those who use the bus regularly help scared newcomers navigate life living unsheltered and provide emotional support.

## Care Coordination

Because the Dignity Bus serves some of our most vulnerable individuals, it has been a tremendous resource to identify significant risk and work with CCA’s Emergency Services, Safe Haven, Serenity, behavioral health programs, and BH Link to ensure that we can connect people with the appropriate level of care. These interventions have been life-saving on more than one occasion.

To date, the Dignity Bus has operated exceptionally well without the need for police assistance and zero deaths.