

A Fact Sheet Correcting Robert Marbut's Claims

Marbut's makes a number of misleading and incorrect claims regarding his work in homelessness, many of which are used in his [action plan](#) submitted to Daytona Beach and Volusia County (9 November 2015). These claims feed the rhetoric that Marbut uses to convince communities into spending millions of dollars on his practice, which lacks supporting evidence, objective data, and transparent and accountable implementation processes. In response, this document has been created to ensure that potential stakeholders who are invested in ending homelessness have the correct information as they make strategic investments.

Some of the incorrect claims by Marbut that can be used as a platform to refute his entire approach:

1. Marbut's model has achieved functional zero in St. Petersburg thanks to the Pinellas Safe Harbor;
2. Haven for Hope in San Antonio Texas, particularly its "Courtyard", exemplifies the success of Marbut's approach to homelessness;
3. Cities that have used Marbut's approach have seen vast reductions in homelessness;
4. A "culture of transformation" is based on best practices employed throughout the USA.

Incorrect claim #1: St. Petersburg has achieved "functional zero" street level homelessness thanks to the Pinellas Safe Harbor.

- Marbut makes claims that the "street-level homelessness" in the St. Petersburg area has been reduced significantly as to be functionally zero street-level homeless.
- This count was done by Police who are also in charge of the Pinellas Safe Harbor Shelter.
- At the same time, St. Petersburg started enforcing a regulation that bans sleeping or reclining on public sidewalks. Any persons breaking this regulation are sent to a jail cell or Pinellas Safe Harbor, a homeless shelter next door to the jail.
- Therefore, these homeless are not "off the street", they have simply been relocated to a shelter where they sleep outside or on a floor and are kept within a fenced in area. They are essentially in a type of prison. They have not been helped to get homes or make moves towards being housed, they are simply put in a cage.
- In other words, Marbut is looking at how many homeless are out of public view and not looking at how many people are being housed.
- Marbut can try to effectively claim a functional zero in homeless people within the areas where counts were taken (steps of city hall, parks) because the homeless that used to occupy these spaces have been relocated to the Pinellas Safe Harbor Shelter. However, as noted by St. Vincent de Paul of Pinellas and others, street homelessness continues to be an issue in and around its facilities.
- Marbut consistently fails to report a critical outcome: how many of those relocated to Safe Harbor have been effectively housed and transitioned into a stable life.

- Marbut seems to be changing the tune of his pitch to sell “jail-diversion” facilities rather than homelessness facilities.
- At the same time that Marbut is claiming these transformations, he makes no mention of other movements afoot in St. Petersburg at the same time. For example, the SSVF program in Pinellas County has been so exemplary that they have been a mentor to other SSVF programs across the country. This housing-focused approach is completely different from the Marbut approach.

Incorrect Claim #2: Haven for Hope in San Antonio Texas, particularly its “Courtyard”, exemplifies the success of Marbut’s approach to homelessness.

- Marbut stepped down from managing the Haven for Hope facility in 2011 -one year after the facility opened.
- In 2015, the Haven for Hope Director of External Communications has gone on record to say that, “Our campus has transformed completely away from Dr. Marbut’s principles; they were ineffective”.
- Haven for Hope’s current [core values](#) are (1) radical compassion, (2) servant leadership by putting others first, (3) driven by hope, acting as pioneers and embracing innovation, and (4) pursuing excellence in both their work and relationships. There is no explicit mention of Marbut’s “culture of transformation” in Haven for Hope’s current values – or anywhere else in the organization.
- Haven for Hope’s health care interventions, which address the “root causes” of homelessness (as alleged by Marbut), do not utilize linear techniques such as positive- and negative-reinforcement. Instead, Haven for Hope [employs](#) a Recovery Oriented System of Care as [advocated](#) by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), drawing on the evidence-based practices of healing and recovery.
- Despite these critical and opposing differences in service delivery, Marbut still insists on referring to “the courtyard” -a fraction of the facilities and services offered by Haven for Hope -as a successful example of his approach to homelessness.
- Haven for Hope has gone on to retain OrgCode Consulting, Inc. and others to help change the approach to service delivery used in programs on the campus.

Incorrect Claim #3: Cities that have used Marbut's approach have seen vast reductions in homelessness.

- Actual Point-In-Time-Count’s have shown that homelessness is still very much prevalent within Pinellas County and St. Petersburg (Homeless and Hungry, 2014)
- While Marbut claims reductions, the evidence suggests that while the number of homeless has gone down, it is nowhere close to the numbers that Marbut is claiming, and fails to account for other initiatives happening in the community like the SSVF Rapid ReHousing program.

- The 2014 Point-in-time housing survey done in Pinellas county showed that there were 3391 homeless. This included adults and children. Of these, 474 were classified as chronically homeless (Young and Moore, 2015).
- 2015 PITC number of Homeless individuals based on Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) criteria: 3387 (Santa Lucia, 2015)
- The most recent 2016 PITC for Pinellas county shows that the number of homeless individuals based on Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) criteria was 2777 (Santa Lucia, 2016)
- Based on Marbut's claims of a large reduction in homelessness, these numbers for Pinellas County speak otherwise.
- In San Antonio, Texas, where Haven For Hope operates, the PITC numbers show a rise in homelessness, not a reduction (Manganella, 2016). In fact, there was an increase of 20% in 2016 over 2015.
- While Pinellas County homeless counts have remained fairly constant over the last three years, this past year has seen a reduction, but not as huge as Marbut is claiming. At the same time homelessness has seen a drastic increase in San Antonio where the flagship of Marbut's model, Haven for Hope, is located (which he claims follows his approach). Therefore, the numbers speak to the fallacy of Marbut's claim of reducing homelessness through his model.

Incorrect Claim #4: A "culture of transformation" is based on best practices employed throughout the USA.

- Marbut claims that, "Communities need to embrace transformational best practices that have worked throughout the USA", and "[n]ational best practices indicate that communities need to have at least one 24/7 "Come-As-You-Are" services center."
- The defining method of his approach is that positive behavior should be rewarded while negative behaviors should bring "swift and proportionate consequences, which Marbut claims would spur client transformation towards reintegration into society.
- The reality is that best practices of experts and government organizations working with populations who are homeless conflict with, rather than endorse, Marbut's "culture of transformation".
- In June of 2015, the **Florida Housing Coalition**, the state's foremost authority on affordable housing, published a [policy document](#) that recognizes Housing First as the best practice for addressing homelessness. This is relevant given how prevalent Marbut's presence has been in Florida.
- The **Central Florida Commission on Homelessness** [identifies](#) affordable housing as the most direct way to ending homelessness, rather than shelters or transitional housing.
- The **Department of Housing and Urban Development's** [strategic plan](#) for 2014-2018 involves a focus on Housing First, improving data collection, and encouraging collaboration across levels of government and service providers.

- The **National Health Care for the Homeless Council** [advocates](#) for permanent supportive housing, rather than shelters or transitional housing, based on objective and empirical evidence in support of its benefits for housing retention and cost saving to systems such as health care.
- The **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration** is [invested in programs](#) to end homelessness that focus on providing permanent, stable housing as part of effective treatment for people recovering from mental illness or substance use disorders.
- The **National Alliance to End Homelessness** relies on empirical studies to [promote permanent supportive housing](#) as the best practice for ending chronic homelessness (those most likely to have co-occurring mental health or substance use disorders).
- NOT ONE of the aforementioned reputable sources indicate that Marbut's approach is a best practice.

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