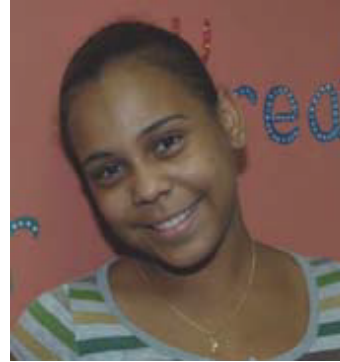


# Northern New Jersey Regional Homeless Assessment Report



2012

## **I. Introduction**

With the release of the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Interim rules in July of 2012, it is essential for communities to continue moving forward with its implementation. One area HEARTH focuses on is the use of data for analyzing current program capabilities and assessing the needs of the population in order to have a more effective planning process and program development that is necessary to achieve the ultimate goal of ending homelessness.

This report uses information from the New Jersey Homeless Information System (HMIS) to provide a snapshot of the characteristics of homeless households in the Northern New Jersey region. This report can serve as the foundation of a more in depth review of the population and its needs in the individual communities included. Communities in New Jersey are well positioned to move towards data driven planning with the wealth of information available through HMIS.

## **II. Data Source**

This Regional Homeless Assessment Report for Northern 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 utilized software developed by Foothold Technology as the primary HMIS system for the state. Data analyzed included that from all Northern New Jersey homeless programs for Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, Passaic, Sussex, Union, and Warren Counties.

Data from the Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2011 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress was also analyzed as a comparison to the regional data. The AHAR provides estimates of the number of characteristics along with service patterns of all people who participated in residential programs for the homeless during the 2011 federal Fiscal Year (October 2010-September 2011).

The Regional Homeless Assessment Report is based on information about unduplicated homeless and formerly homeless families and individuals who used emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent housing programs during the year long reporting period January 1, 2012 – December 31, 2012, as reported in HMIS.

Data was collected in the following categories:

1. Total number served
2. Total number of adults vs. children
3. Cause of homelessness
4. Residence prior to program entry
5. Length of homeless episode prior to program entry
6. Number of homeless episodes prior to entry
7. Chronic homelessness
8. Disabling condition
9. Veteran status

10. Gender
11. Age range
12. Race
13. Ethnicity
14. Highest level of education
15. Access to cash-income and non-cash benefits
16. Average length of program stay
17. Reason for discharge from program
18. Destination at discharge

The data in this report was analyzed based on two populations, total population served and total youth served.

In the first section of the results the total homeless population served was organized and at times separated based on program type and individual/family type. It focused on:

- Families served in Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, and Permanent Housing
- Individuals served in Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, and Permanent Housing

Families include households with at least one child age 17 or younger and at least one adult age 18 or older. Adult couples were also considered families for this report. All others were considered homeless individuals.

The second section of the results focused on the youth population served in emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent housing during the reporting period. A person was considered youth in this section if they were between the ages of 18 – 24 and were identified as the head of household.

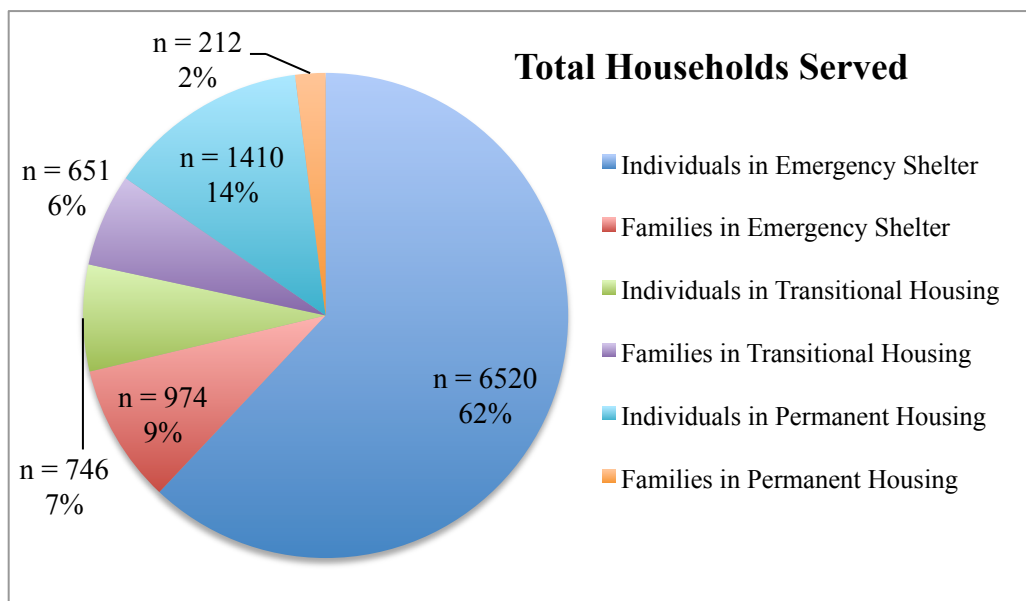
All percentages are based on total number of actual responses, an answer of “don’t know” or missing data were not represented or calculated in this report.

### **III. Findings for Total Population Served**

#### **Key Findings:**

- A total of 10,513 households were served in HMIS participating emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent housing programs during the January 1, 2012 – December 31, 2012 report period
- A total of 909 individuals were identified as chronically homeless
- 29% of the total population including children and adults either served as individuals or families identified having a disability
- 24% of the total population served was between the ages of 18 and 29
- Among children served as part of a family, 56% were under the age of six
- 65% of the head of households served had obtained their high school diploma/GED or higher education
- 20% of individuals and 56% of families moved on to permanent housing upon discharge

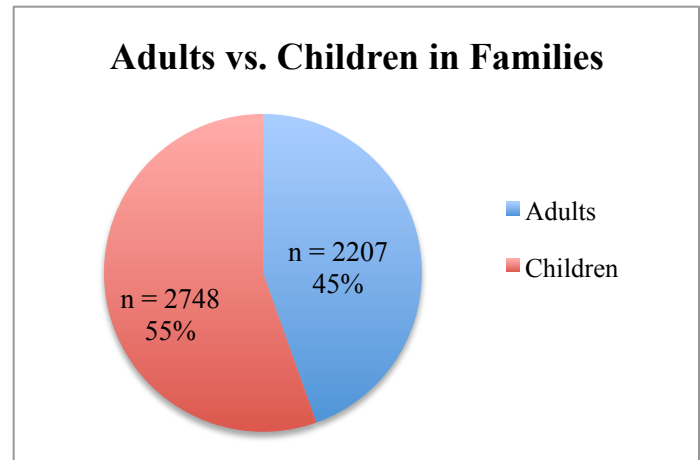
**Total Homeless Population.** A total of 10,513 households involving 13,631 persons were housed in Northern New Jersey Region HMIS participating emergency shelters, transitional housing, or permanent housing programs during the January 1, 2012 – December 31, 2012 reporting period. This represents 53% of all 19,861 households as well as 53% of all 25,870 persons who were homeless throughout New Jersey during the report period. Out of those identified as homeless in the Northern Region, 212 (2%) were families served in permanent housing. 651 (6%) were families served in transitional housing and 974 (9%) were families served in emergency shelters. For individuals, there were 746 (7%) that were served in transitional housing, 1410 (14%) were in permanent housing, and 6520 (62%) of the total northern population were individuals served in emergency shelters.



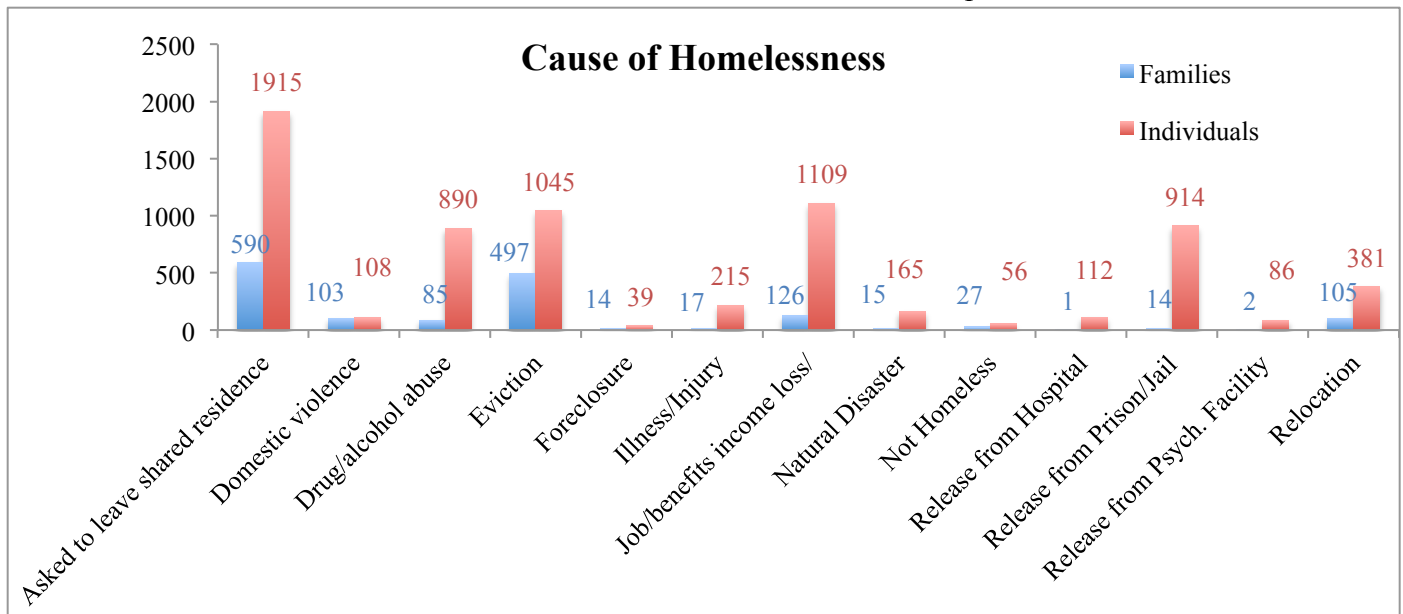
families served in emergency shelters. For individuals, there were 746 (7%) that were served in transitional housing, 1410 (14%) were in permanent housing, and 6520 (62%) of the total northern population were individuals served in emergency shelters.

	Northern New Jersey	New Jersey	National
<b>Total Persons Served</b>	13,631	25,870	1,598,592
<b>Emergency Shelter</b>	9,122	17,776	1,236,814
Individuals	6,520	12,163	828,400
Families	2,602	5,613	408,414
<b>Transitional Housing</b>	2,510	4,837	361,778
Individuals	746	2,072	208,446
Families	1,764	2,765	153,332
<b>Permanent Housing</b>	1,999	3,257	298,488
Individuals	1,410	2,217	193,214
Families	589	1,040	105,274

**Adults vs. Children in Families.** The average size of a homeless family in Northern New Jersey is 3 persons regardless if they are in an emergency shelter, transitional housing, or permanent housing program. Children represented 55% of persons sheltered as part of a family in any of the three program types. The average age of children sheltered in either emergency shelter or transitional housing was 6 years old where as the average age for a child in permanent housing was 9.



**Cause of Homelessness.** The most reported cause of homelessness for both individuals and families for emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent housing combined was being “asked to leave shared residence” which accounted for 29% of all responses.

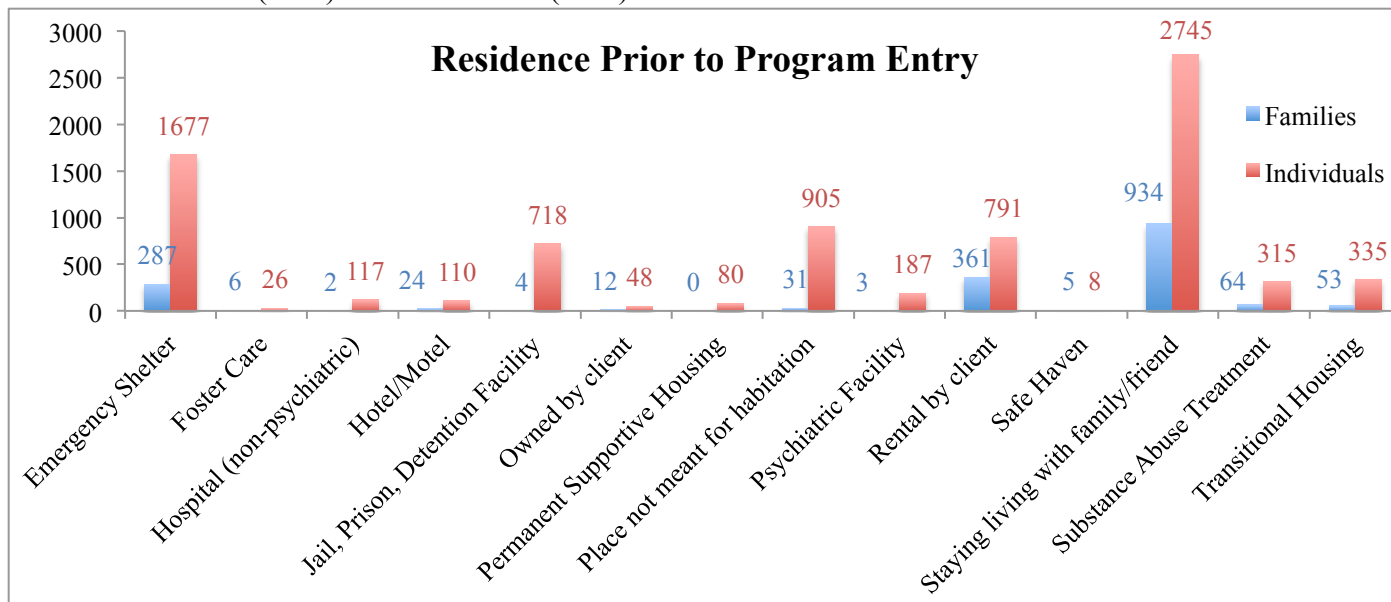


For emergency shelters the most reported cause of homelessness was being “asked to leave shared residence” for both individuals (30%) and families (40%) followed by “job income loss/reduction” (15%) for individuals and “eviction” (32%) for families.

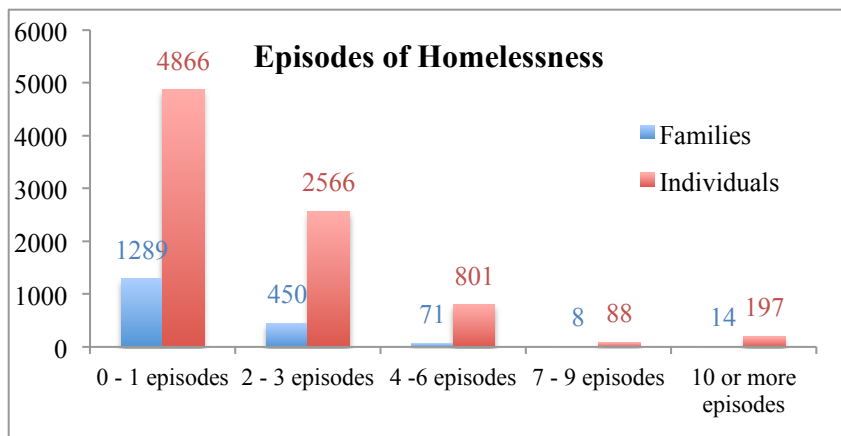
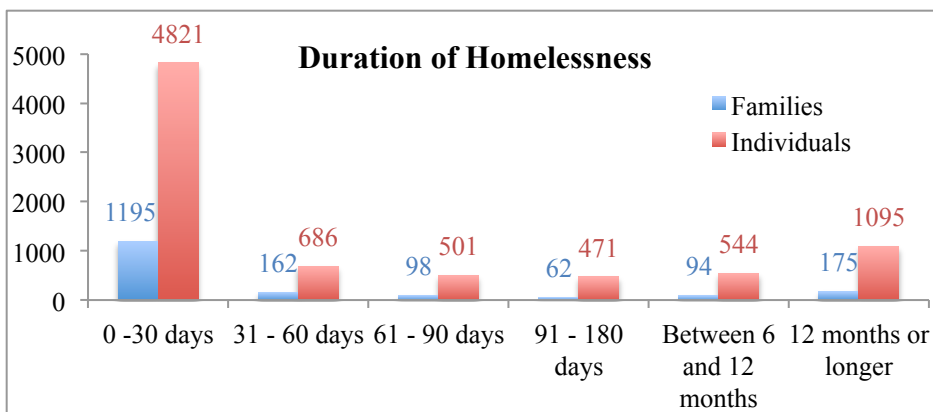
For transitional housing programs, a similar trend was found for families in which “asked to leave shared residence” was most reported at 40% followed again by “eviction” at 31%. Different results were found for individuals though as “drug/alcohol abuse” was most reported at 29%, followed by “asked to leave shared residence” at 21%.

For individuals served in permanent housing “drug/alcohol abuse” was most reported (18%) followed by “eviction” (17%). For families served in permanent housing “eviction” was the most reported cause of homelessness at 25% followed by “drug/alcohol abuse” (13%).

**Residence Prior to Program Entry.** “Staying or living with family member/friend” was the most common response for both families and individuals in both emergency shelters (families – 60%, individuals – 40%) and transitional housing (families – 54%, individuals – 29%). The most reported residence prior to program entry for permanent housing was “emergency shelter” for both families (34%) and individuals (43%).

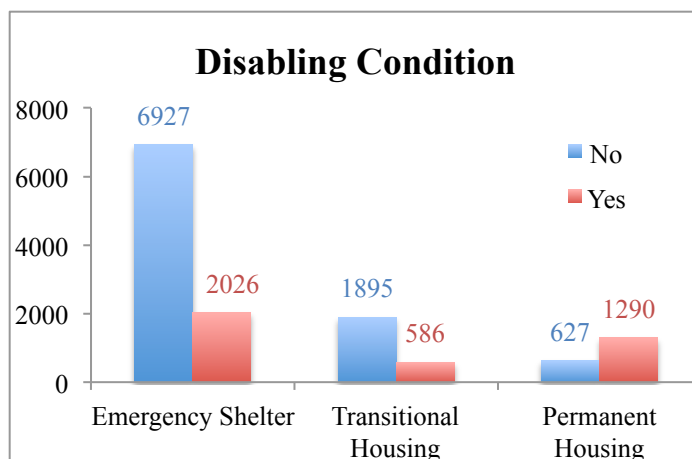


**Length of homeless episode prior to program entry.** For both families (67%) and individuals (59%), most had become homeless very recently, within a month or less. 10% of families and 13% of individuals reported experiencing homelessness for over a year.



**Episodes of Homelessness and Chronic Homelessness.** The majority of both families (70%) and individuals (57%) served in emergency shelters, transitional housing, or permanent housing programs had experienced 0 or 1 episodes of homelessness prior to program entry. Out of all individuals served, a total of 909 or 10% were identified as chronically homeless.

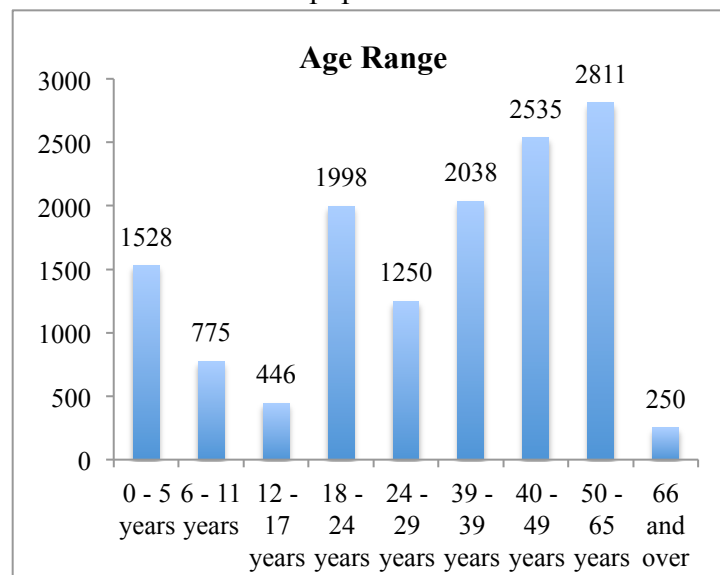
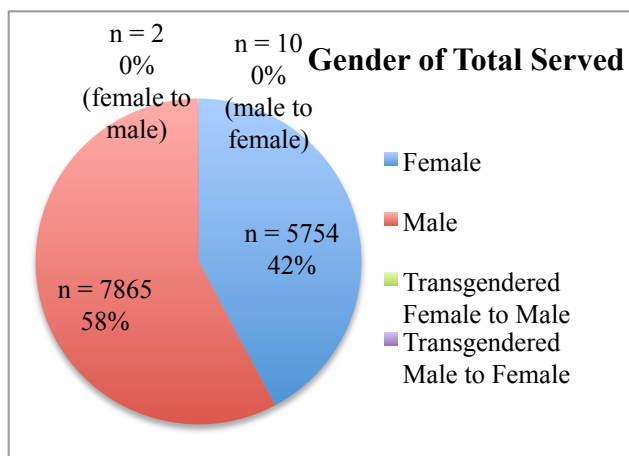
**Disabling Condition.** 3,902 persons (29% of total), including children, who were homeless in Northern New Jersey indicated having a disability. 39% of individuals identified themselves as having a disabling condition compared to 12% of families. The most prevalent disabling condition reported by families was chronic physical illness or disability, while the most prevalent condition for individuals was serious mental illness.



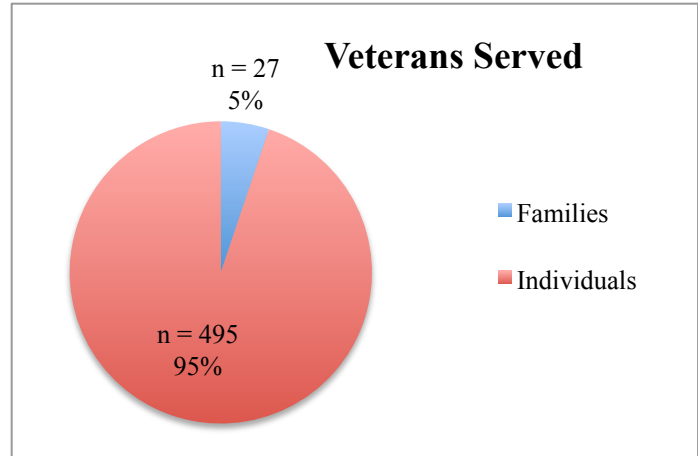
For those whom indicated a disabling condition, the breakdown is as follows:

Disabling Condition	Individuals	%	Families	%
Yes	1193	36%	406	69%
Yes – Chronic physical illness or disability	390	12%	57	10%
Yes – Developmental disability	89	3%	27	5%
Yes – Diagnosable substance use disorder	595	18%	32	5%
Yes – Dually diagnosed	182	5%	24	4%
Yes – Serious mental illness	862	26%	45	8%
Total	3311	100%	591	100%

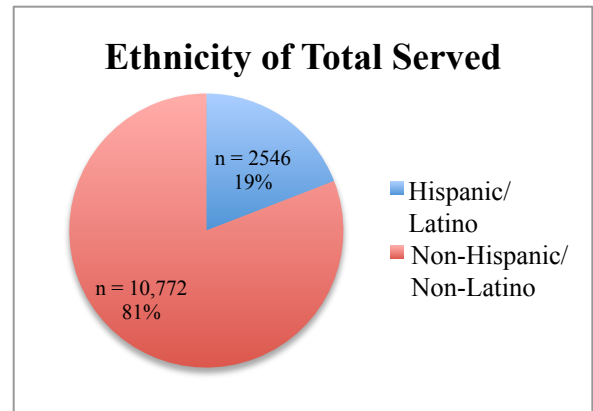
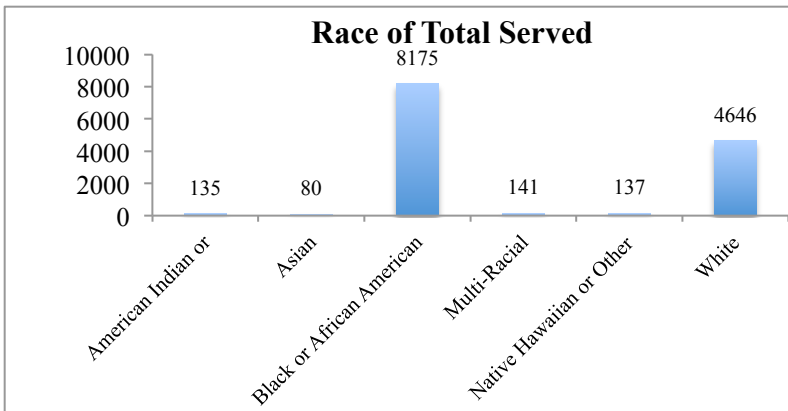
**Gender and Age Range.** More than half (58%) of homeless persons served in Northern New Jersey were male, with women representing 42% of the population. This is slightly lower than the national trend, which shows men representing around 63% of the population and women representing 37%. Of the 13,631 persons served in the HMIS participating emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent housing programs, the age range that contained the most amount of persons was between 18 and 29 years of age (24%). The second largest age range found was 50 – 65 years of age, which consisted of 21% of the total population. Of the children served in all three program categories the majority (56%) were between the ages of 0 and 5 years old.



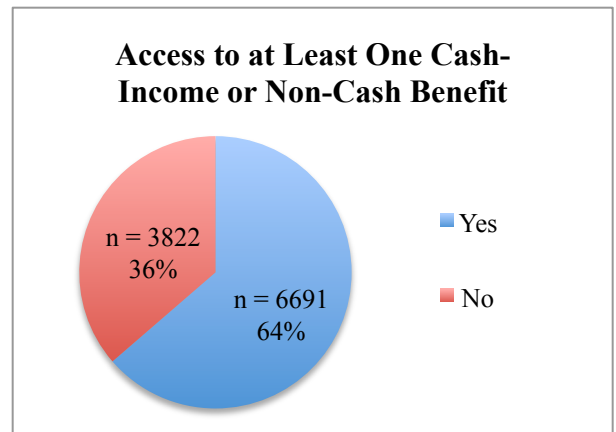
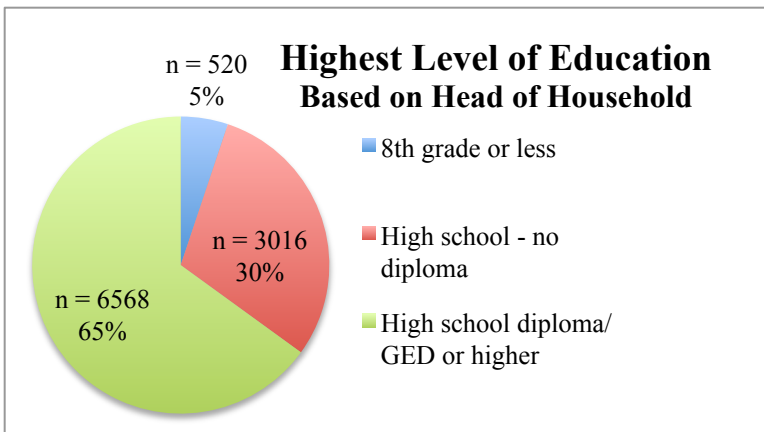
**Veteran Status.** A total of 522 veterans were served in emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent housing programs. This accounted for 5% of all adults served throughout the 2012 report period. Of the veterans served, 27 (5%) were served as part of a family, while 495 (95%) were served as individuals. 407 or 78% of the veterans served were served in an emergency shelter setting, 10% (50) as part of a transitional housing program, and 12% (65) were provided housing through a permanent housing program.



**Race and Ethnicity.** Most homeless persons served in the Northern New Jersey region (8,175) reported their race as “Black or African-American” (61%). The next most reported race was “White” at 35% (4,646), followed by “Multi-Racial” at 141 (1%). 81% of the homeless population identified themselves as “Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino.”



**Level of Education and Access to Cash-Income/Non-Cash Benefits.** When looking at highest level of education in the head of household, 6,568 (65%) served as either a family or individual in Northern New Jersey programs received their high school diploma/GED or higher. 5% or 520 head of households received no more than an 8<sup>th</sup> grade education. Of the individuals and families served, 6,691 or 64% have at least one source of cash-income or non-cash benefit.





For families served in emergency shelter and transitional housing the most common cash-income reported was TANF (55% for emergency shelter and 70% for transitional).

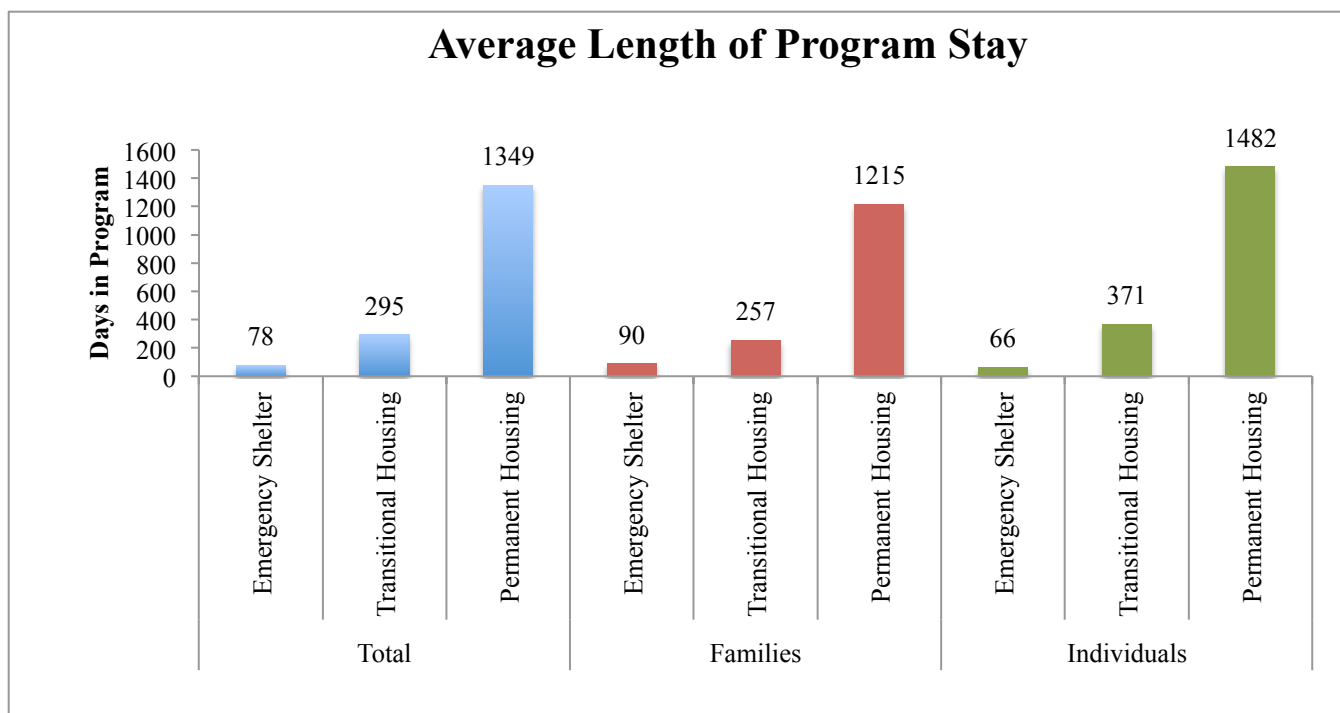
General assistance was the most reported cash-income for individuals in both emergency shelter (19%) and transitional housing (30%).

The most reported cash-income for both families and individuals served in permanent housing was SSI (32% for families and 33% for individuals).

15% of all families and 9% of all individuals reported having an earned income.

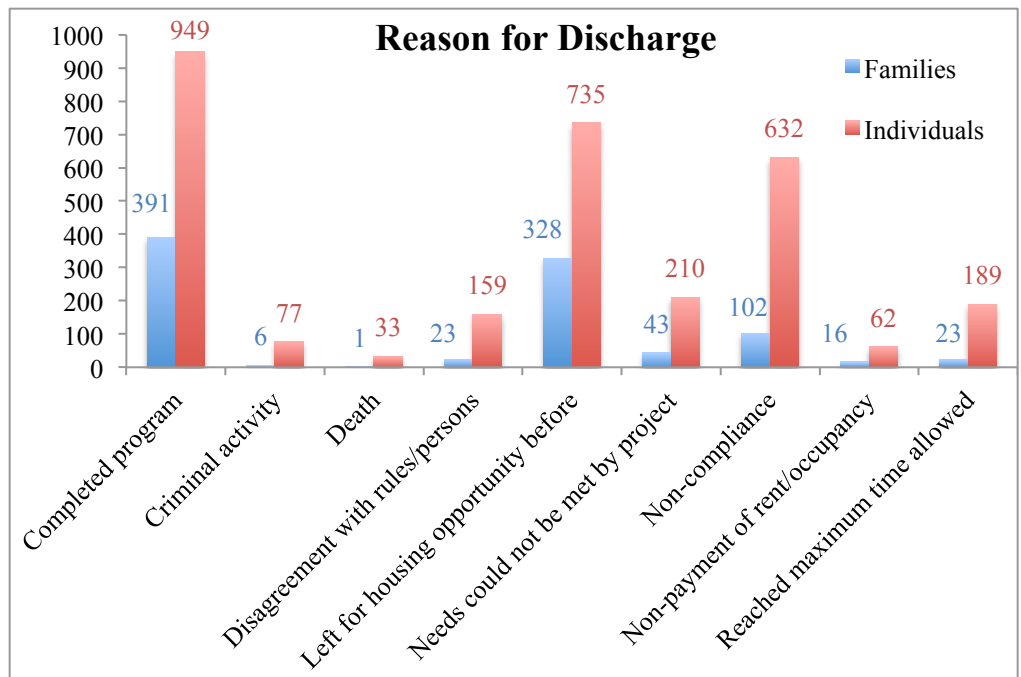
Food Stamps was the top reported non-cash benefit for both families and individuals served in all program categories with 37% of all individuals and 75% of all families receiving food stamps.

**Average Length of Program Stay.** When looking at total length of program stay for families and individuals, on average, families seemed to have longer stays in emergency shelter where as individuals seemed to have longer program stays for both transitional and permanent housing. The most noticeable difference is seen in transitional housing where individuals’ length of program stay is longer than families’ stay by about 114 days or almost 4 months.

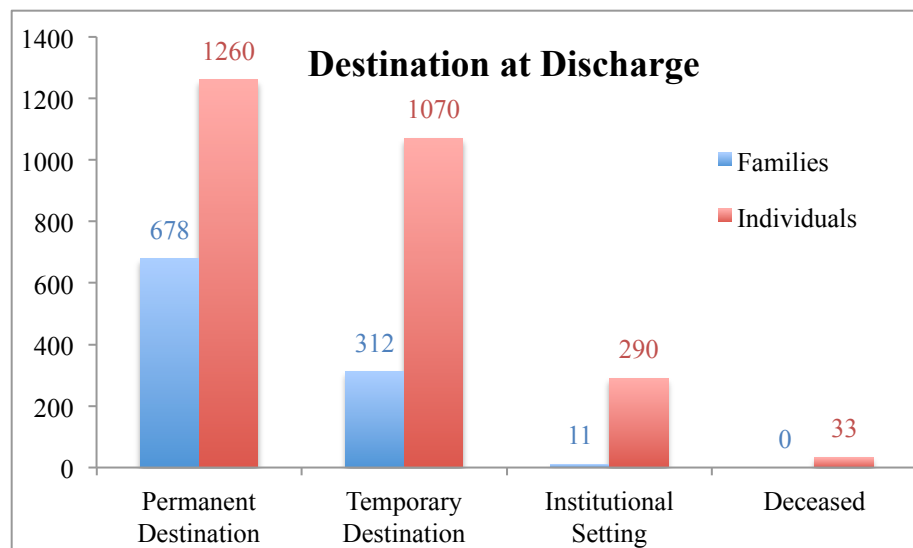


**Reason and Destination at Discharge.** A total of 7,583 households were discharged from emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent housing programs during the 2012 reporting period. 18% of these households were discharged from programs after completing the program while 14% left for a housing opportunity before completing the program. 20% of individuals and 56% of families moved on to permanent housing after being discharged. A permanent housing destination includes a unit owned or rented by a client, permanent supportive housing for formerly homeless person, or living with a family member or friend permanently. The most common permanent housing response was rental by client with 20% of total households moving into a rental. This rental could be with or without a subsidy. A temporary discharge destination includes an emergency shelter, hotel or motel, place not meant for habitation, staying with a family member or friend temporarily, or transitional housing for homeless persons. The most common form of temporary housing as a destination was an emergency shelter, which involved 7% of the total population. An institutional destination includes hospital (psychiatric or non-psychiatric), jail or prison, or a substance abuse treatment facility. The most common institutional destination reported was jail or prison with 2% of the total discharges.

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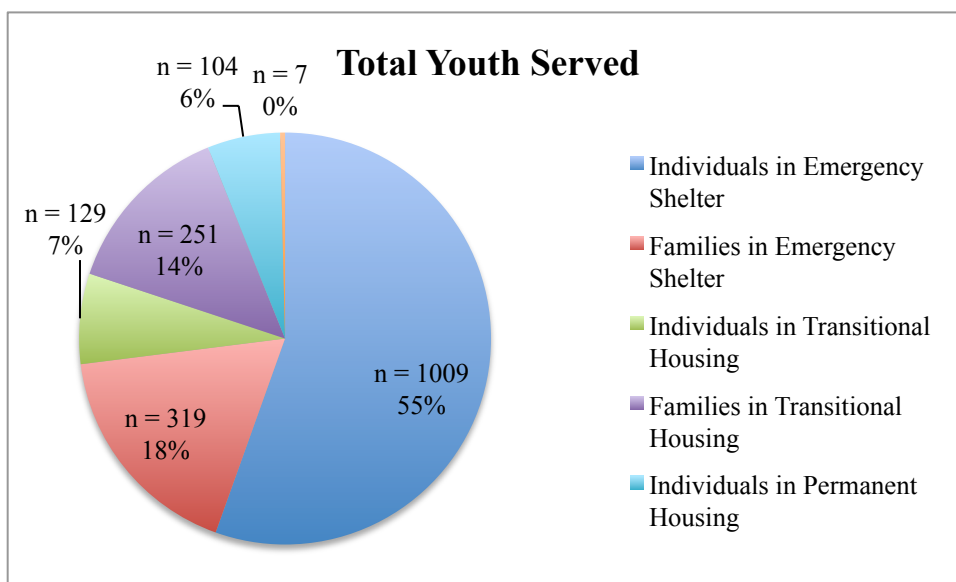
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#### IV. Findings for Youth Population

##### Key Findings

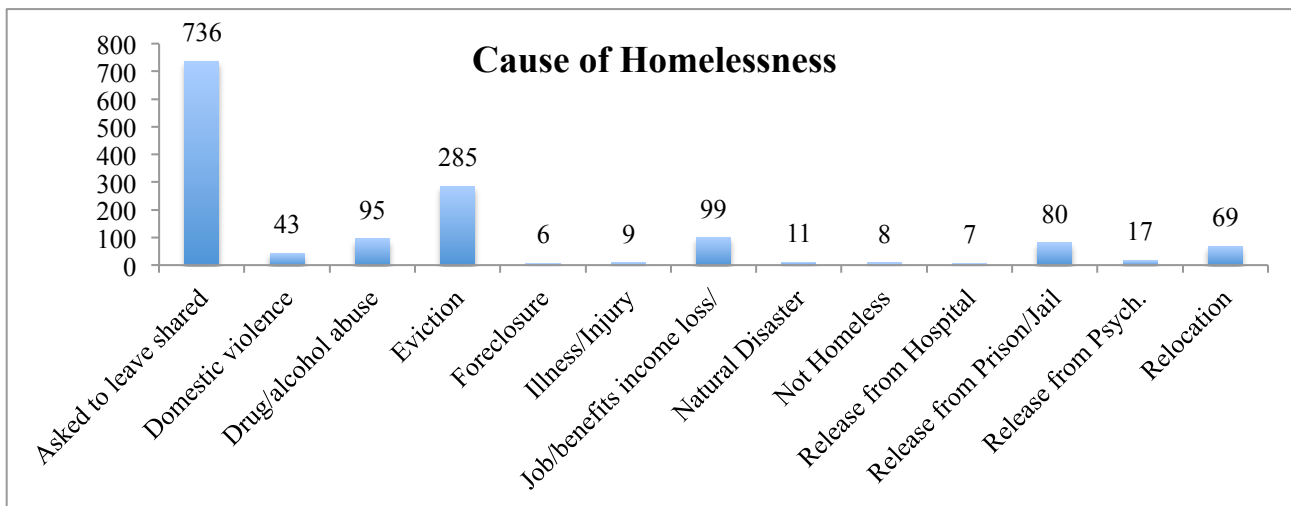
- A total of 1,819 homeless youth were served in HMIS participating emergency shelters, transitional housing, or permanent housing programs during the January 1, 2012 – December 31, 2012 report period
- Youth households represented 27% of those served in transitional housing, 18% of those served in emergency shelters, and 7% of those served in permanent housing
- 20% of disabled youth identified having a diagnosable substance abuse disorder
- 60% of youth served were female which differed from the total population in which 58% were male
- 14% of youth identified having earned income compared to the 10% of the total population
- Youth had shorter program stays in both emergency shelter and permanent housing when compared to the total population
- Just as many youth were discharged into permanent destinations as were discharged into temporary destinations during the report period

**Total Served.** A total of 1,819 youth were served as a head of household in the Northern New Jersey region during the January 1, 2012 – December 31, 2012 reporting period. Youth households represent 18% of households served in emergency shelters, 27% served in transitional housing, 7% of households served in permanent housing and 17% of the total households served throughout the region. Of the youth households identified as homeless in the Northern region, 7 (0%) were families served in permanent

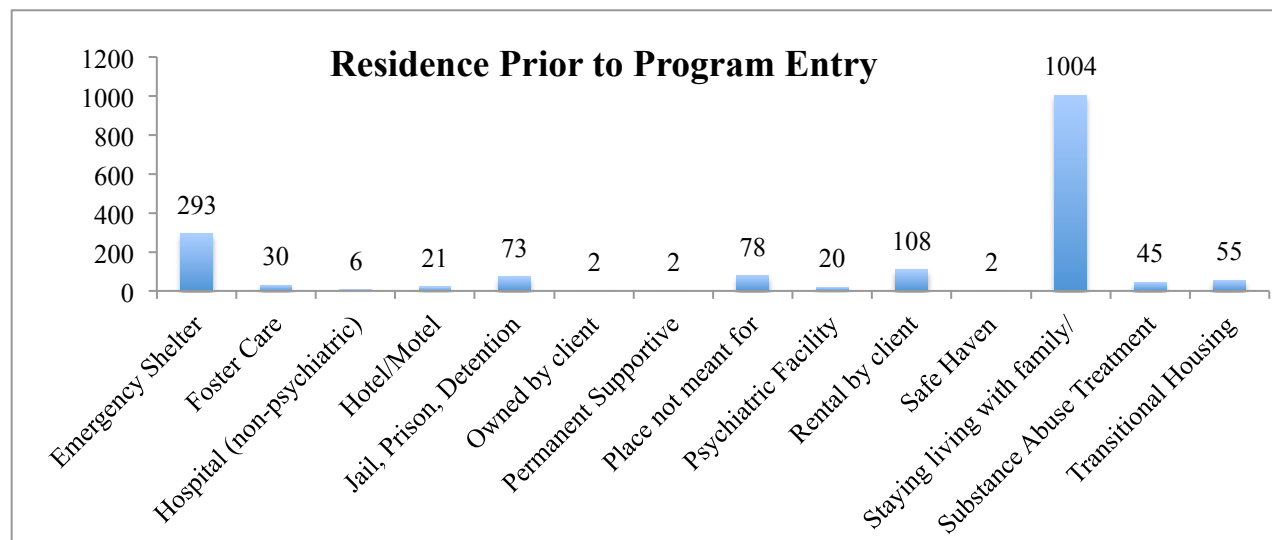


housing. 251 (14%) were families served in transitional housing and 319 (18%) were families served in emergency shelters. For individuals, there were 104 (6%) that were served in permanent housing, 129 (7%) were a part of a transitional housing program, and 1009 (55%) were served as individuals in emergency shelters. The average age of youth served as either families or individuals was 22 in all three program categories.

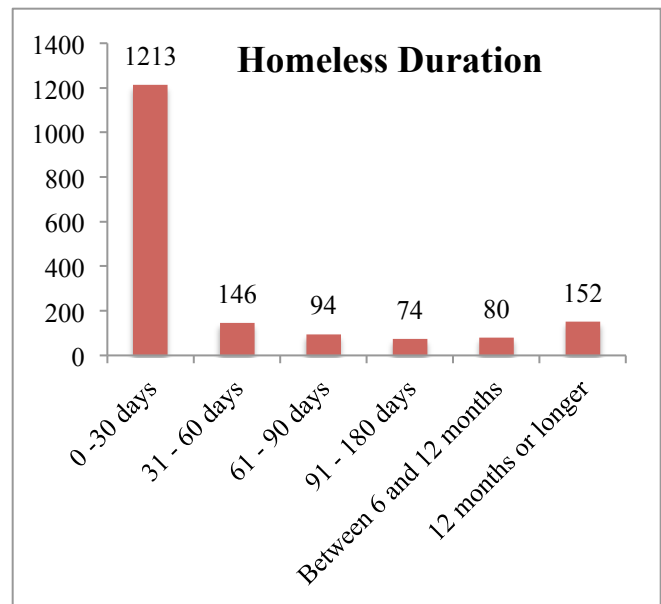
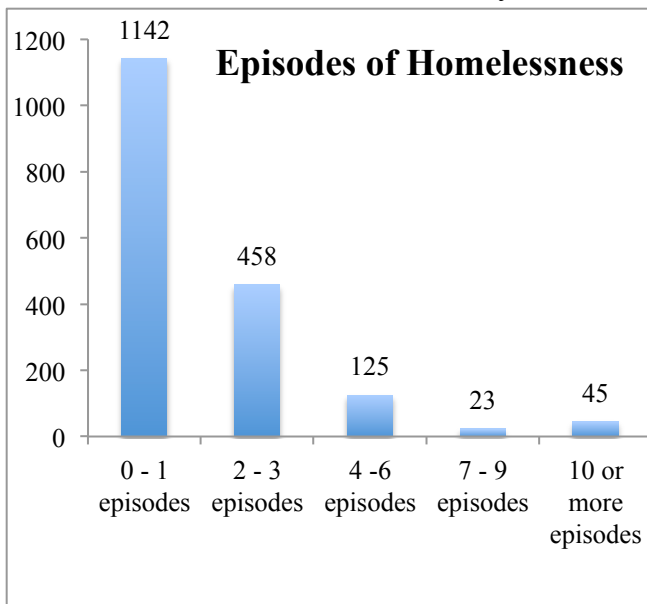
**Cause of Homelessness.** Similar to the total population the most reported cause of homelessness for youth in all three program categories was being “asked to leave shared residence” which accounted for 50% of all responses. The second most common response for emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent housing was “eviction” which was the response for 19% of the youth served. These responses are similar to what was seen by the total population.



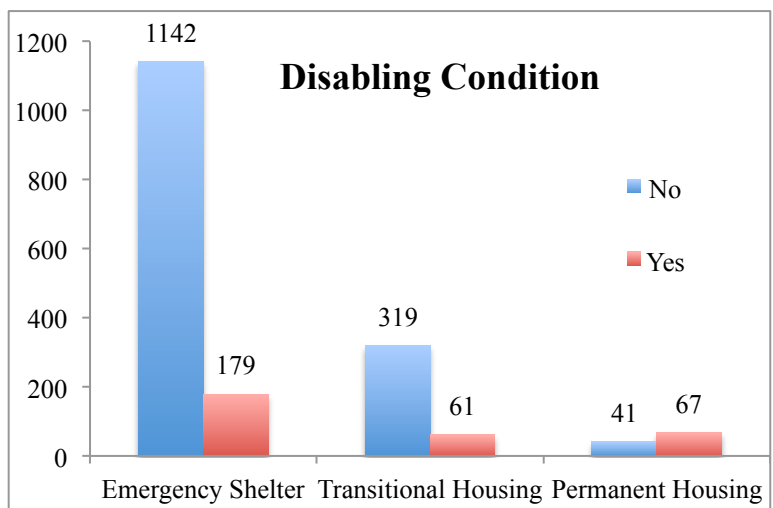
**Residence Prior to Program Entry.** The most common response for residence prior to program entry was “staying or living with a family member or friend” for both emergency shelter (61%) and transitional housing (59%). The most reported residence prior to program entry for permanent housing programs was “emergency shelter” with 62%. All of these percentages are only slightly higher than what was seen in these categories for the total population.



**Episodes and Duration of Homelessness and Chronic Homelessness.** Similar to the total population, most homeless youth reported experiencing 0 -1 episode of homelessness prior to entering the program (64%). The majority of the youth also became homeless shortly before entering their most recent homeless program (69%). Although this response accounts for 71% for emergency shelters and 72% for transitional housing it only accounts for 25% for permanent housing participants with 56% reporting a length of homeless of at least 90 days before entering the permanent housing program. A total of 64 homeless youth were identified as chronically homeless during this reporting period. This number represents only 7% of the total number of individuals identified as chronically homeless.

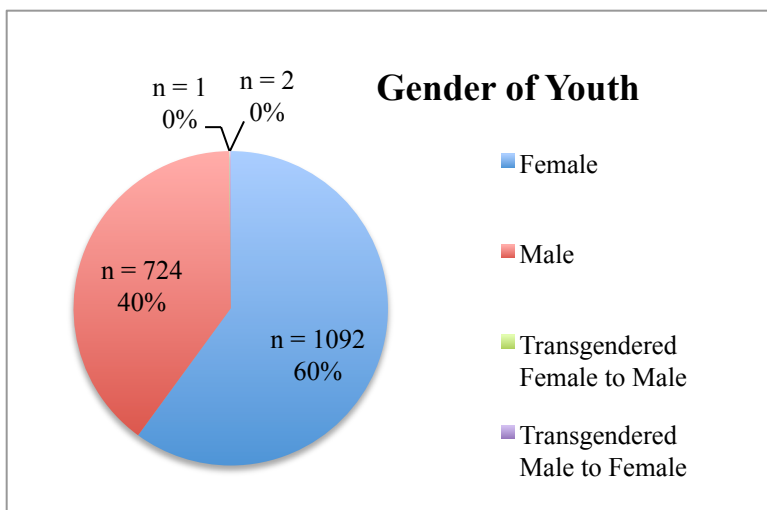


**Disabling Condition.** 307 homeless youth (17%) in Northern New Jersey indicated having a disability. The most prevalent disabling condition reported for both emergency shelter (17%) and transitional housing (52%) was a diagnosable substance abuse disorder. This varies greatly from the total population in which substance abuse only accounted for 16% of the total disabling conditions reported. The most commonly reported disability for permanent housing was serious mental illness at 10%.



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

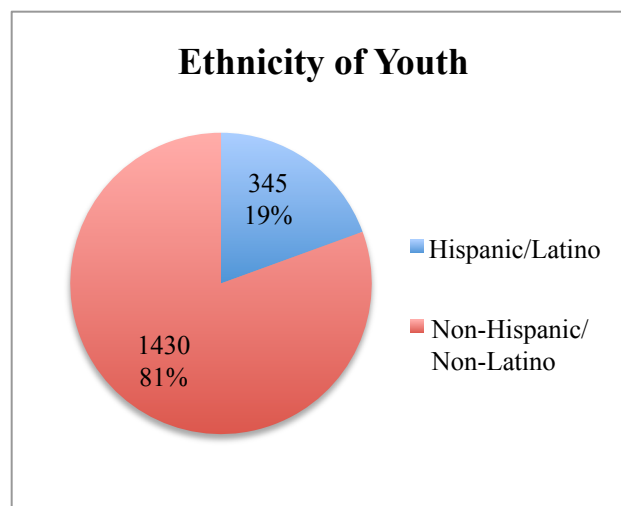
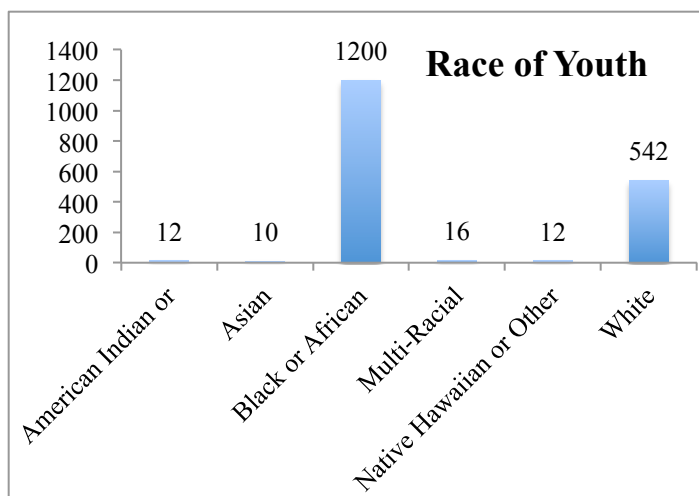
Disabling Condition	Youth	%
Yes	174	57%
Yes – Chronic physical illness or disability	13	4%
Yes – Developmental disability	19	6%
Yes – Diagnosable substance use disorder	62	20%
Yes – Dually diagnosed	9	3%
Yes – Serious mental illness	30	10%
Total	307	100%



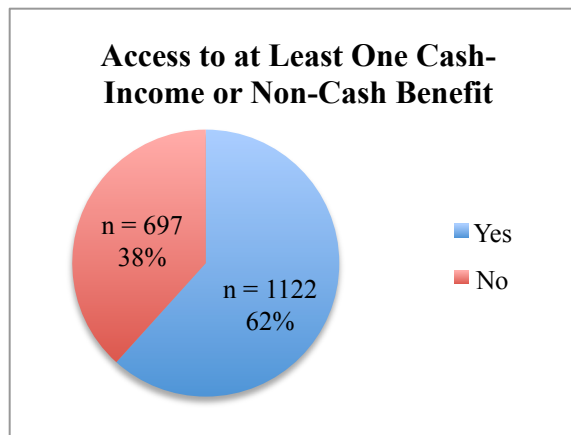
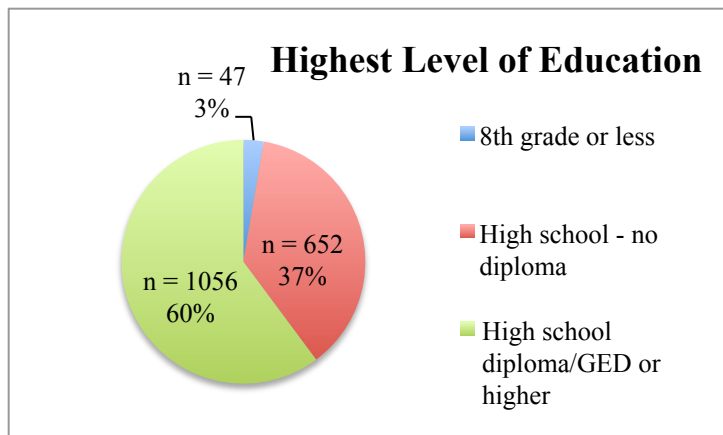
**Gender and Veterans Served.**

More than half (60%) of the homeless youth served in Northern New Jersey were female, with male representing only 40%. This is the opposite of the gender information found for the overall population in which men represented 58% and women with 42%. A total of 10 youth veterans were served between all three program categories during the reporting period, which accounts for 2% of the total veterans served.

**Race and Ethnicity.** Most homeless youth served in emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent housing (1200) reported their race as “Black or African-American” (67%). The next most reported race was “White” at 30% (542), followed by “Multi-Racial” at 16 (1%). 80% of the homeless youth served identified themselves as “Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino.” These percentages coincide with the total population percentages found.



**Level of Education and Cash-Income Sources/Non-Cash Benefits.** When looking at the highest level of education for youth, 1,056 (60%) served in Northern New Jersey programs received their high school diploma/GED or higher. 3% or 47 youth received no more than an 8<sup>th</sup> grade education. Of the youth served 1,122 or 62% have at least one source of cash-income or non-cash benefit.

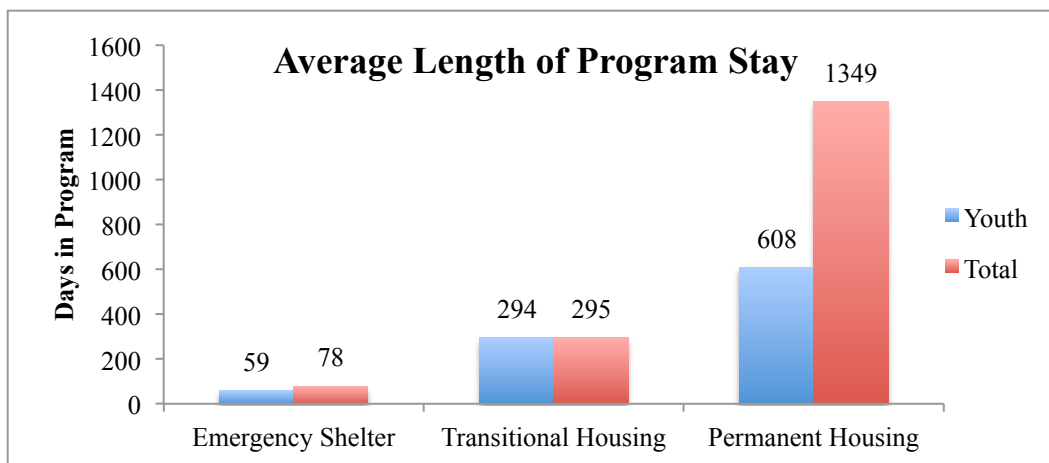


For youth served in emergency shelter and transitional housing TANF was the most common cash-income source reported (18% for emergency shelter and 52% for transitional housing).

Earned income was the most reported cash-income source for youth served in permanent housing with 35%. 10% of youth served in emergency shelter reported having earned income and 21% in transitional programs for a total of 14% having earned income. This is slightly higher than the total population percentage of 10% having earned income.

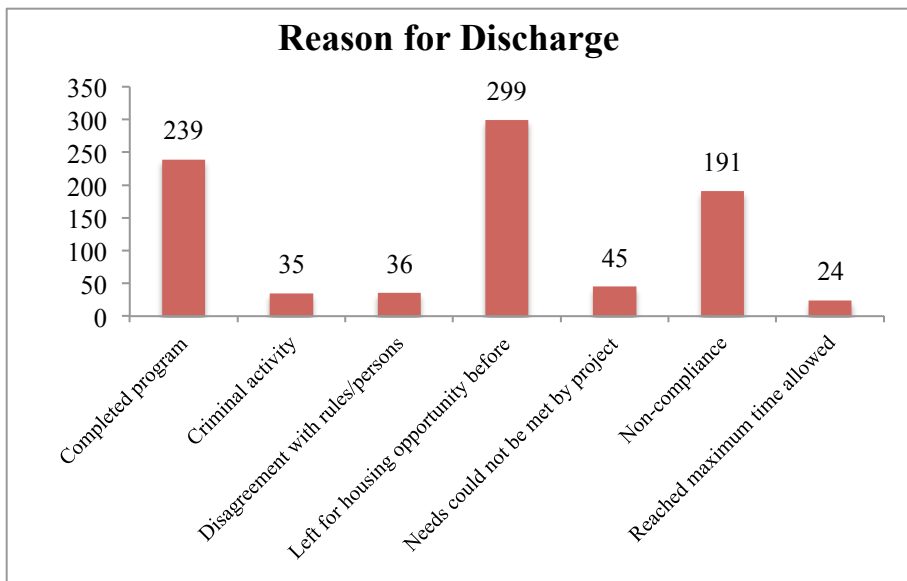
Similar to the total population Food Stamps was the top reported non-cash benefit for homeless youth with 41% of youth receiving Food Stamps.

**Average Length of Program Stay.** When comparing the average length of program stay for youth and the total population, youth, on average, tend to have shorter stays in emergency shelter and permanent housing. The most apparent difference is in permanent housing where youth have an average length of program stay that is 741 days or about 2 years less than the total population average.

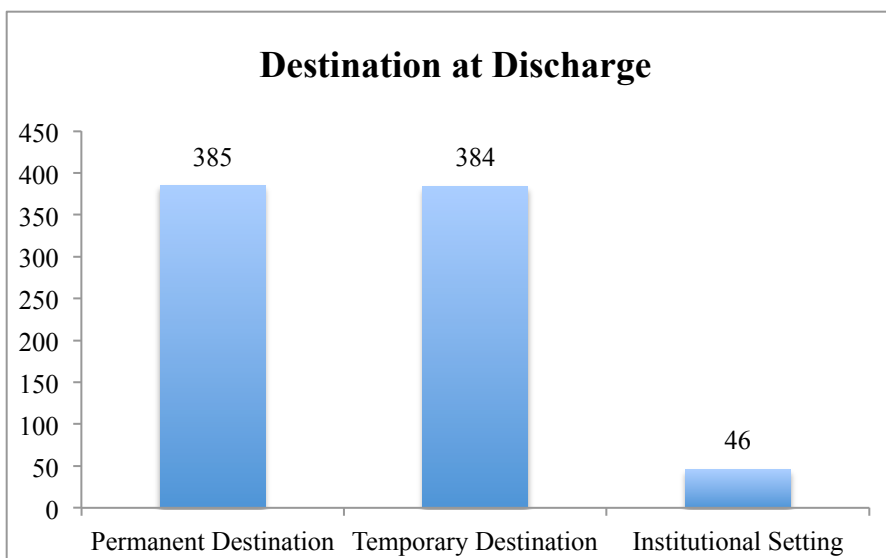


**Reason and Destination at Discharge.**

A total of 1,466 youth were discharged from emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent housing programs during the 2012 reporting period. 20% of these youth were discharged from programs due to finding a housing opportunity before completing the program, while 16% were discharged after



completing the program. About 26% of youth moved on to either a permanent or temporary destination while 3% moved on to an institutional setting. These percentages greatly differ from the total population in which 26% went on to permanent housing but only 10% moved on to temporary destinations. A permanent housing destination includes a unit owned or rented by a client, permanent supportive housing for formerly homeless, or living with a family member or friend permanently. Similar to the total population, the most common permanent destination at discharge was a rental by client which accounted for 19% of the total responses. A temporary discharge destination includes an emergency shelter, hotel or motel, place not meant for habitation, staying with a family member or friend temporarily, or transitional housing for the homeless. The most common temporary destination was temporarily staying with a family member or friend at 15%. This varies from the total population in which emergency shelter was the most common response. An institutional destination includes hospital (psychiatric or non-psychiatric), jail or prison, or a substance abuse treatment facility. The most common institutional destination, in line with the total population, was jail or prison with 2% of the total discharges.



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