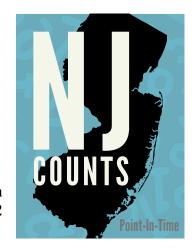***Contacts:***
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RECOGNIZING HOUSING AS A HUMAN RIGHT CREATES PATHWAYS TO ENDING HOMELESSNESS IN NJ

October 3, 2022 - #NJCounts 2022 found 8,754 men, women, and children, in 6,631 households, experienced homelessness across New Jersey. NJCounts 2022 counted individuals experiencing homeless on the night of January 25, 2022.

The full report and county by county reports are available at this link:
https://monarchhousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/New-Jersey-PIT-2022-Report.pdf

Local county press contacts are available at this link:
https://www.monarchhousing.org/wp-content/uploads/njcounts22/NJ%20Counts%202022%20Press%20Contacts.pdf
These contacts can provide additional information and details about the local county counts.

Other key findings from NJCounts 2022 include:

- 7,776 persons were in sheltered locations (emergency shelter, hotel/motel placements, transitional housing, safe haven programs)
- 978 persons were unsheltered
- 1,750 persons, in 1,592 households, were identified as chronically homeless representing 20% of the total homeless population
- 988 households were counted as families, which included 2,945 persons (a family is defined as a household with at least one child under the age of 18 and one adult)
- 24 unaccompanied youth under 18 were identified in the count

"Community efforts to end homelessness are strengthened by a data informed approach to planning. The Point in Time count serves as one of the tools we can use to help understand who is experiencing homelessness in our communities and what their needs are," said Taiisa Kelly, CEO of Monarch Housing Associates. "While we understand that the count is not a comprehensive accounting of all persons experiencing homelessness, it does provide a consistent snapshot of what is happening in our communities. This information can serve as the basis for significant investments in strategies that end homelessness and support the understanding that housing is a human right."

Counties across the state annually conduct NJCounts, as required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), to secure federal funding for programs serving persons experiencing homelessness. Commissioned by the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (NJHMFA), NJCounts reflects the collaborative efforts of social service providers, local government, and community advocates and volunteers to identify and enumerate persons experiencing homelessness within each county. Monarch Housing Associates coordinates NJCounts activities and completes an analysis of data collected from the Point-in-Time (PIT) survey. NJCounts aims to provide communities with valuable information as they develop strategies and plans to end homelessness.

Data for NJCounts 2022 was collected via two methods: household surveys and information from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). About 55% of the information for persons staying in sheltered locations was drawn from the HMIS, with the remaining information submitted through

household surveys. Data for persons staying in unsheltered locations and in programs not utilizing the HMIS was collected through household surveys administered by trained homeless service providers. Communities across the state implemented coordinated street outreach efforts and outreach to service locations to identify individuals and families that might be experiencing unsheltered homelessness the day/night of the count.

Some of the factors impacting the count this year include:

- COVID-19 has had a tremendous impact on homeless services across the state. Given the nature of the pandemic, many shelter providers reduced capacity to allow for appropriate social distancing. As we entered the second year of shelters operating under new protocols that aim to protect both staff and guests from spreading and contracting COVID-19 operations have been more 'permanently' altered without an end to COVID-19 in sight. Shelter providers and homeless service systems have shifted to having isolation protocols in place and plans in place if capacity in congregate settings has to be reduced for there to be additional non-congregate beds so as to ensure the ability to continue to serve at normal capacities.
- The COVID-19 global health pandemic affected the way agencies were able to safely conduct outreach. In previous years, communities have relied on trained volunteers and Project Homeless Connect events in the community to conduct surveys. In 2021 all communities canceled these in-person events to ensure safety of staff and guests. In 2022, some communities had these in-person events again although the approach was altered to either be outside or have limited numbers of persons inside a space at any given time. Other communities found that the strategic outreach plans implemented in 2021 were more effective at reaching the unsheltered populations in their community and expanded on those efforts to ensure a more effective count. Surveys were conducted over a 7-day period by homeless service providers that had been continuously working in the community and interacting with those experiencing homelessness throughout the pandemic.
- Code Blue efforts in NJ relied heavily on volunteers and faith-based organizations to operate warming centers in previous years. Code Blue is called on nights when temperatures reach below 32°F and municipalities (with more than 10 unsheltered homeless persons during the previous PIT count) are required to mobilize warming centers to accommodate unhoused persons out in the freezing temperatures. During the 2021-2022 Code Blue season, many of these centers continued to be closed due to health concerns related to COVID-19 and the Omicron surge. Communities had to alter Code Blue efforts to include non-congregate sheltering options, mainly hotel/motel placements. Congregate shelters allowed communities to conduct more comprehensive counting of individuals experiencing homelessness as they were able to go to one center and conduct surveys, whereas non-congregate shelter options including hotel/motels made it more difficult for agency staff to outreach and complete surveys.
- On January 1st, 2022, the eviction moratorium ended in New Jersey. Courts began hearing eviction cases and moving forward with lock outs. This led to an influx in persons entering the homeless service system statewide. Homeless service systems have been preparing for this 'surge' since March 2020 when the eviction moratorium was put into place. Despite efforts statewide to get prevention money, made available through the CARES Act and American Rescue Plan, out to those at risk or pending eviction there has still be an influx of persons entering the homeless service system since the beginning of the year.

New Jersey continues to see disparities in who experiences homelessness. Similar to national trends, persons identifying as Black or African American experience homelessness at disproportionately higher rates. On par with trends observed in prior years, Black people in New Jersey represent about 12% of the state population but about 48% of the identified population experiencing homelessness.

"The disparate impact of homelessness on communities of color highlight the fact that we cannot separate the conversations of structural racism and equity building from strategic planning to end homelessness," said Taiisa Kelly. "Building effective strategies can only be done in partnership with the true experts, people who have been directly impacted by homelessness, including people of color who have experienced homelessness. When we build systems to address the needs of the most marginalized communities, we create avenues to stability for all."

Communities across New Jersey are working to integrate voices of persons impacted by homelessness in their local planning processes. Monarch Housing Associates in partnership with several CoCs across the state implemented the Community Led Planning Development (CLPD) Project. These communities are working to address racial disparities in their homeless service systems by increasing access and lowering barriers to entering shelters and permanent housing. The communities have worked to develop advisory boards of persons with lived experience of homelessness to provide recommendations on how to change policies and procedures to ensure all those experiencing homelessness can access critically needed services.

"Homeless service systems have had to respond and adapt to ever changing circumstances during the last two years. Shelter operations, outreach, linkage, and connection to community resources have all had to alter operations to reach those that are in need in the community in a safe and effective manner," said Kasey Vienckowski of Monarch Housing Associates. "As we entered 2022 it became apparent that COVID-19 isn't going anywhere and programs needed to be able to continue operations to serve those experiencing, or at risk of homelessness, in the community. In March 2020, many agencies were not prepared or equipped for remote work or the ability to interact with consumers outside of a traditional face to face interview, but when we look at our homeless service systems and the programs operating within them now we see much more flexibility and adaptability. Programs can now operate in person, virtually, or a hybrid method to best meet the needs of the community members. This allows agencies to continue to operate despite COVID-19 surges or contacts with persons that test positive. Despite what at times felt like insurmountable circumstances during the last two years, systems across the state have responded to and continued to ensure they are bringing crucial resources to the most vulnerable in our community."

For more information about Monarch Housing Associates' work to ensure that every person will have quality, affordable, and permanent supportive housing that fosters freedom, independence, and community integration, visit www.monarchhousing.org.