



Central New Jersey Regional Homeless Assessment Report

2011

I. Introduction

In May of 2009, Congress passed the Homelessness Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act (HEARTH). The HEARTH Act challenges communities to move from addressing homelessness to ending it through focusing on data driven planning, system analysis and monitoring, and setting performance standards/goals. Federal resources for homeless programs will be tied to a community's ability to effectively reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness and implement programs and processes that can successfully end homelessness. Use of local data on the homeless population and the programs within a community will play a critical role in planning and program development in order to end homelessness and will be essential for basic compliance with HEARTH Act regulations.

This report uses information from the New Jersey Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to provide a snapshot of the characteristics of homeless households in the Central New Jersey region. While this report provides very basic information about the homeless population in Central New Jersey, it may serve as the foundation of a more in depth review of the population and its needs. Communities in New Jersey are well positioned to move towards data driven planning with the wealth of information available through HMIS. We hope this report will serve as an example of how to take the first step in using data to transform the system.

II. Key Findings

- A total of 3,476 households were housed in HMIS participating emergency shelters or transitional housing programs during the January 1, 2011 – November 1, 2011 report period
- There are 52 emergency shelter and transitional housing programs in Central New Jersey.
- A total of 346 people were identified as chronically homeless
- Persons of Black/African American descent were disproportionately homeless compared to other races (Similar to findings from the 2010 National Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR).)
- Individuals experienced a higher incidence of first-time homelessness compared to families.
- Among the children sheltered as part of a family, more than half were under the age of six.
- Homeless Individual adults were more likely to be disabled than homeless adults in families (Similar to findings from the 2010 National AHAR.)

III. Data Source

This Regional Homeless Assessment Report for Central New Jersey analyzed data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) administered by New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (NJHMFA), the HMIS Lead Agency. In New Jersey, NJHMFA utilizes software developed by Foothold Technology as the primary HMIS system for the state. Data analyzed included that from all Central New Jersey homeless programs for Hunterdon, Somerset, Middlesex, Mercer, Monmouth, Ocean and Burlington Counties.

Data from the Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2010 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress was also analyzed as a comparison to the regional data. This is the most recent national data available from HUD. The AHAR provides estimates of the number and characteristics along with service patterns of all people who participated in residential programs for the homeless during the 2010 federal Fiscal Year (October 2009-September 2010).

Information about unduplicated homeless and formerly homeless families and individuals who used emergency shelter and transitional housing during the 10-month period between January 1, 2011 – November 1, 2011 was gathered from HMIS.

Data was collected in the following categories:

1. total number served,
2. total number of adults vs. children,
3. total number of persons homeless for the first time,
4. length of homeless episode prior to program entry,
5. average length of program stay emergency shelter vs. transitional housing,
6. causes of homelessness,
7. disabling condition,
8. veteran status,
9. race,
10. ethnicity,
11. gender,
12. age range , and
13. chronically homeless.

The data in this report was analyzed according to four reporting categories that are organized based on shelter type and individual/family type.

- Families in Emergency Shelters
- Families in Transitional Housing
- Individuals in Emergency Shelters
- Individuals in Transitional Housing

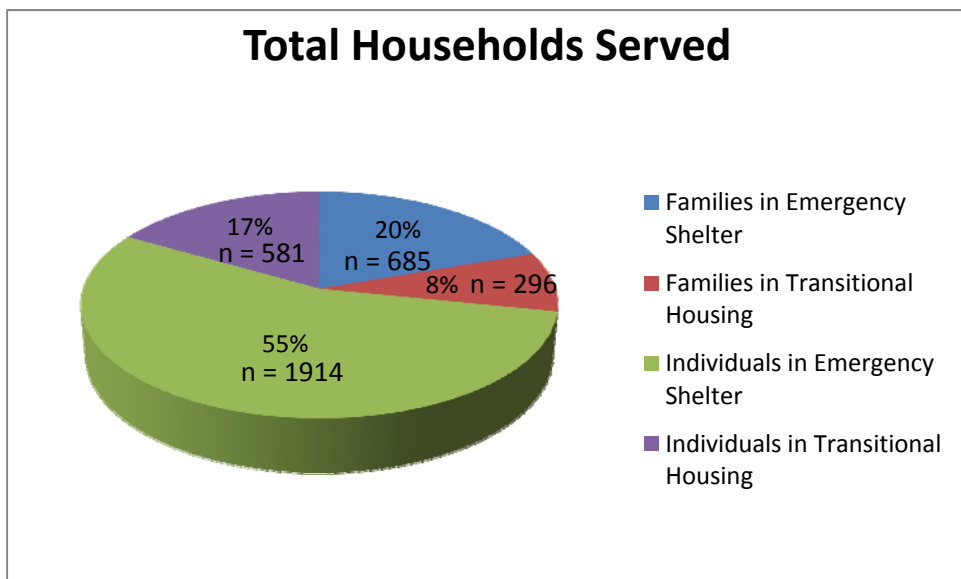
Families include households with at least one child age 17 or younger and at least one adult age 18 or older. All others were considered homeless Individuals.

IV. Findings

The following section provides a summary of the demographic characteristics of homeless households in the Central New Jersey region.

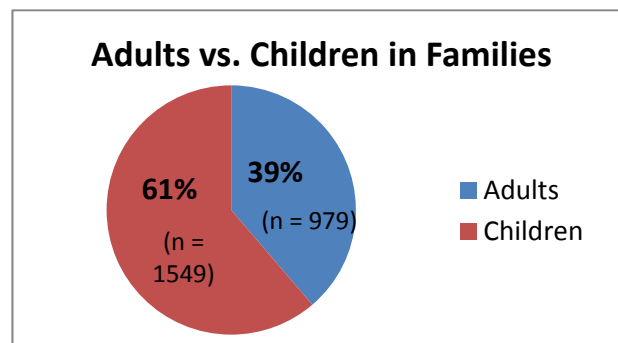
Total Homeless Population. A total of 3,476 households which involved 5,023 persons were housed in Central Region HMIS participating emergency shelters or transitional housing programs during the January 1, 2011 – November 1, 2011 report period. This represents 27% of all 12,981 households and 29% of all 17,100 persons throughout New Jersey who were homeless during the report period.

Out of those identified as homeless in the Central Region, 685 (20%) were families served in emergency shelters and 296 (9%) were families served in transitional housing. 1,914 (55%) of the total central population were individuals served in emergency shelters and 581 (17%) individuals served in transitional housing.



	Central New Jersey	New Jersey	National
Total Persons Served	5,023	17,100	1,540,151
Emergency Shelter	3,686	13,041	1,268,068
Individuals	1,914	8,547	859,426
Families	1,772	4,494	408,642
Transitional Housing	1,337	4,059	272,083
Individuals	581	1,745	137,992
Families	756	2,314	134,091

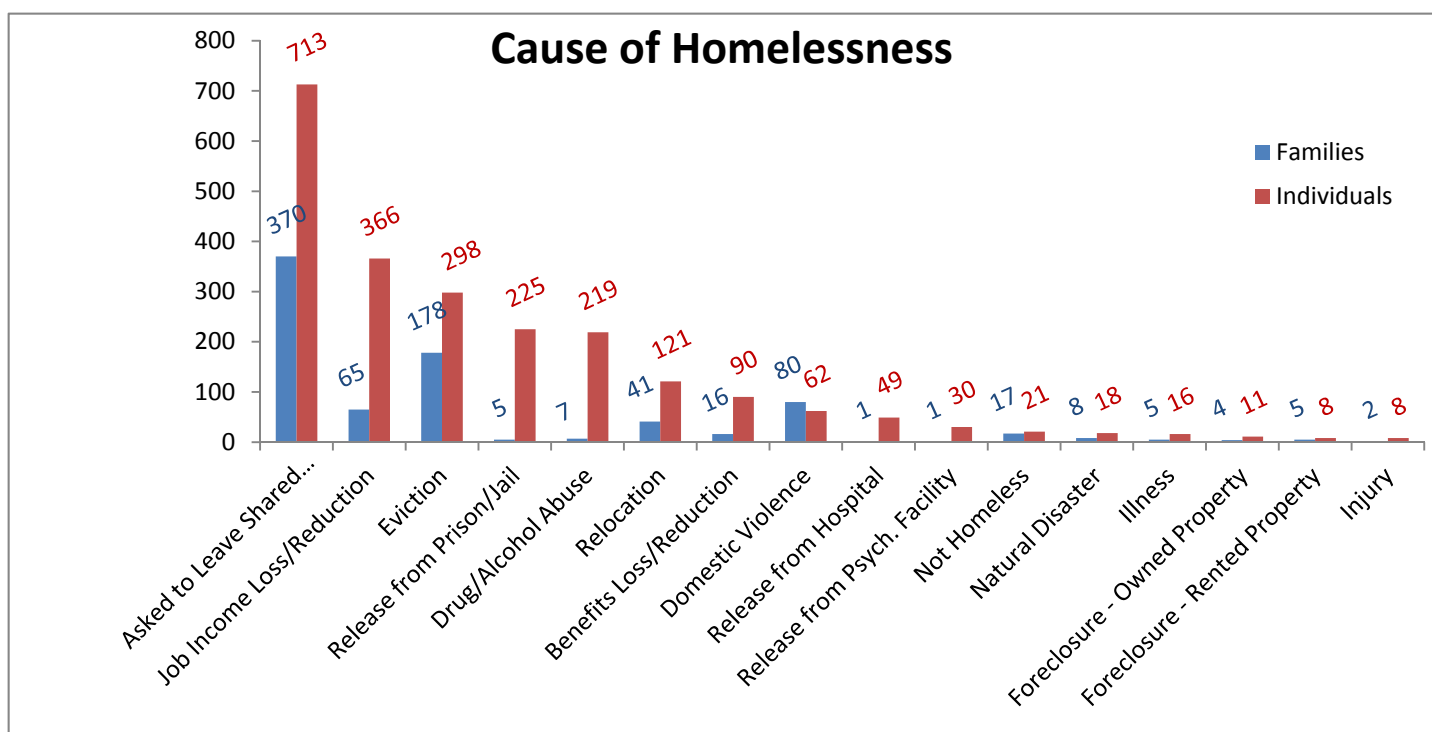
Adults vs. Children in Families. The average size of a homeless family sheltered in emergency shelter and transitional housing in Central New Jersey is 2 persons. Children represented 61% of persons sheltered as part of a family in both emergency shelters and transitional housing. Very few persons, less than 2%, sheltered as part of a family were over the age of 50. Among the



children sheltered in the family population, more than half were under the age of six:

- 625 (57%) of the 1,089 children in emergency shelters were under age 6
- 275 (60%) of the 460 children in transitional housing were under age 6

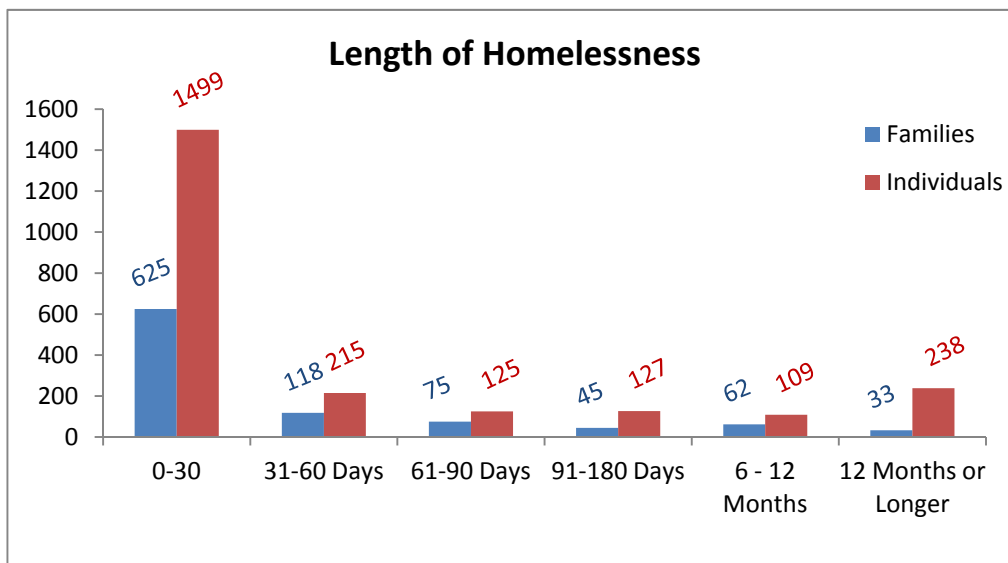
Cause of Homelessness. Of the top five reasons for homelessness given by families and individuals in both emergency shelters and transitional housing, the number one was being asked to leave a shared residence. This response accounted for more than one-third of all responses, with 46% of the total for families and 31% for individuals.



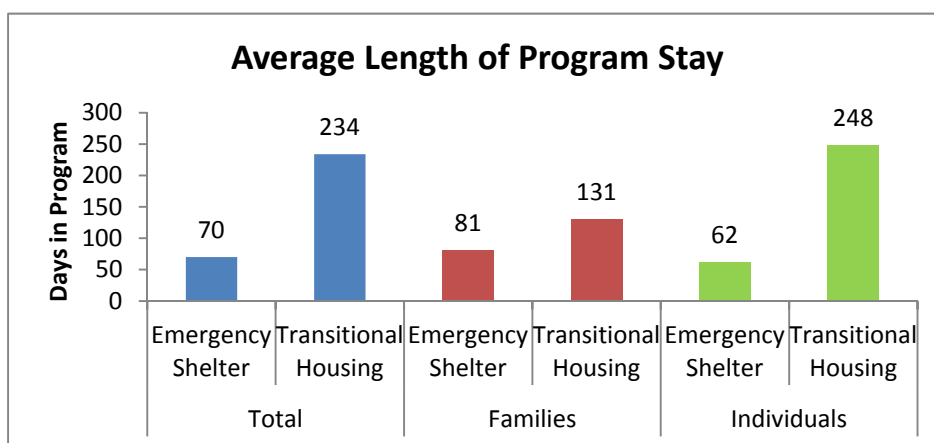
For individuals, this top reason was followed by job income loss/reduction (16%), eviction (13%), release from prison/jail (9%) and drug/alcohol abuse (9%).

For families, this top reason was followed by eviction (22%), domestic violence (9%), job income loss/reduction (8%) and relocation (5%).

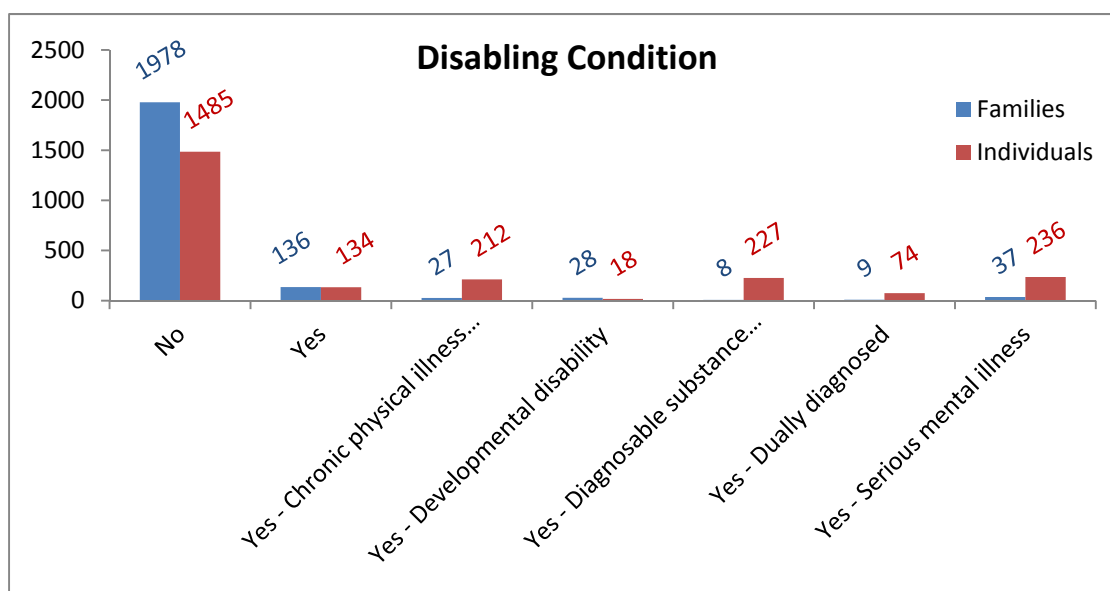
Length of homeless episode prior to program entry. For both families (65%) and individuals (65%), most had become homeless very recently, within a month or less. 85% of families and 80% of individuals experienced homelessness for up to three months. 3% of families and 10% of individuals reported experiencing homelessness for over a year.



Average Length of Program Stay. On average, individuals in transitional housing had longer program stays than families. Individuals in transitional housing had stays that were almost twice as long as families' stays in transitional housing. On the other hand, families in emergency shelters averaged slightly longer stays than individuals.



Disabling Condition. 1,146 persons (22% of total), including children, who were homeless in Central New Jersey indicated having a disability. 36% of the individuals identified themselves as having a disabling condition compared to 9% of persons in families. Three of the most prevalent disabling conditions reported by both individuals and families included serious mental illness (24%), chronic physical illness or disability (21%) and diagnosable substance use disorder (21%).

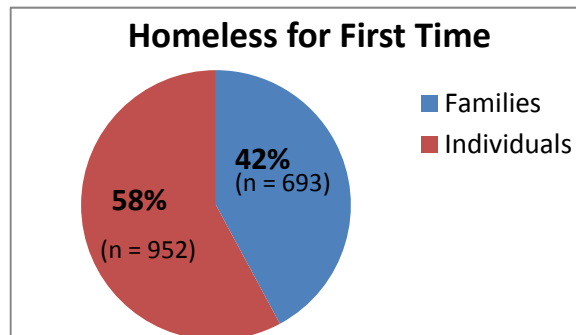


For those indicating a disabling condition, the breakdown was as follows:

Disabling Condition	Individuals	%	Families	%
Yes	134	15%	136	56%
Yes - Chronic physical illness or disability	212	24%	27	11%
Yes - Developmental disability	18	2%	28	11%
Yes - Diagnosable substance use disorder	227	25%	8	3%
Yes - Dually diagnosed	74	8%	9	4%
Yes - Serious mental illness	236	26%	37	15%
Total	901	100%	245	100%

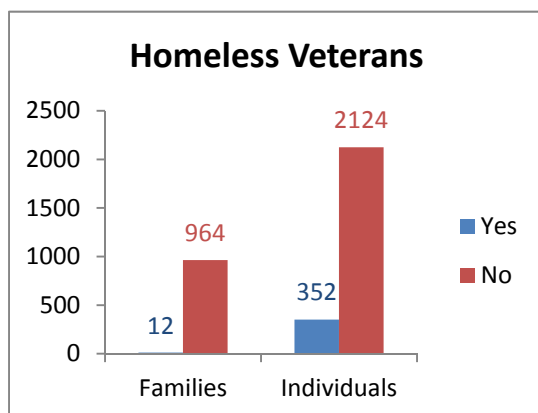
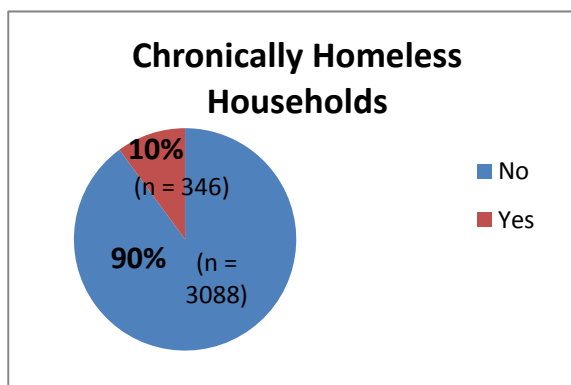
- 56% of persons in families and 15% of individuals indicated a disability however the specific disability was not provided.
- Among those indicating a disability, for both families and individuals, the most common condition reported was serious mental illness, with 15% for families and 26% for individuals.
- Of those reporting a disabling condition, 25% of individuals had a diagnosable substance use disorder compared to 3% of families.
- Of those indicating disability, 24% of individuals reported a chronic physical illness or disability compared to 11% of persons in families.

Homeless for the first time. A total of 1,645 persons experienced homelessness for the first time during the report period. Individuals experienced a higher incidence of first-time homelessness (58%) compared to families (42%).



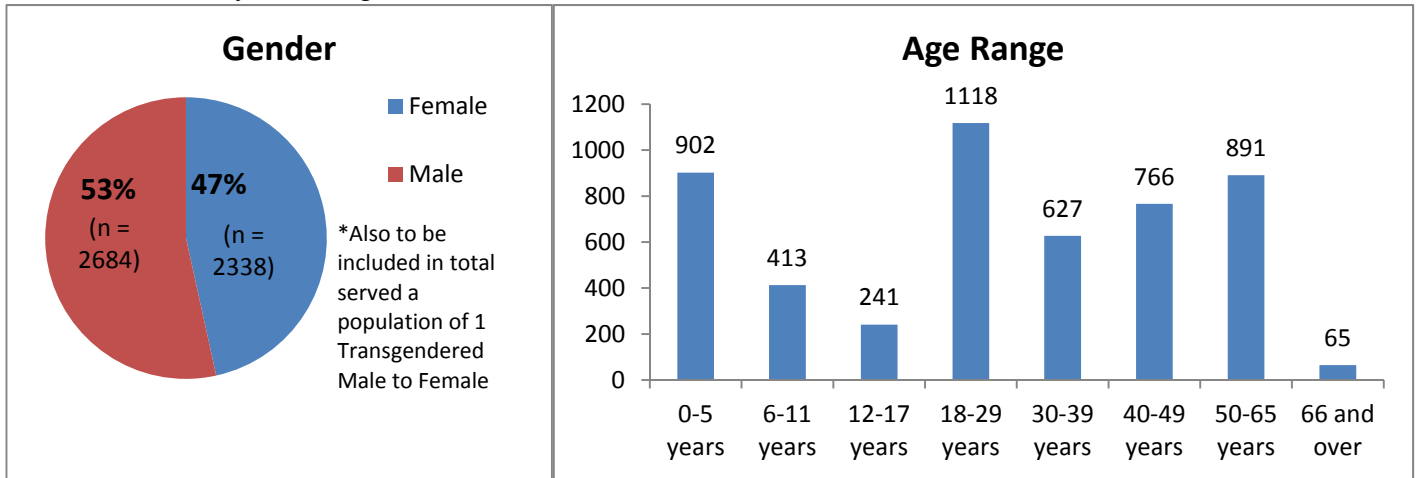
Chronically Homeless and Veterans. Chronic homelessness is defined as a person with a disabling condition being homeless for 12 months or longer or having 4 episodes of homelessness in 3 years.

Based on HMIS information, 10% of individuals served were identified as chronically homeless. This is similar to national results which indicate the chronically homeless population account for 10% of the total homeless population. It should be noted that the chronically homeless in this chart are only individuals. Due to the recent change in the definition, the HMIS system does not yet have the capacity to identify chronically homeless families.



Very few of adults sheltered as part of a family during this report period were identified in HMIS as veterans (1%). On the other hand, 14% of individual adults accessing emergency shelters and transitional housing were identified as veterans. This is slightly higher than national estimates which indicate homeless veterans account for 11.5% of the total adult homeless population (Veteran Homelessness: A Supplemental Report to the 2010 Annual Homeless Assessment Report).

Gender and Age Range. Just over half (53 %) of homeless persons in Central New Jersey were male, with women representing 47% of the population. This diverges from the national trends which show a significantly higher proportion of homeless males who represent 62.3% of the population, with women representing 37.7%. The average age of the individuals was 27 with more than half of the homeless population under the age of 30. 34% of those individuals 30 years or younger were under 6 years of age. 28% of the people were 30-49 years of age and only 19% were 50 years of age and over.



Race and Ethnicity. Most homeless persons reported their race as Black or African American (62%). The next largest racial group was White (33%), followed by Multi-Racial (2%). Nationally, Black or African Americans represent 37% of the homeless population and Whites represent 41%. Regarding ethnicity, 86% of homeless persons self-identified their ethnicity as Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino, which is comparable to 83% nationally.

