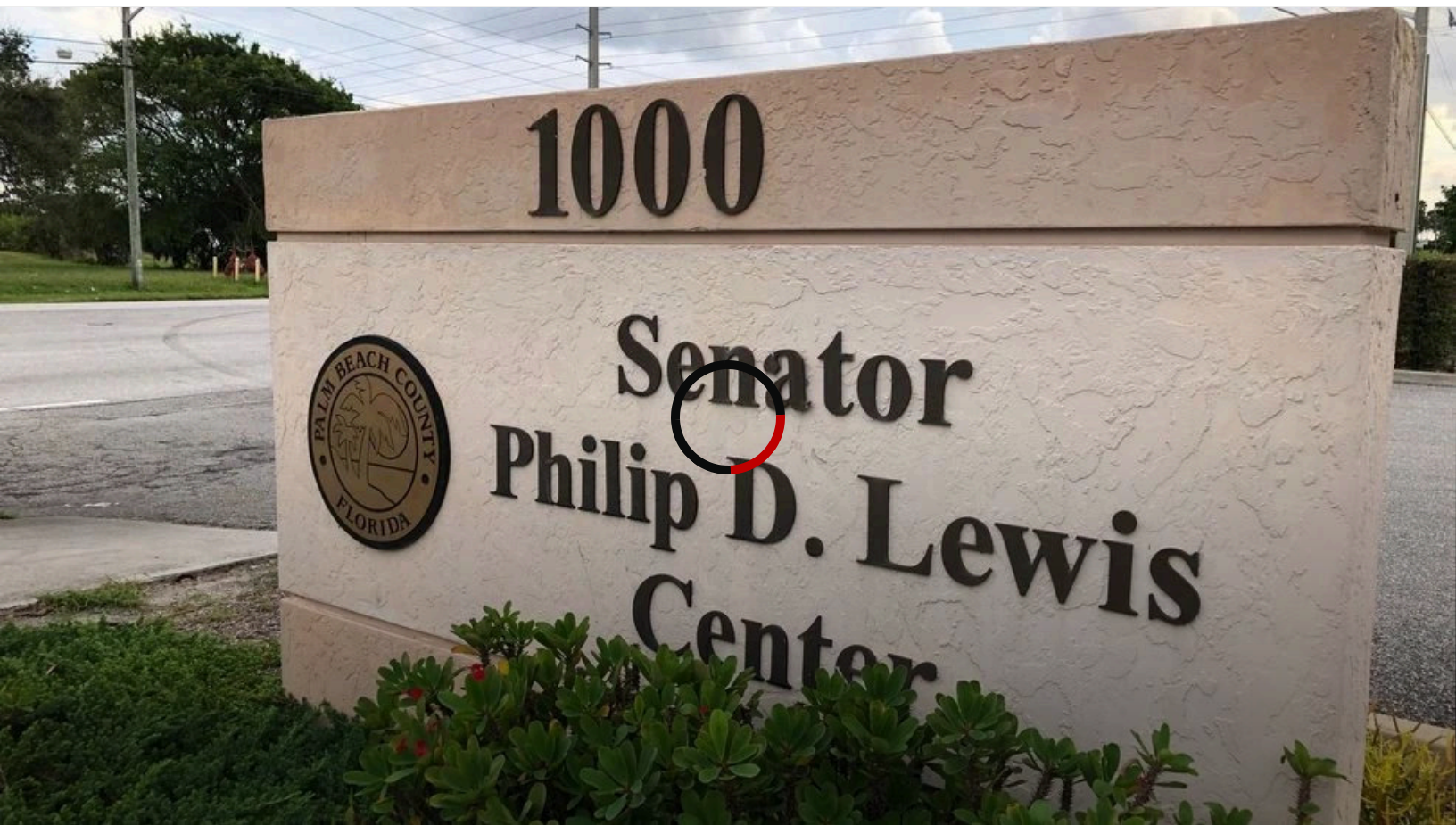


County leaders, organizations report more locals falling into first-time homelessness

by Stefany Valderrama

Mon, November 11th 2024 at 6:13 AM

Updated Mon, November 11th 2024 at 10:26 AM



The Senator Philip D. Lewis Center in West Palm Beach. (WPEC)



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WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (CBS12) — Palm Beach County leaders and organizations are reporting an increase in families experiencing first-time homelessness.

time.

It comes as counties and cities are searching for solutions to house the homeless who are banned from sleeping in public now that a new state law went into effect on the 1st of October.

Experts say the main factor contributing to this trend is the rising cost of housing in Palm Beach County.

According to Apartments.com a one bedroom apartment in West Palm Beach is averaging at around \$2,034, which is 31 percent higher than the national average. Data from the website names West Palm Beach as one of the most expensive cities in the U.S.

Experts also tell CBS12 that the rising cost of condo fees is also aiding the growing housing crisis.

However, they want our community to know that it's individuals and families who are working full-time are the ones being priced out of their homes.

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"We think of teachers, firefighters, and policemen as having good jobs, but the reality is when you look at the price of housing, even those jobs don't provide enough income to cover housing and other necessities," said the President and CEO of Gulfstream Goodwill Industries Karen Davidson. "It's really shocking that we rely on people to keep our families safe, and they can't afford to live here."

Many local organizations are working together to provide these families falling into homelessness with wrap-around services in this vulnerable new chapter. The county's health care district is sending their mobile unit to local shelters to provide them with access to medical care and really focus on their mental health and addressing the trauma and shame that comes with falling into homelessness.

See also: [West Palm Beach moves 40 homeless people into permanent homes](#)

the Community Services Department for Palm Beach County, tells CBS12 News.

“ *Being on the street, adds to the mental health issues.*”

"We see severe mental illnesses. We see substance abuse disorders, but we also see adjustment disorders," said Chief Medical Officer for the Health Care District of Palm Beach County Belma Andric said. "People who find themselves in very usual circumstances and it really affected their mental health."

Malhotra tells CBS12 as part of the effort to be in compliance with the new state law local leaders are using all resources to find families housing.

The biggest challenge is the desperate need for more affordable housing in Palm Beach County.

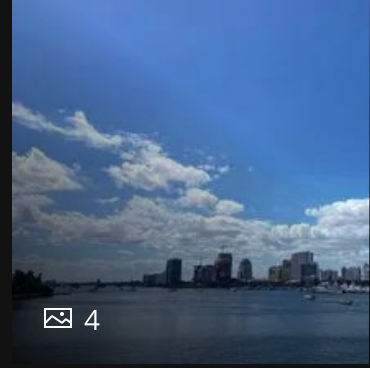
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