Somerset County CoC Homeless Assessment Report

2014

I. Introduction

In 2012, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development released the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Interim rules. These interim regulations require a high level of planning and coordination among all Continuums of Care (CoCs) throughout the Country. As with any planning process, data analysis of the needs and outcomes of the current system is essential to facilitate meaningful planning.

In order to assist the Continuums of Care throughout New Jersey with this data analysis, this report uses information from the New Jersey Homeless Information System (HMIS) to provide a snapshot of the characteristics of homeless households in the Somerset County CoC. This report can 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.

II. Data Source

This Homeless Assessment Report for Somerset County CoC 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. The projects included in this report were all Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing and Safe Haven projects (if available in the community) that were classified as "Homeless Only".

The Homeless Assessment Report is based on information about unduplicated homeless families and individuals who used available emergency shelter, transitional housing and safe haven projects during the yearlong reporting period January 1, 2014 – December 31, 2014, as reported in HMIS.

For purposes of this report, families included any persons that presented together at the HMIS participating project and would choose to be permanently housed together if that was an option. This can include, households with adults and children under the age of 18, households made of all adults, or unaccompanied youth (under age 18) that present together.

III. Findings for Total Population Served

Key Findings:
- A total of 157 households were served in HMIS participating emergency shelters and transitional housing projects during the January 1, 2014 – December 31, 2014 period
- There were 42 households identified as chronically homeless during this reporting period
- 84% of all adults served either as individuals or as part of a family identified having a disabling condition
- Nearly 40% of the total population served was over the age of 50
- 51% of households moved on to permanent destinations after project discharge

Total Homeless Population. A total of 157 households composed of 213 persons were housed in Somerset County CoC HMIS participating emergency shelters or transitional housing projects during the January 1, 2014 – December 31, 2014 reporting period. This is a 26% decrease in total households and a 28% decrease in total persons served from 2013. Out of the households served in 2014, the majority, 82% (129) were individuals, while the remaining 18% (28 households) were families. As shown in Figure 1, the most served population was individuals in transitional housing projects, which made up 66% of the total population served. The 213 persons served throughout Somerset County HMIS projects made up 1% of New Jersey's total homeless population served in HMIS projects in 2014.
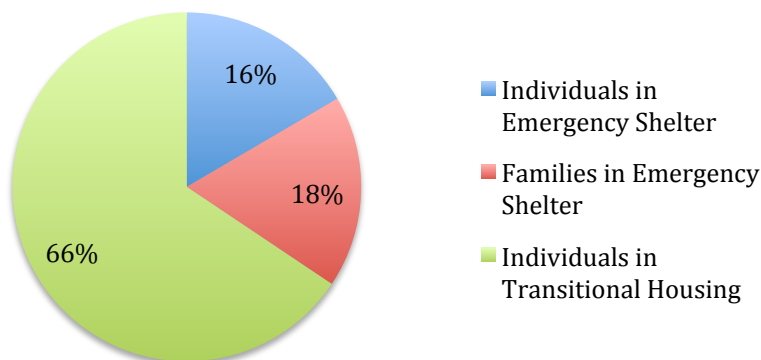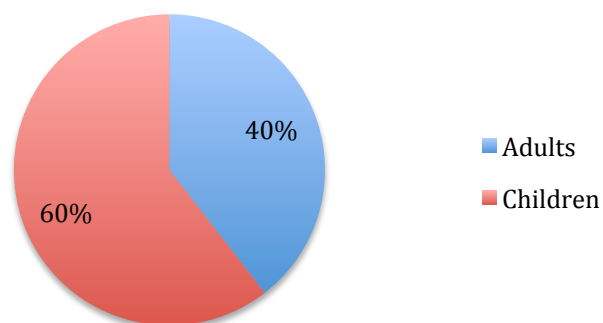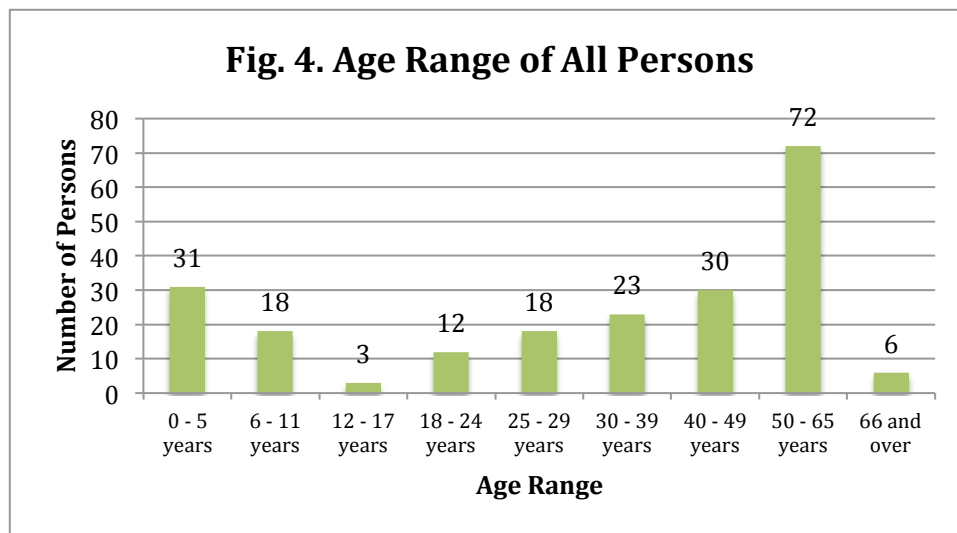
Fig. 1. Total Households Served

- Individuals in Emergency Shelter
- Families in Emergency Shelter
- Individuals in Transitional Housing

Figure 2. Total Persons Served		
	Somerset County	**New Jersey**
Total Persons Served	213	25,327
Emergency Shelter	110	20,800
Individuals	26	14,143
Families	84	6,657
Transitional Housing	103	4,343
Individuals	103	2,256
Families	0	2,087

Family Composition. Of the 28 family households served throughout Somerset County in 2014, 27 (96%) were households with adults and children under 18, the remaining household was a youth only household. As shown in Figure 3, children represented 60% of the persons included in adult and children families. The average size of a homeless family in 2014 was 3 and the average age of a child served was 5 years old.

Fig. 3. Adults vs. Children in Families

- Adults
- Children

Demographics. Of the total homeless population that was served in the Somerset CoC during 2014, **t**he largest percent, 34%, of persons were between the ages of 50 and 65. As Figure 4 shows, the next highest age range served was children under the age of 18 (24%).
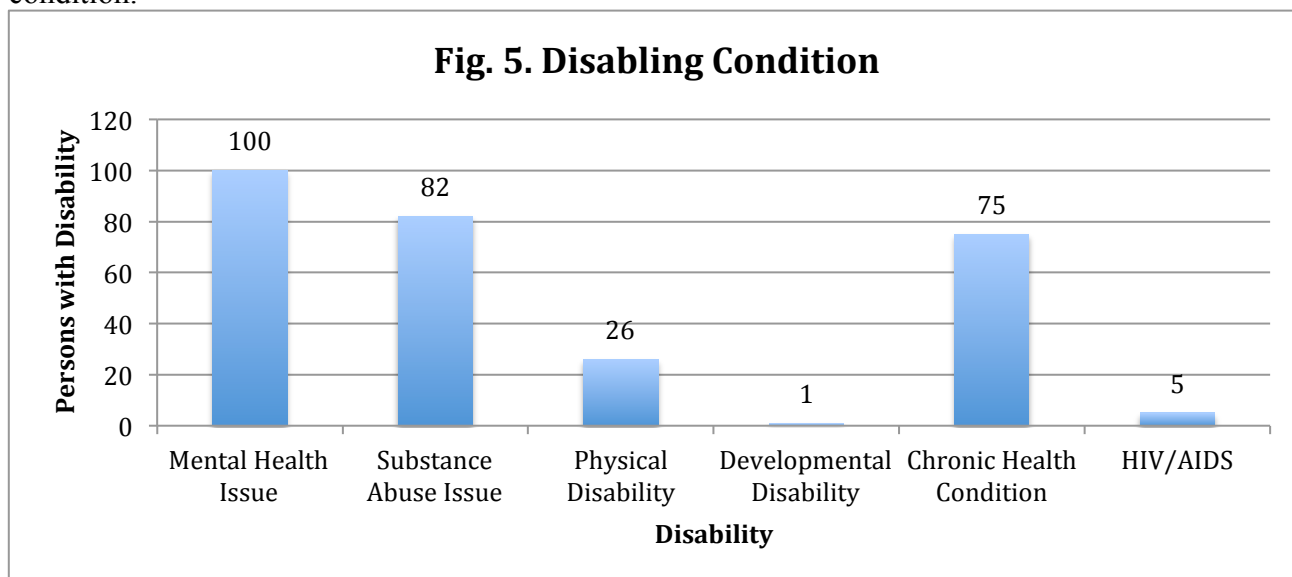
Fig. 4. Age Range of All Persons

Similar to the 2013 numbers, more than half (64%) of the homeless persons served in Somerset CoC HMIS participating projects were male, with women representing 36% of the population.

In addition, 64% of the homeless persons served during 2014 identified their race as Black or African American, making that the largest racial subgroup. The next largest was White (31%), followed by Multi-Racial with 3%. With regards to ethnicity, only 11% identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino.
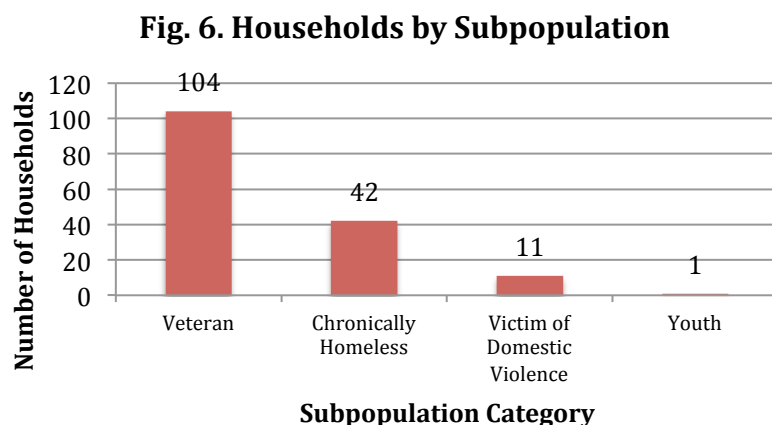
Disabling Conditions. Among all persons served throughout Somerset County's HMIS emergency shelter and transitional housing projects, 65% identified having a disabling condition, this number includes 84% of adults and 8% of children.

Among disabled adults, 74% reported a mental health issue, making this the most prevalent disability; representing 62% of the total adult homeless population. 61% of disabled adults also reported a substance abuse issue. Among disabled children, 75% reported a chronic health condition.

Fig. 5. Disabling Condition
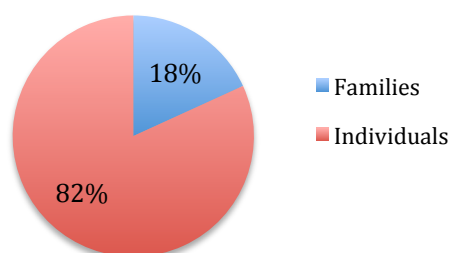
Subpopulation Characteristics. In its plan, *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) has prioritized ending youth, veteran and chronic homelessness across the Country. In 2014, Somerset CoC served a total of 42 households that were identified as chronically homeless. All 42 households were individuals, and 93% were served in transitional housing projects.

Fig. 6. Households by Subpopulation

Number of Households / Subpopulation Category

- Veteran: 104
- Chronically Homeless: 42
- Victim of Domestic Violence: 11
- Youth: 1

Somerset HMIS served 1 youth only household, households without someone over age 18, during the 2014 reporting period. This youth household was composed of 3 youth whom were served in an emergency shelter project.

As far as veterans served, Somerset CoC served a total of 104 veterans throughout 2014. All of the veterans served were individuals and only 6% were female. 99% of the veterans served were served in transitional housing projects. All veterans reported having some kind of disability, with the most common disability reported being a mental health issue (76%).
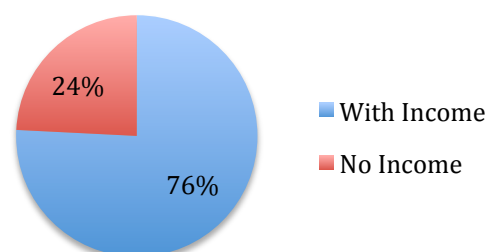
Fig. 7. Household Type Among Victims of Domestic Violence

- Families: 18%
- Individuals: 82%

In addition to the chronic, youth and veteran populations, there were 11 homeless households that reported having a victim of domestic violence. 82% of these households were individuals, while the remaining 2 were families. 36% reported that the last episode of domestic violence occurred over a year ago, while 27% reported it happening within the past 3 months. The majority of the domestic violence victims (73%) were served in emergency shelter projects. As a note, while there are victims of domestic violence being served in HMIS participating agencies, due to federal regulations, Domestic Violence specific projects are not able to enter data into HMIS, so the number of victims served in those projects are not included in this report.
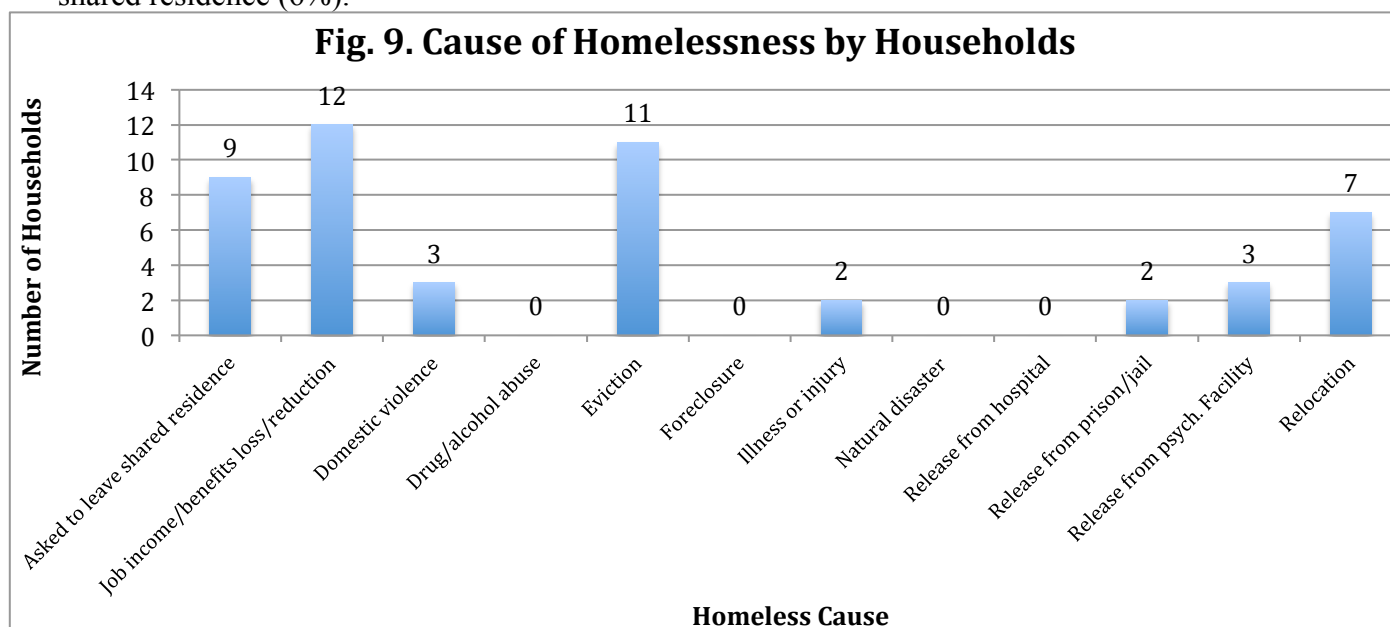
Income and Benefits. Among all homeless households served in emergency shelter or transitional housing projects during 2014, 24% had no source of income, while 28% reported receiving some form of earned income. The most common source of cash income among households, after earned income, was SSI (20%). The average monthly income for households was $427 in emergency shelter and $1,303 in transitional housing projects.

Fig. 8. Percentage of Households with Income

- With Income: 76%
- No Income: 24%

While 24% of households had no source of income, 59% of households were not receiving some kind of non-cash benefit. Food Stamps was the top reported non-cash benefit, which was reported by 38% of the households. Another 11% of households were connected to Medicaid.
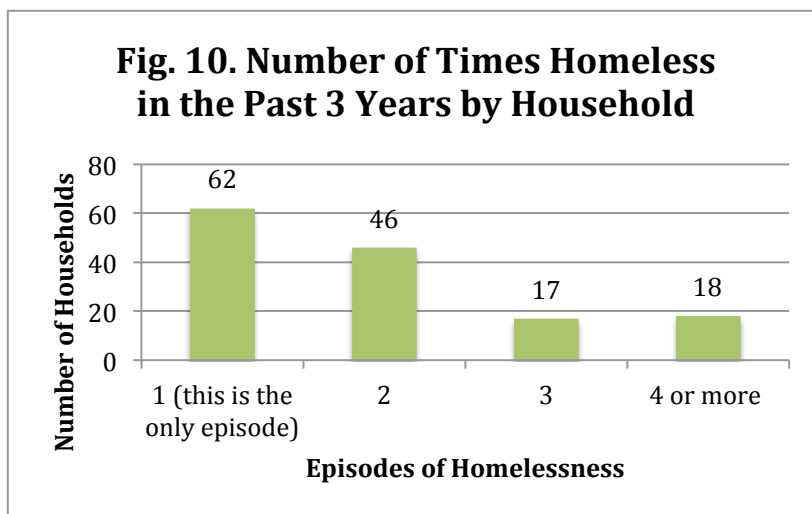
Cause of Homelessness and Residence Prior to Project Entry. When asked what the primary factor was that contributed to, or caused, their homelessness, more households attributed their homelessness to a loss or reduction in job income or benefits (8%) than any other cause. As Figure 9 shows, the next most common factors were eviction (7%) and being asked to leave a shared residence (6%).

Fig. 9. Cause of Homelessness by Households

When looking at the responses for residence prior to project entry, 29% of households reported staying in a transitional housing project prior to project entry. The next most common response was staying with friends or family (25%), followed by an emergency shelter (20%).

Length of Stay at Prior Residence and Episodes of Homelessness. 43% of households served during 2014 had resided in their last residence for more than 3 months but less than one year before entering the emergency shelter or transitional housing project. Another 20% were in their prior residence for one to three months, while only 5% were there one week or less. Similarly, only 11% of households experienced 4 or more episodes of homelessness in the last 3 years, while 39% were experiencing their first episode of homelessness, as seen in Figure 10.
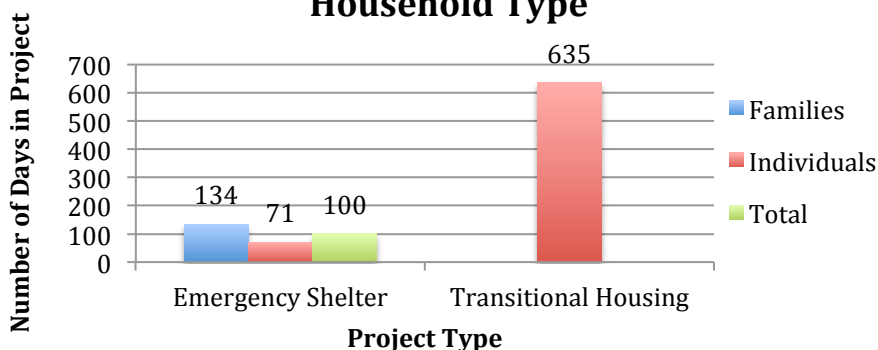
Fig. 10. Number of Times Homeless in the Past 3 Years by Household

Average Length of Project Stay. When looking at total length of project stay, families seemed to have longer stays in emergency shelters when compared to individuals. It was found that families stayed on average, 84 days or about almost 3 months longer than individuals. When comparing the average lengths of stay in 2014 to those of 2013

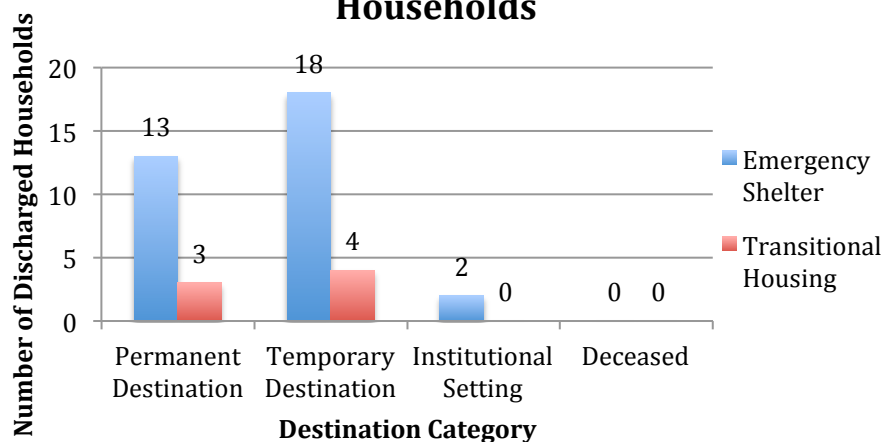**Fig. 11. Average Length of Project Stay by Household Type**

it was found that the average length of stay increased by 6 days for emergency shelter projects, but decreased by 313 days for transitional housing projects in 2014.

Reason and Destination at Discharge. A total of 79 households were discharged from emergency shelter and transitional housing projects during the 2014 reporting period. 27% of these households were discharged upon project completion, while 14% left for a housing opportunity prior to project completion.

Fig. 12. Destination Category by Households

51% of households discharged in 2014 moved on to permanent destinations upon discharge from the project. A permanent destination includes a unit owned or rented by a client, permanent housing project, or living with a family member or friend permanently. The most common permanent destination was rental by client with 23% of total households moving into a rental upon discharge. This rental could be with or without a subsidy. 33% of households moved on to a temporary destination at discharge, which could include an emergency shelter, hotel or motel, place not meant for habitation, staying with a family member or friend temporarily, safe haven, or transitional housing for homeless persons. The most common form of temporary housing as a destination was staying or living with family or friends temporarily, which involved 16% of the total households. An institutional destination, which was the destination of 6% of households, includes hospitals (psychiatric or non-psychiatric), a halfway house, jail or prison, foster care, long-term care facility or a substance abuse treatment facility. Psychiatric hospital was the most common institutional destination, with 3 households being discharged to psychiatric hospitals in 2014.

Appendix A: HMIS Projects Included in Report

I. Emergency Shelter Projects

Agency	Project Name
VOADV	VOADV – Agape House

II. Transitional Housing Projects

Agency	Project Name
Community Hope	Community Hope – Hope for Veterans A
	Community Hope – Hope for Veterans B