

# Southern 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 Southern 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 Sources**

This Regional Homeless Assessment Report for Southern 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 Southern New Jersey homeless programs for Atlantic, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem 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 a 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 of 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 programs 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 the total number of actual responses, an answer of “don’t know” or missing data were not represented or calculated in this report.

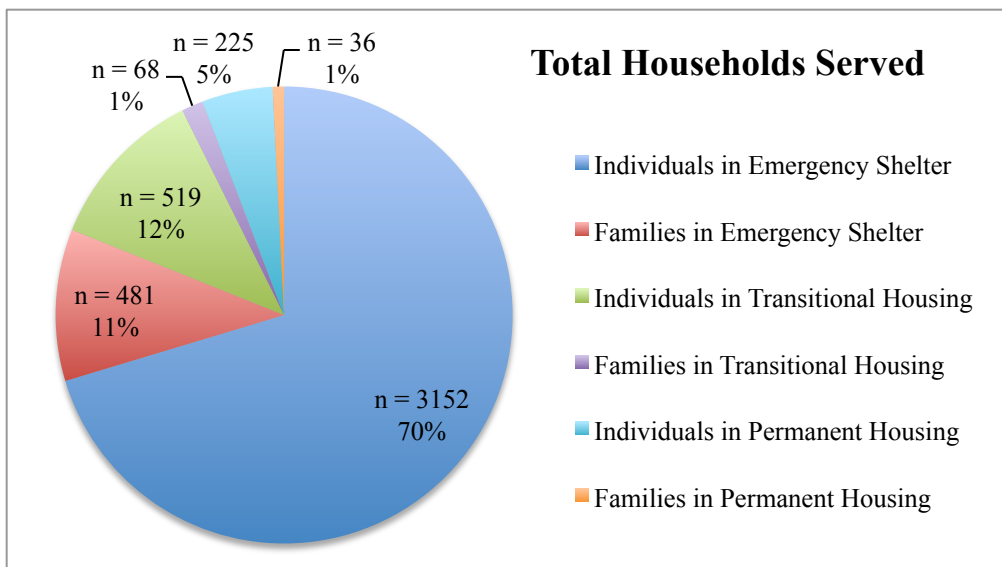
### **III. Findings for Total Population Served**

#### **Key Findings:**

- A total of 4,481 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 150 individuals were identified as chronically homeless
- 33% of the total population served was between the ages of 18 and 29
- Among children served as part of a family, 60% were under the age of six
- 60% of the head of households served had obtained their high school diploma/GED or higher education
- 16% of individuals and 38% of families moved on to permanent housing upon discharge, but 20% of individuals moved on to a temporary placement

**Total Homeless Population.** A total of 4,481 households involving 5,616 persons were housed in Southern New Jersey HMIS participating emergency shelters, transitional housing, or permanent housing programs during the January 1, 2012 – December 31, 2012 reporting period.

This represents 22% of all 19,861 households as well as 21% of all 25,870 persons who were homeless throughout New Jersey during the report period. Out of those identified as homeless in the Southern Region, 36 (1%) were families served in permanent housing. 68 (1%) were families served in transitional housing and 481 (11%) were families served in emergency shelters.

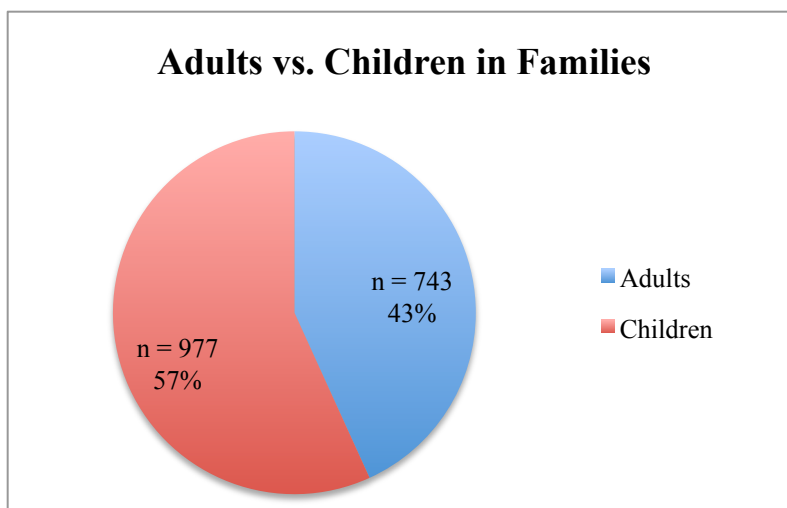


For individuals, there were 225 (5%) that were served in permanent housing, 519 (12%) were in transitional housing, and 3,152 (70%) of the total southern population were individuals served in emergency shelters.

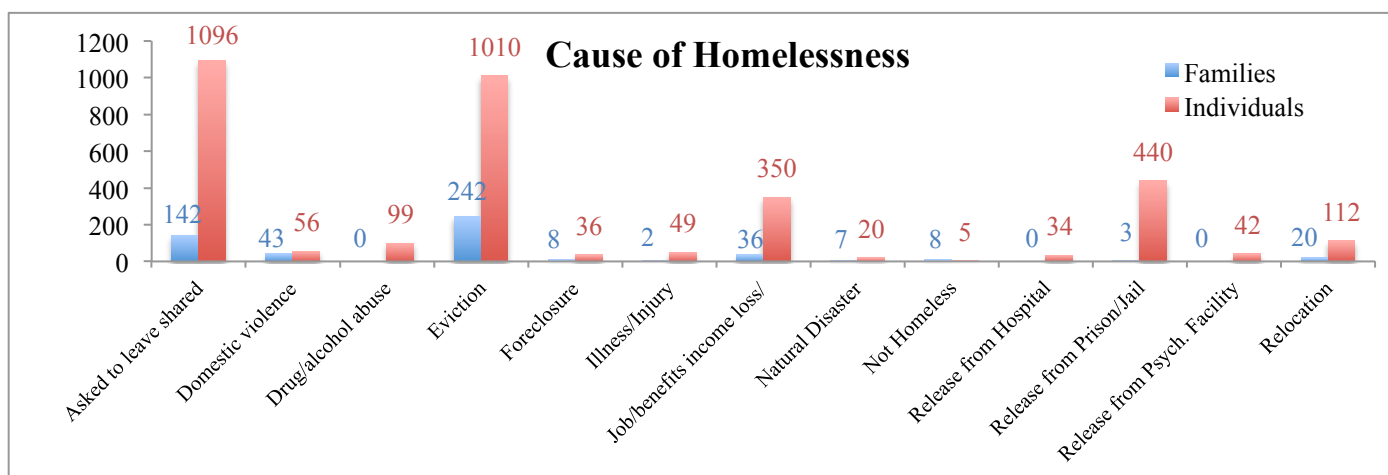
|                             | Southern New Jersey | New Jersey | National  |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|------------|-----------|
| <b>Total Persons Served</b> | 5,616               | 25,870     | 1,598,592 |
| <b>Emergency Shelter</b>    | 4,555               | 17,776     | 1,236,814 |
| Individuals                 | 3,152               | 12,163     | 828,400   |
| Families                    | 1,403               | 5,613      | 408,414   |
| <b>Transitional Housing</b> | 740                 | 4,837      | 361,778   |
| Individuals                 | 519                 | 2,072      | 208,446   |
| Families                    | 221                 | 2,765      | 153,332   |
| <b>Permanent Housing</b>    | 321                 | 3,257      | 298,488   |
| Individuals                 | 225                 | 2,217      | 193,214   |
| Families                    | 96                  | 1,040      | 105,274   |

### Adults vs. Children in Families.

The average size of a homeless family in Southern New Jersey is 3 persons for families served in an emergency shelter or permanent housing program. The average family size for transitional housing is 4. Children represented 57% of persons sheltered as part of a family in any of the 3 program types. The average age of children sheltered in either emergency shelter or permanent housing was 5 years old, where as the average age for a child in transitional housing was 8.



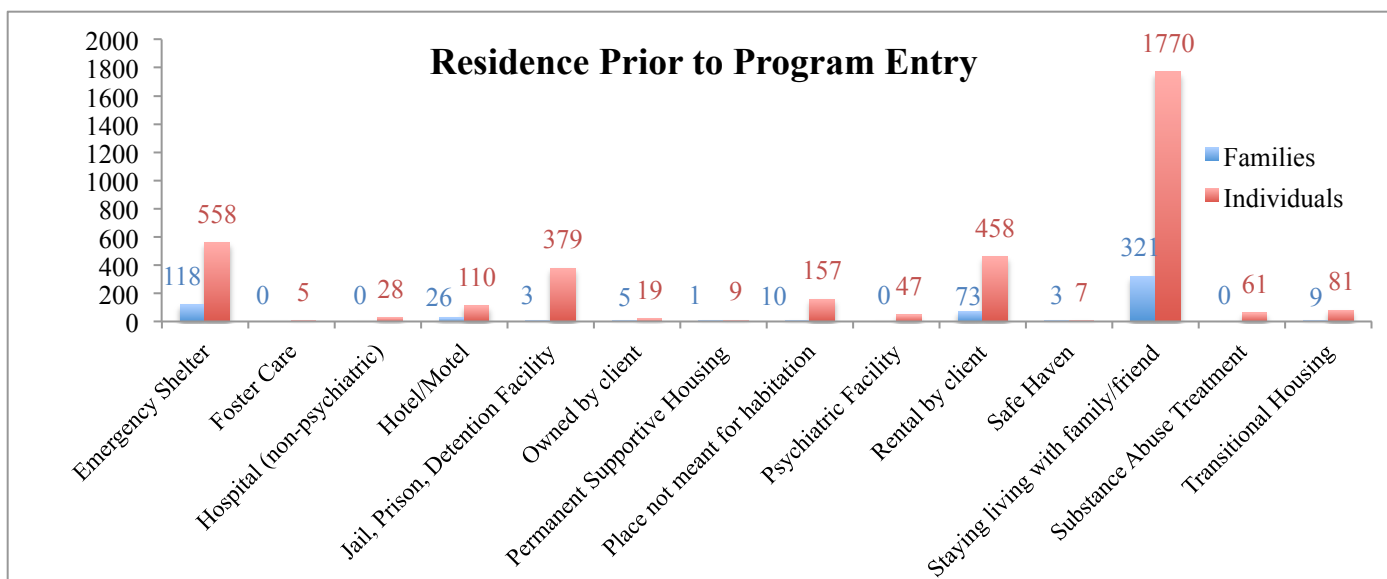
**Cause of Homelessness.** The most reported cause of homelessness for individuals served in emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent housing combined was being “asked to leave shared residence” which accounted for 33% of all responses. The most reported cause of homelessness for families for all three program types combined was “eviction” which accounted for 47% of the responses.



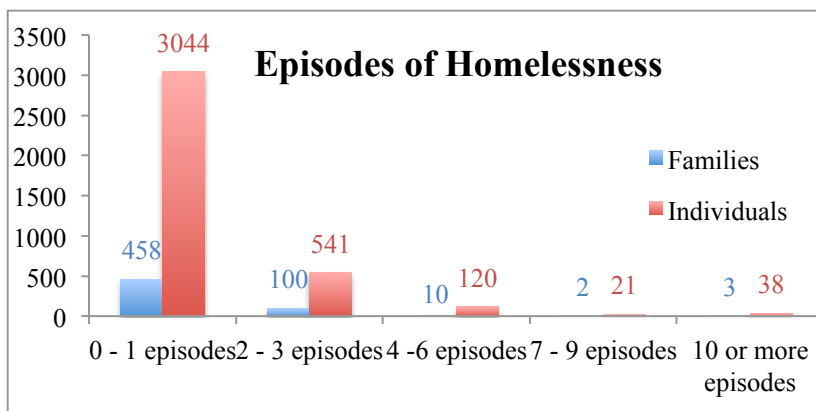
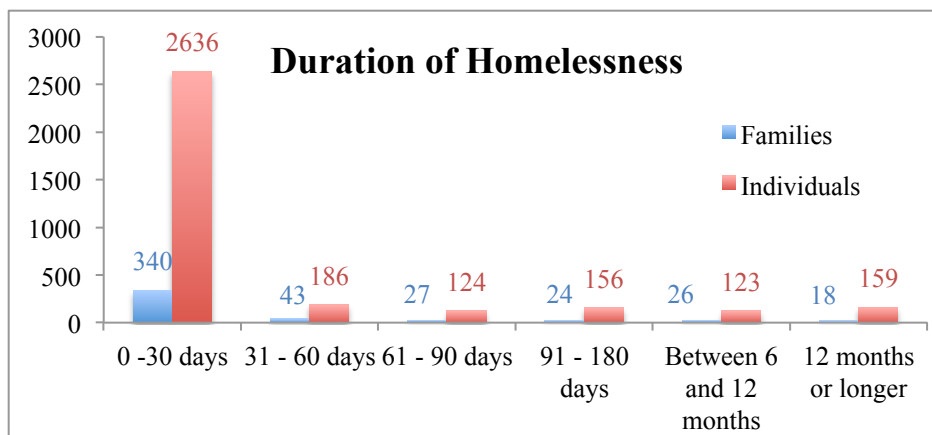
Being “asked to leave their shared residence” was the top cause of homelessness response for individuals in emergency shelters (35%), transitional housing (22%) and permanent housing programs (23%). The second most reported answer for emergency shelters was “eviction” at 35%. “Job income loss/reduction” was second most reported for transitional housing (20%), while it was “release from psychiatric facility” for permanent housing (16%).

For families served in emergency shelter and transitional housing the top reported cause of homeless was “eviction” (emergency shelter – 51%, transitional – 36%) followed by “asked to leave shared residence” at 28% for emergency shelter and 20% for transitional housing. For families served in permanent housing “asked to leave shared residence” was the top reported cause of homelessness (55%) followed by “relocation” at 14%.

**Residence Prior to Program Entry.** “Staying or living with family member/friend” was the most common response for families in both emergency shelter (58%) and permanent housing (67%), and individuals in both emergency shelter (53%) and transitional housing (30%). “Emergency shelter” was the most reported residence prior to program entry for families served in transitional housing (42%) and individuals served in permanent housing (47%).

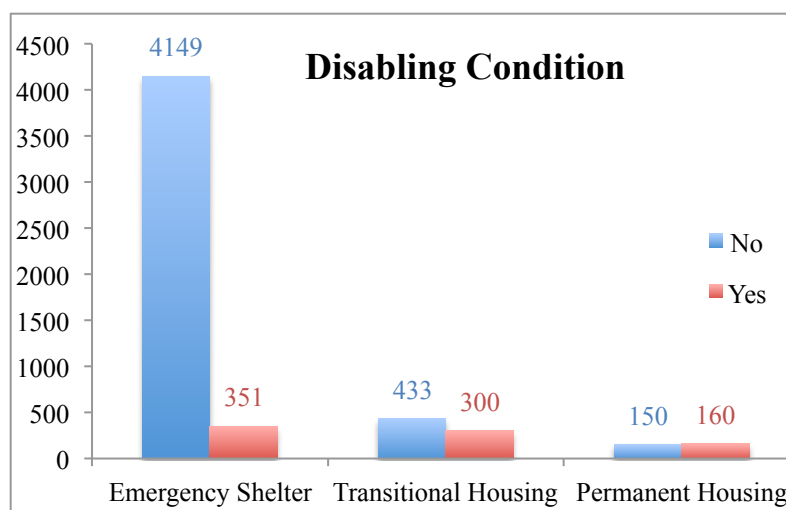


**Length of homeless episode prior to program entry.** For both families (71%) and individuals (78%), most had become homeless very recently, within a month or less of their program entry. Only 4% of families and 5% of individuals reported experiencing homelessness for over a year.



**Episodes of Homelessness and Chronic Homelessness.** The majority of both families (80%) and individuals (81%) served in emergency shelters, transitional housing, or permanent housing programs had experienced 0 or 1 episode of homelessness prior to program entry. Out of all individuals served, a total of 150 or 4% were identified as chronically homeless.

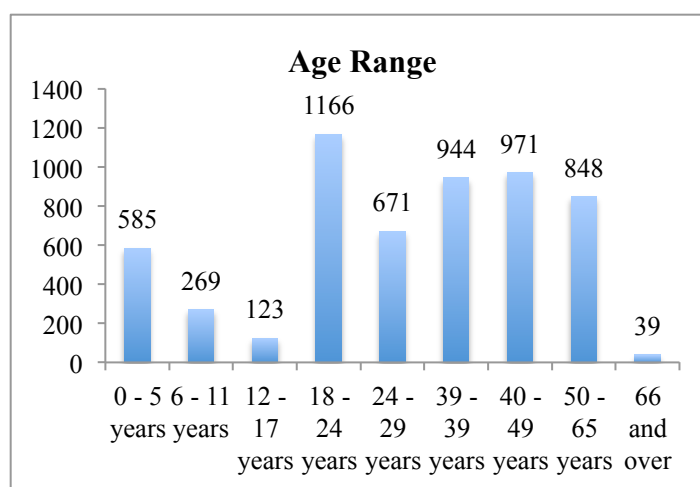
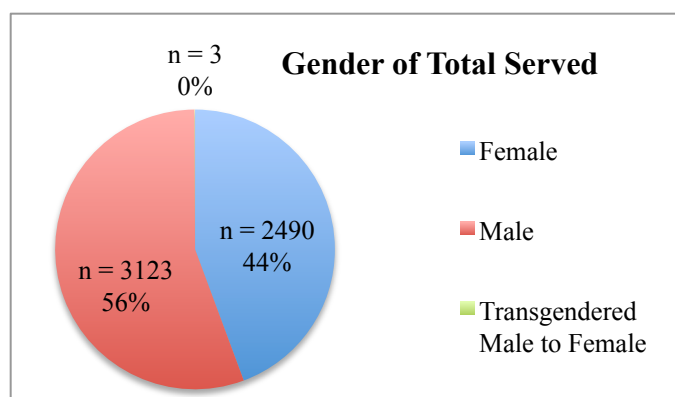
**Disabling Condition.** 811 persons (15% of total), including children, who were homeless in Southern New Jersey indicated having a disability. 19% of individuals identified themselves as having a disabling condition compared to only 4% of families. The most prevalent disabling condition reported by 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:

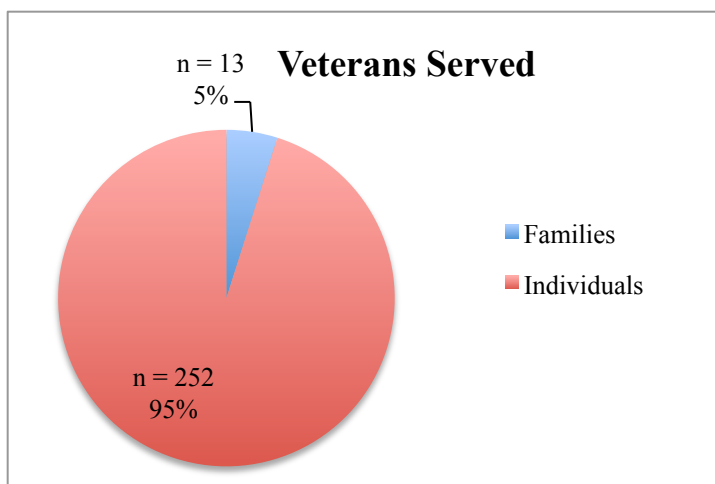
| Disabling Condition                          | Individuals | %    | Families | %    |
|--|-------------|------|----------|------|
| Yes  | 258         | 34%  | 38       | 60%  |
| Yes – Chronic physical illness or disability | 78          | 10%  | 9        | 14%  |
| Yes – Developmental disability               | 18          | 2%   | 6        | 10%  |
| Yes – Diagnosable substance use disorder     | 44          | 6%   | 3        | 5%   |
| Yes – Dually diagnosed                       | 62          | 8%   | 3        | 5%   |
| Yes – Serious mental illness                 | 288         | 39%  | 4        | 6%   |
| Total  | 748         | 100% | 63       | 100% |

**Gender and Age Range.** More than half (56%) of homeless persons served in Southern New Jersey were male, with women representing 44% 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 5,616 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 (33%). The second largest age range found was 40 – 49 years of age, which consisted of 17% of the total population. Of the children served in all three program categories the majority (60%) were between the ages of 0 and 5 years old.

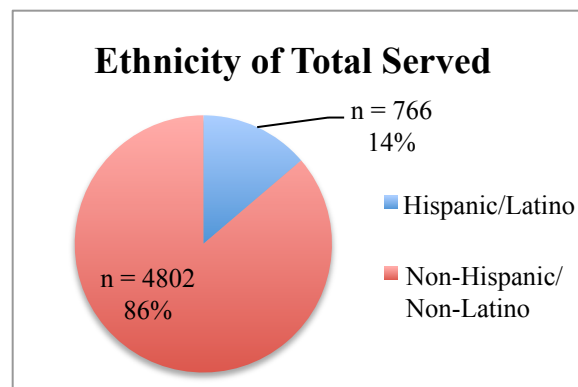
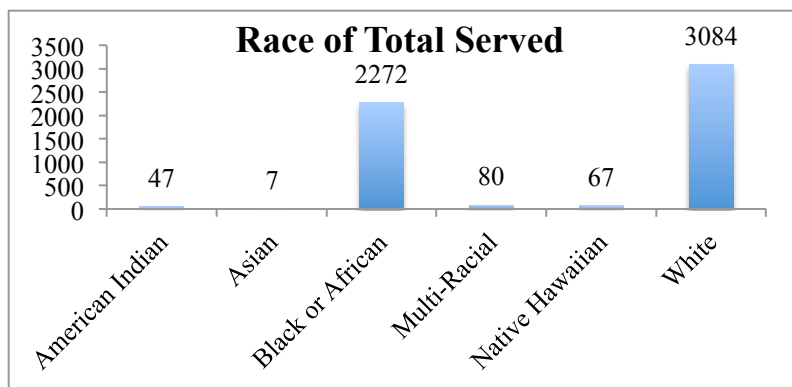




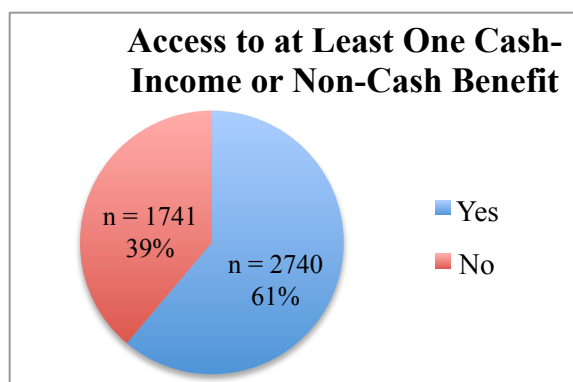
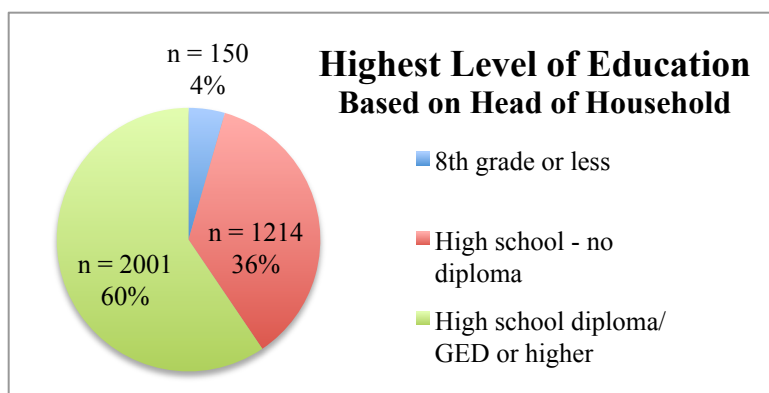
**Veteran Status.** A total of 265 veterans were served in emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent housing programs. This accounted for 6% of all adults served throughout the 2012 report period. Of the veterans served, 13 (5%) were served as part of a family, while 252 (95%) were served as individuals. 102 or 38% of the veterans served were served in an emergency shelter setting, 58% (153) as part of a transitional housing program, and 4% (10) were provided housing through a permanent housing program.



**Race and Ethnicity.** Most homeless persons served in the Southern New Jersey region (3,084) reported their race as “White” (55%). The next most common race reported was “Black or African-American” at 41% (2,272), followed by “Multi-Racial” at 80 (1%). 86% 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, 2,001 (60%) served as either a family or individual in Southern New Jersey programs received their high school diploma/GED or higher. 4% or 150 head of households received no more than an 8<sup>th</sup> grade education. Of the individuals and families served, 2,740 or 61% 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 (49% for both).

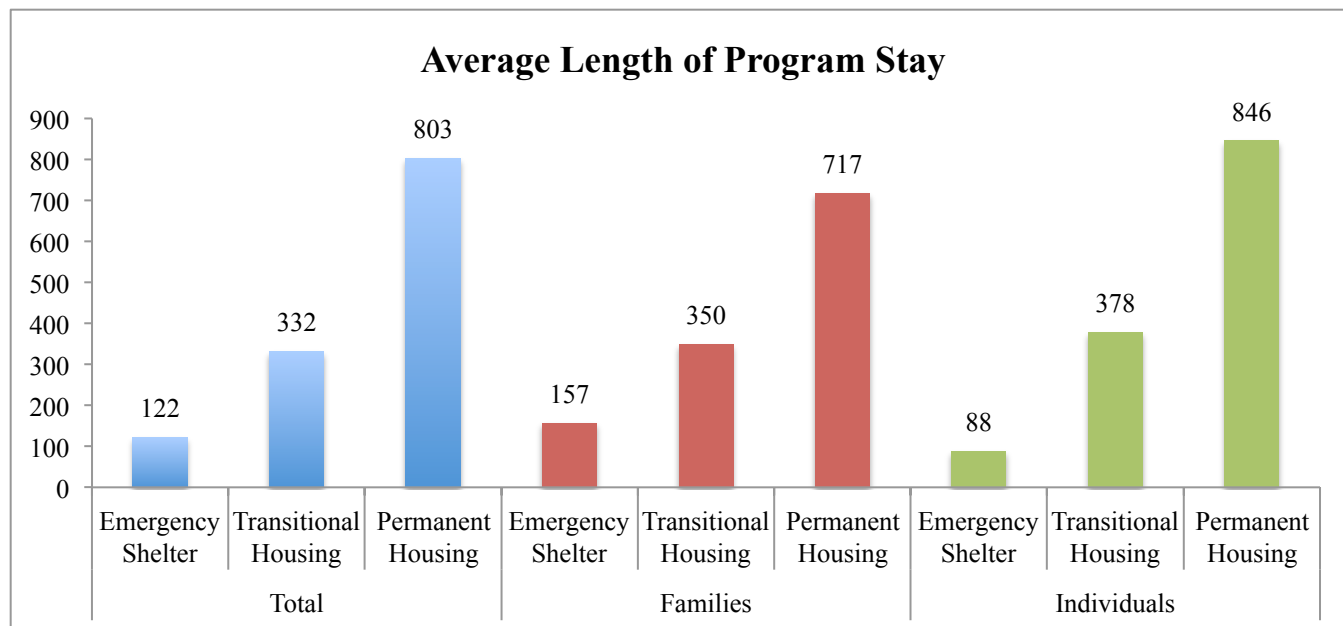
General assistance was the most reported cash-income for individuals in both emergency shelter (20%) and transitional housing (51%).

For permanent housing, the most reported cash-income for families was earned income at 36%, and SSI for individuals (31%)

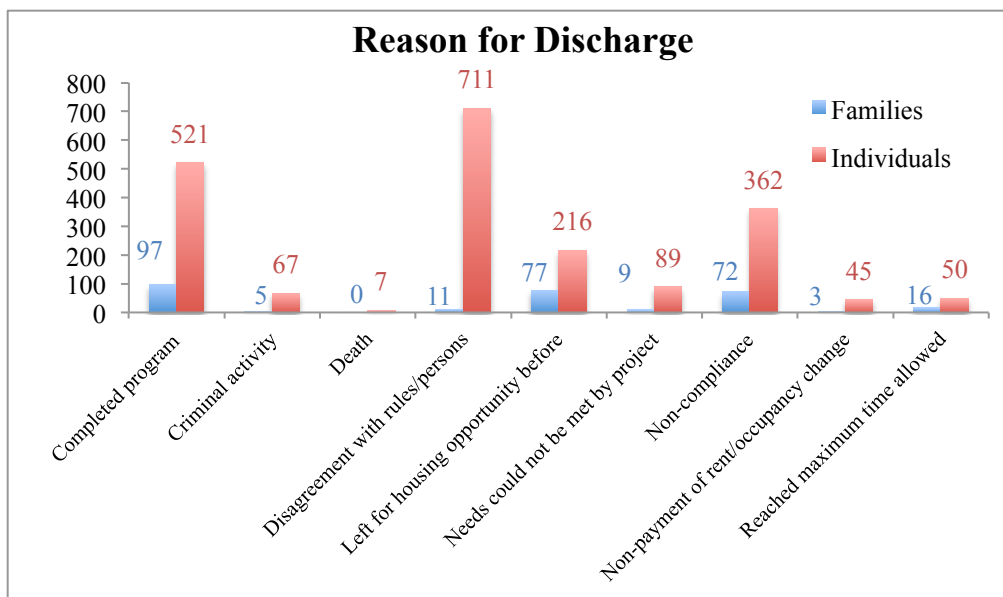
9% of all families and 5% of all individuals reported having an earned income.

Food Stamps was the top reported non-cash benefit for both families served in emergency shelter (71%) and transitional housing (76%) and individuals served in all three program categories, with 40% of all individuals receiving Food Stamps. MEDICAID was the top reported non-cash benefit for families in permanent housing with 64%.

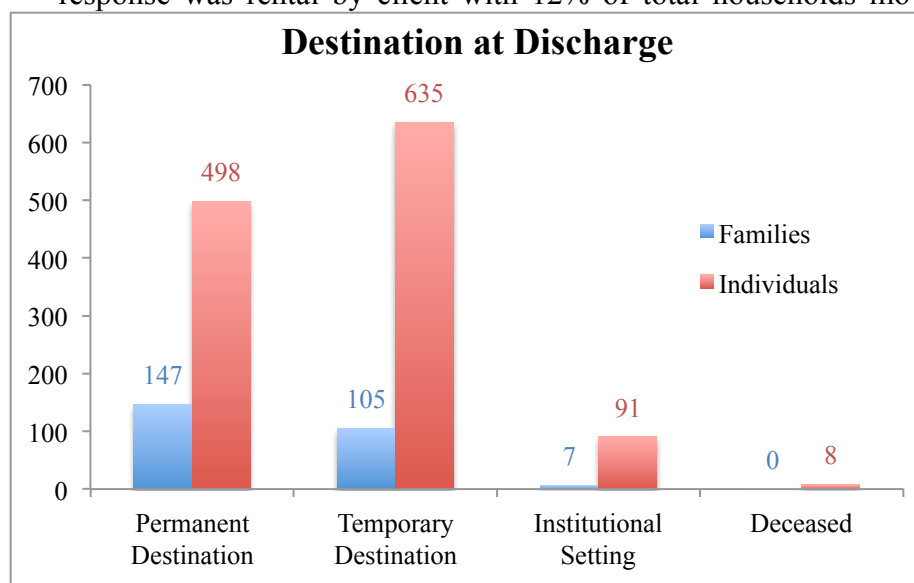
**Average Length of Program Stay.** When looking at total length of program stay for families and individuals, on average, families seemed to have longer stays in emergency shelter where as individuals seemed to have longer program stays for both transitional and permanent housing. The most noticeable difference is seen in emergency shelter where families' length of program stay is longer than individuals' stay by 69 days or about 2 months.



**Reason and Destination at Discharge.** A total of 3,520 households were discharged from emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent housing programs during the 2012 reporting period. 21% of these households were discharged from programs due to disagreeing with either rules or persons at the program while 18% were discharged after completing the program. 16% of individuals and 38% 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 a formerly homeless person, or permanently living with a family member or friend. The most common permanent housing response was rental by client with 12% of total households moving into a rental. This rental



could be with or without a subsidy. Although 16% of individuals moved into a permanent destination, 20% moved into a temporary destination upon discharge. 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 temporarily staying with a family member or friend, which involved 8% 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 1% of the total discharges.

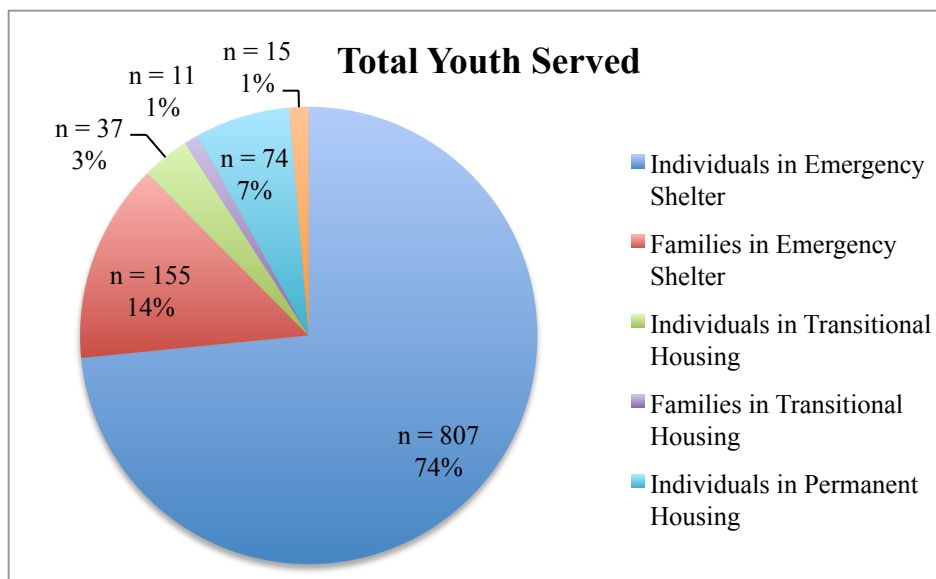
#### IV. Findings for Youth Population

##### Key Findings

- A total of 1,099 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 26% of those served in emergency shelter, 8% of those served in transitional housing, and 34% of those served in permanent housing
- 32% of disabled youth identified having a serious mental illness
- 55% of youth served were female which differed from the total population in which 56% were male
- 10% of youth identified having earned income compared to the 6% of the total population
- Youth had shorter program stays in all three program categories when compared to the total population
- While 17% of youth were discharged into permanent housing, 21% were discharged to a temporary destination

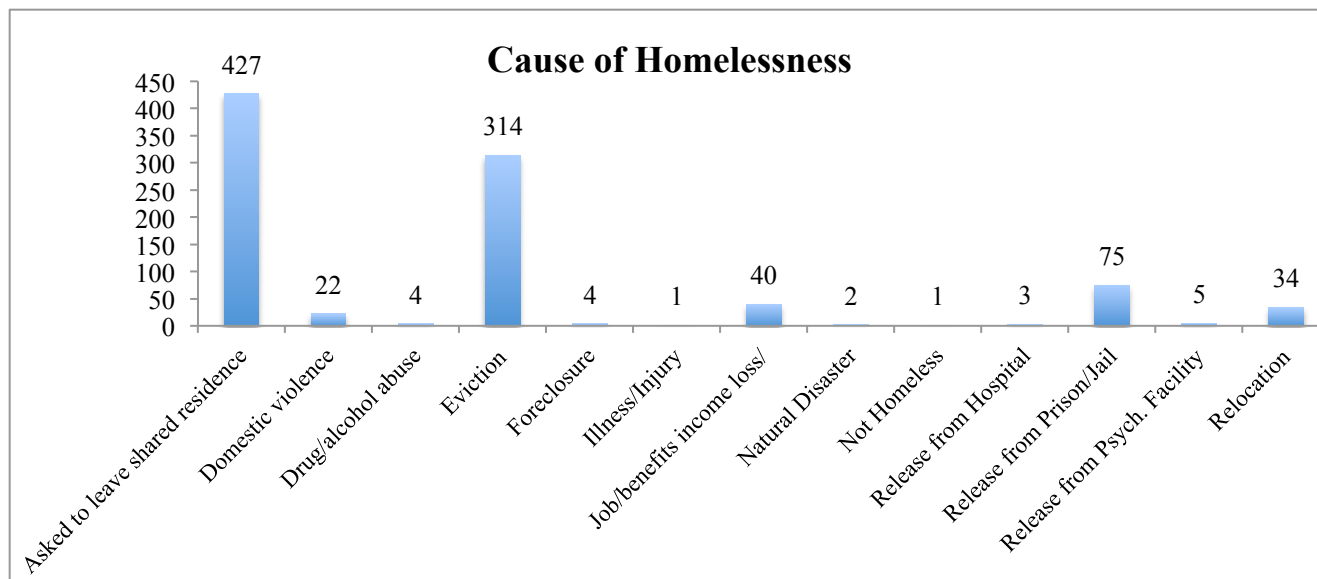
**Total Served.** A total of 1,099 youth were served as a head of household in the Southern New Jersey region during the January 1, 2012 – December 31, 2012 reporting period. Youth

households represent 26% of households served in emergency shelters, 8% served in transitional housing, 34% of households served in permanent housing and 25% of the total households served throughout the region. Of the youth households identified as homeless in the Southern region, 15 (1%) were families served in permanent

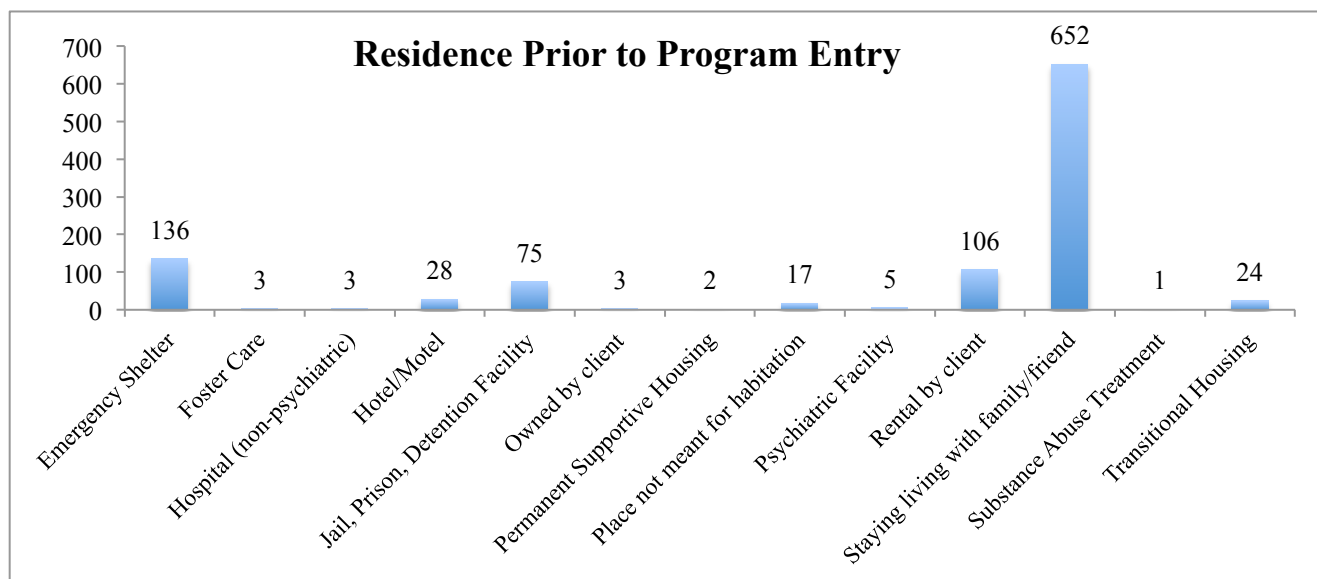


housing. 11 (1%) were families served in transitional housing and 155 (14%) were families served in emergency shelters. For individuals, there were 74 (7%) that were served in permanent housing, 37 (3%) were a part of a transitional housing program, and 807 (74%) were served as individuals in emergency shelters. The average age of youth served as either a family or individual in emergency shelter or transitional housing was 22, while 21 was the average age for youth served in permanent housing.

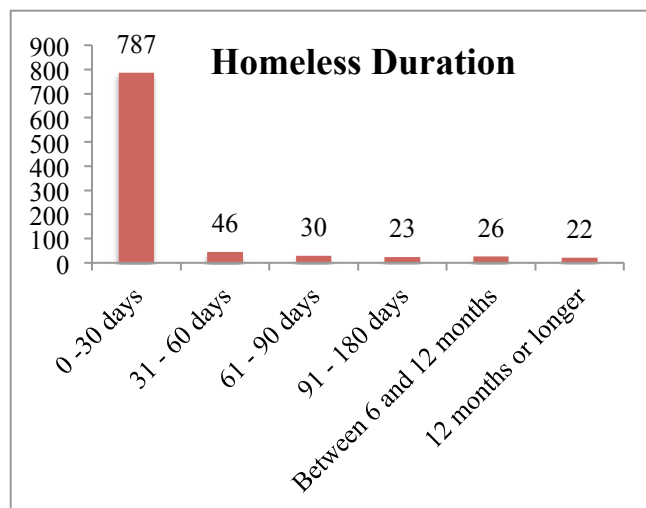
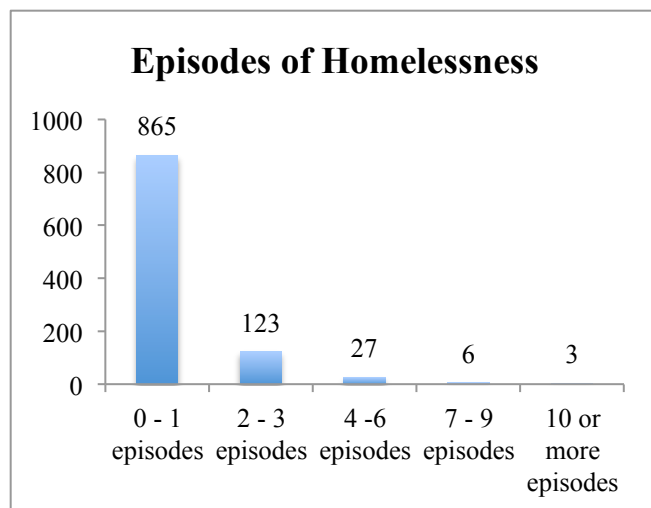
**Cause of Homelessness.** Similar to the total population the most reported cause of homelessness for youth in all three program categories was being “asked to leave shared residence” which accounted for 46% of all responses. The second most common response for emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent housing was “eviction” which was the response for 34% of the youth served.



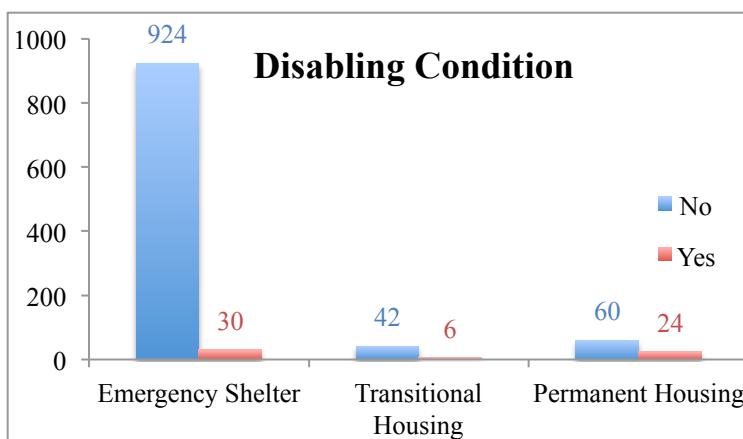
**Residence Prior to Program Entry.** The most common response for residence prior to program entry was “staying or living with a family member or friend” for all three program categories. This response was given by 62% of the youth served. This is similar to what was found in the total population.



**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 (84%). The majority of the youth also became homeless shortly (0 – 30 days) before entering their most recent homeless program (84%). A total of 6 homeless youth were identified as chronically homeless during this reporting period. This number represents only 4% of the total number of individuals identified as chronically homeless.

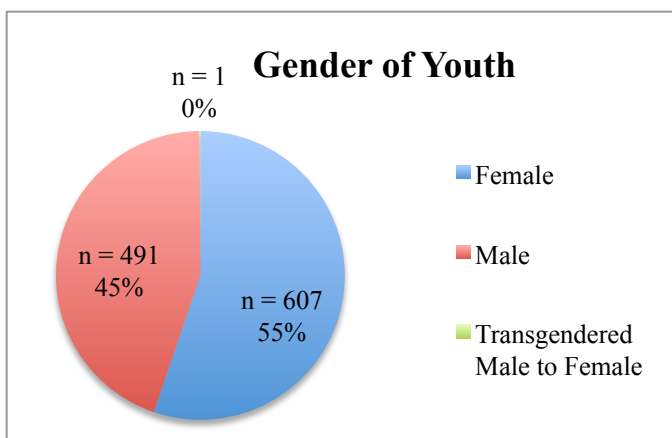


**Disabling Condition.** 60 homeless youth (6%) in Southern New Jersey indicated having a disability. The most prevalent disabling condition reported for emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent housing was serious mental illness (32%). This is similar to what was found in the overall population in which serious mental illness was reported for 36% of the persons with a disability.



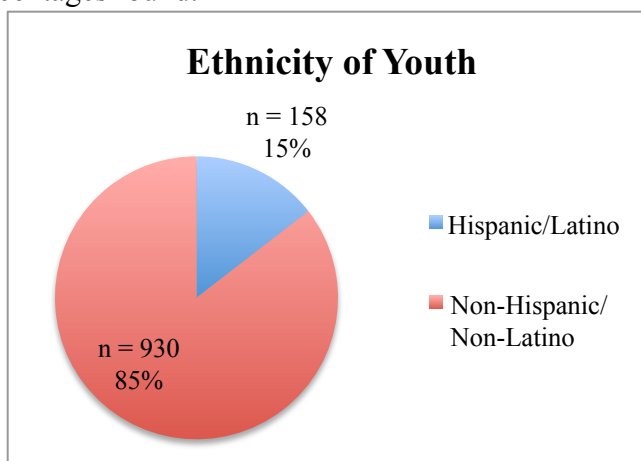
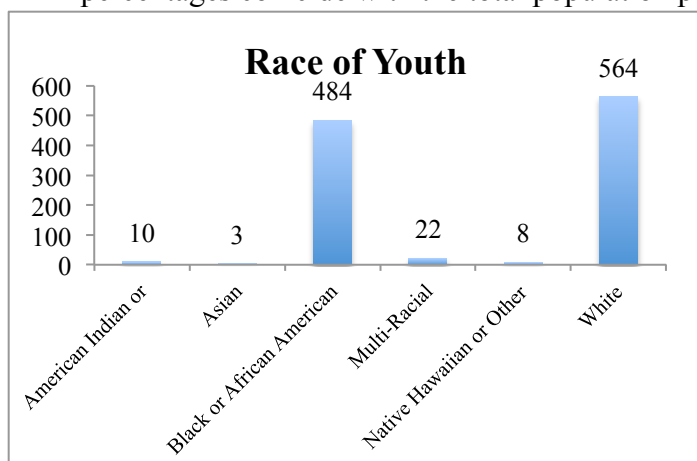
For those indicating a disabling condition, the breakdown is as follows:

| Disabling Condition                          | Youth | %    |
|--|-------|------|
| Yes  | 31    | 52%  |
| Yes – Chronic physical illness or disability | 0     | 0%   |
| Yes – Developmental disability               | 7     | 12%  |
| Yes – Diagnosable substance use disorder     | 1     | 2%   |
| Yes – Dually diagnosed                       | 2     | 3%   |
| Yes – Serious mental illness                 | 19    | 32%  |
| Total  | 60    | 100% |

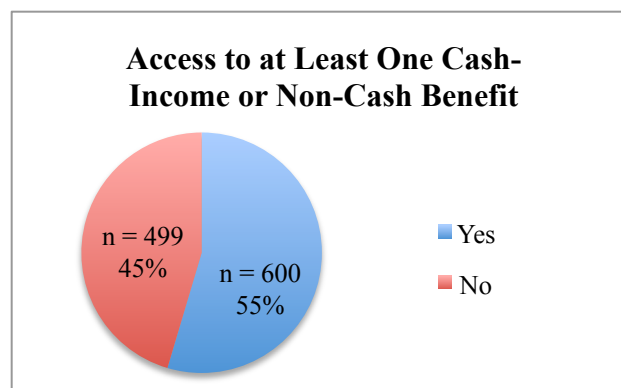
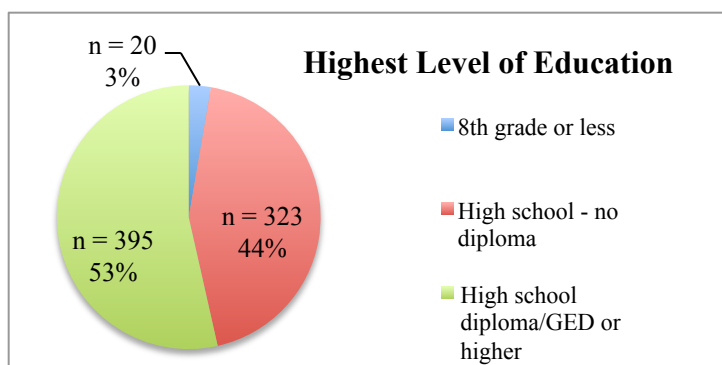


**Gender and Veterans Served.** More than half (55%) of the homeless youth served in Southern New Jersey were female, with male representing only 45%. This is the opposite of the gender information found for the overall population in which men represented 56% and women with 44%. A total of 5 youth veterans 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 (564) reported their race as “White” (52%). The next commonly reported race was “Black or African-American” at 44% (484), followed by “Multi-Racial” at 22 (2%). 85% 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, 395 (53%) served in Southern New Jersey programs received their high school diploma/GED or higher. 3% or 20 youth received no more than an 8<sup>th</sup> grade education. Of the youth served 600, or 55%, have at least one source of cash-income or non-cash benefit.



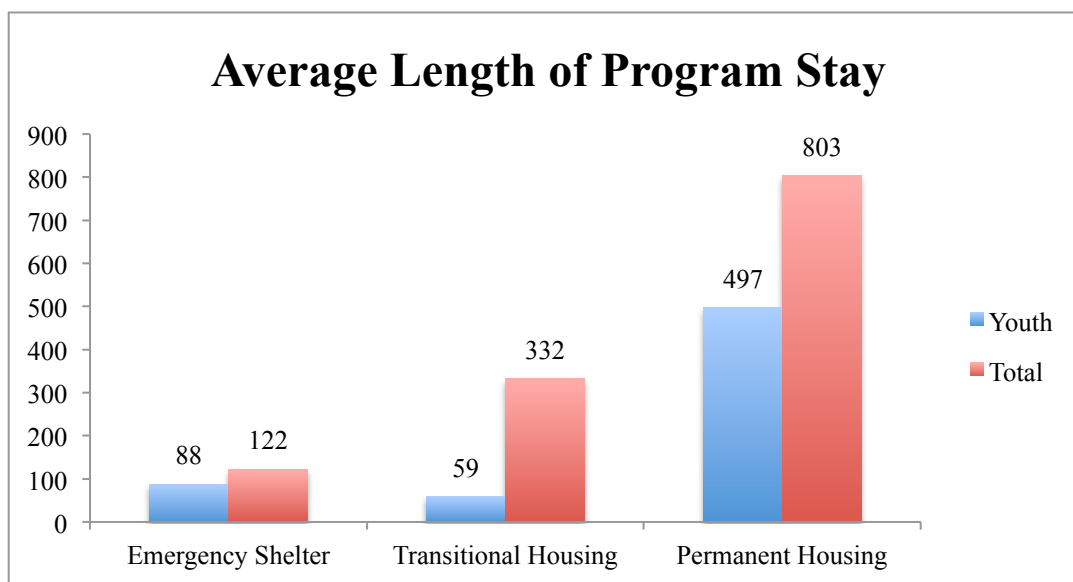
For youth served in emergency shelter the most reported cash-income source was TANF at 15%. The most reported non-cash benefit was Food Stamps which was reported by 37% of the youth.

Transitional housing programs were slightly different in which General Assistance was the most common cash-income source at 42%. Food Stamps was again the most reported non-cash benefit at 67%.

Earned income was the most reported cash-income source for youth served in permanent housing with 56%. MEDICAID was the highest non-cash benefit reported at 35%.

5% of youth served in emergency shelter and 13% in transitional programs reported having earned income for a total of 10% of all youth served having reported earned income. This is slightly higher than the total population percentage of 6% of all households having earned income.

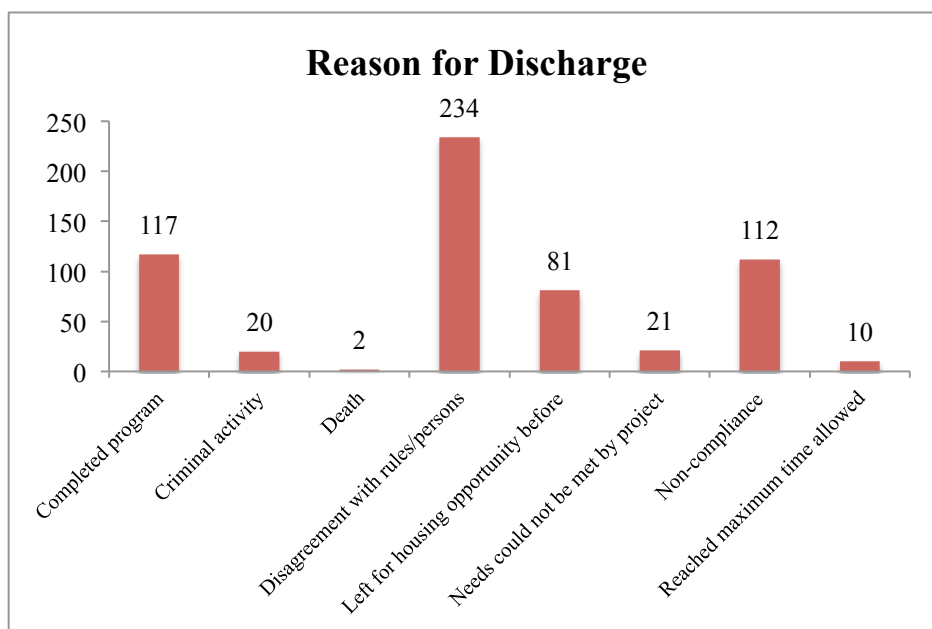
**Average Length of Program Stay.** When comparing the average length of program stay for youth and the total population, youth, on average, tend to have shorter stays in all three program categories. This difference in length of program time for youth is shorter by about 1 month for emergency shelter, 9 months for transitional housing, and 10 months for permanent housing, on average.



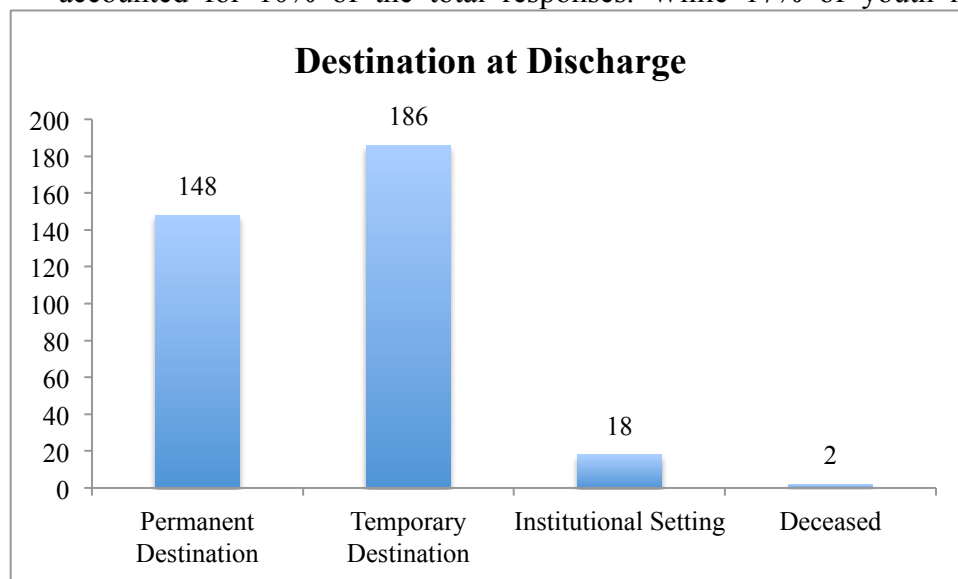


### Reason and Destination at Discharge

A total of 896 youth were discharged from emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent housing programs during the 2012 reporting period. 26% of these youth were discharged from programs due to disagreements with either rules or persons in the program, while 13% were discharged due to completing the program.



About 17% of youth moved on to a permanent destination upon discharge. A permanent 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 10% of the total responses. While 17% of youth moved on to a permanent destination, 21% moved on to a temporary destination after discharge.



These percentages match what was found in the total population in which only 18% of the total moved on to a permanent destination while 21% moved on to a temporary one. 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 staying with a family member or friend temporarily at 10%. 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 1% of the total discharges.