New Jersey
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 Homeless Information Systems (HMIS) used in New Jersey to provide a snapshot of the characteristics of homeless households that were served throughout the State. 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 the State of New Jersey analyzed data from both HMIS Collaborative HMIS, Middlesex CoC HMIS, and Bergen CoC HMIS systems. 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.
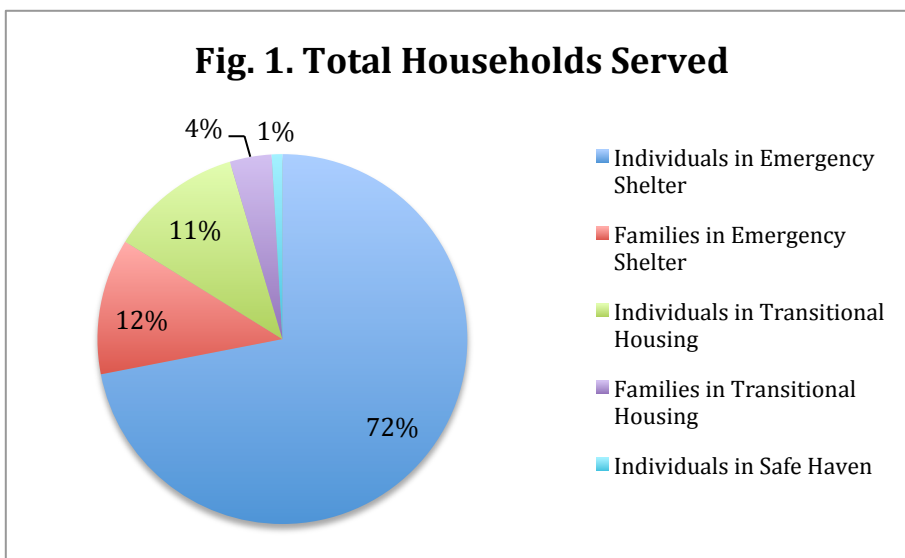
III. Findings for Total Population Served

Key Findings:
- A total of 19,635 households were served in HMIS participating emergency shelters, transitional housing and safe haven projects during the January 1, 2014 – December 31, 2014 period
- There were 1,842 households identified as chronically homeless during this reporting period
- 48% of all adults served either as individuals or as part of a family identified having a disabling condition
- 44% of the total population served was under age 30
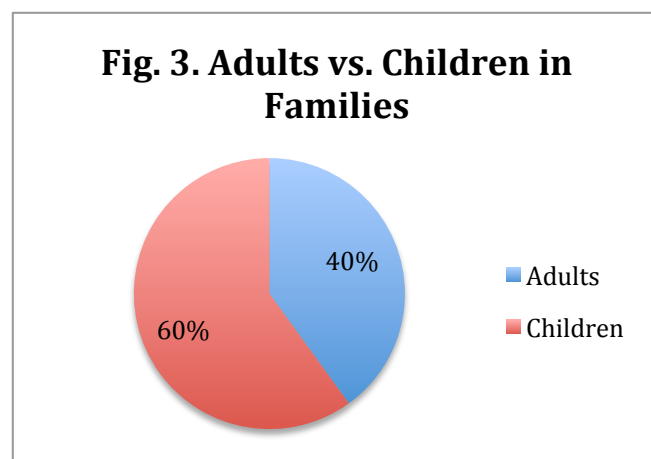- 26% of households moved on to permanent destinations after discharge

Total Homeless Population. A total of 19,635 households composed of 25,327 persons were housed in New Jersey HMIS participating emergency shelters, transitional housing or safe haven projects during the January 1, 2014 – December 31, 2014 reporting period. This is an 8% increase in the total number of households served from 2013 and a 6% increase from the 23,949 persons served in 2013. Out of the households served in 2014, the large majority, 84% (16,583) were individuals, while the remaining 16% (3,052 households) were families. As shown in Figure 1, the most served population was individuals in emergency shelter projects, which accounted for 72% of the total population.
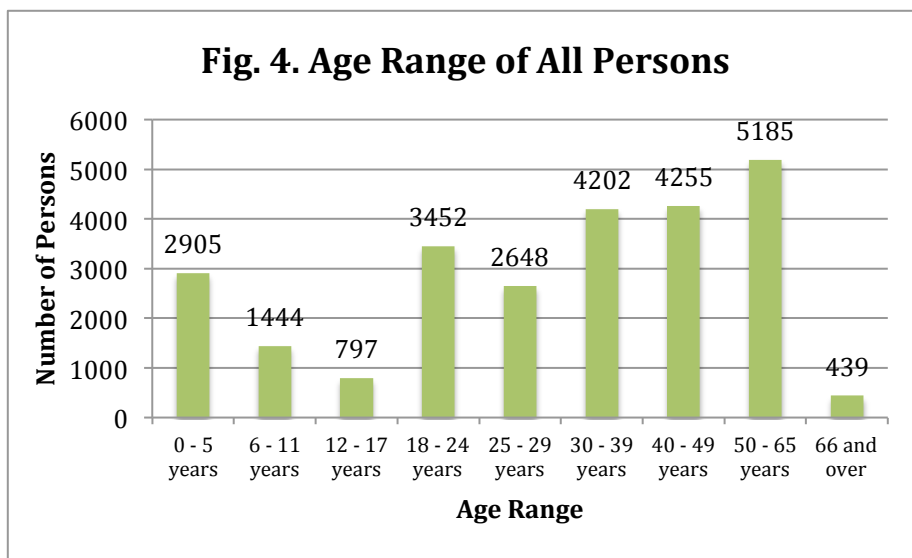
Fig. 1. Total Households Served

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

4% — 1%
11%
12%
72%

Fig. 2 Total Persons Served Statewide		
	2013	**2014**
Total Persons Served	23,949	25,327
Emergency Shelter	19,208	20,800
Individuals	12,639	14,143
Families	6,569	6,657
Transitional Housing	4,455	4,343
Individuals	2,176	2,256
Families	2,279	2,087
Safe Haven	286	184
Individuals	286	184
Families	0	0

Family Composition. Of the 3,052 family households served throughout New Jersey in 2014, 2,878 (94%) were households with adults and children under 18, 159 (5%) were adult only households while the other 15 were youth only households. 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 between the two project types was 6 years old.

Fig. 3. Adults vs. Children in Families

40%
60%

- Adults
- Children

Demographics. Of the total homeless population that was served in New Jersey during 2014, **t**he largest percent, 24%, of persons were between the ages of 18 and 29, with over half being youth between the ages of 18 and 24. As Figure 4 shows, the next highest age range served was persons between the ages of 50 and 65, which represented 20% of the total population.

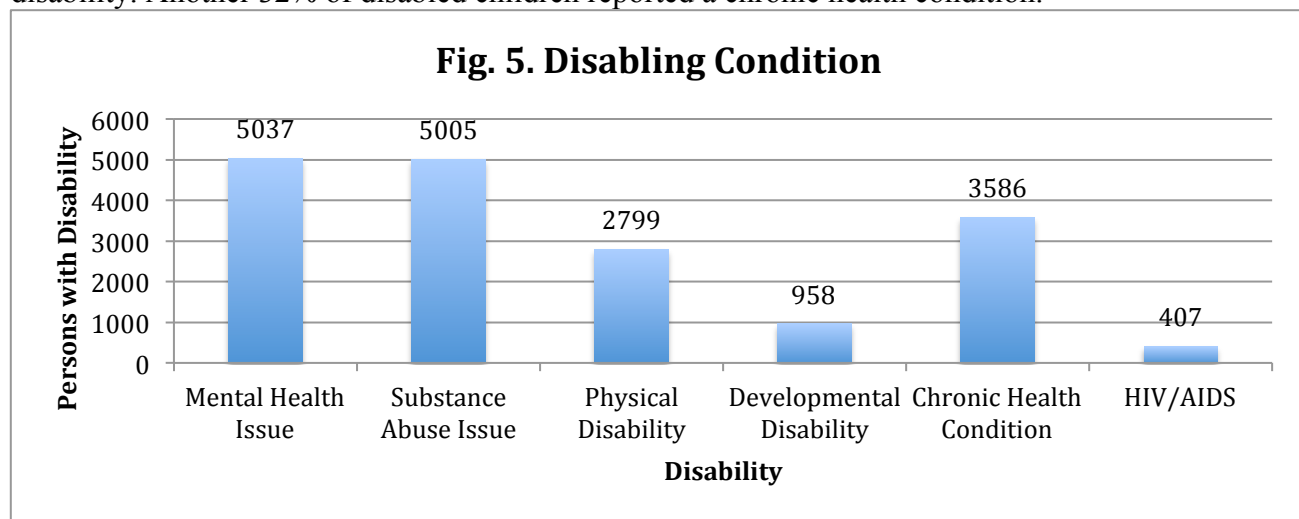**Fig. 4. Age Range of All Persons**

Similar to the 2013 numbers, more than half (60%) of the homeless persons served in New Jersey HMIS participating projects were male, with women representing 40% of the population.

In addition, 54% 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 (41%), followed by Multi-Racial with 2%. With regards to ethnicity, 17% identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino.
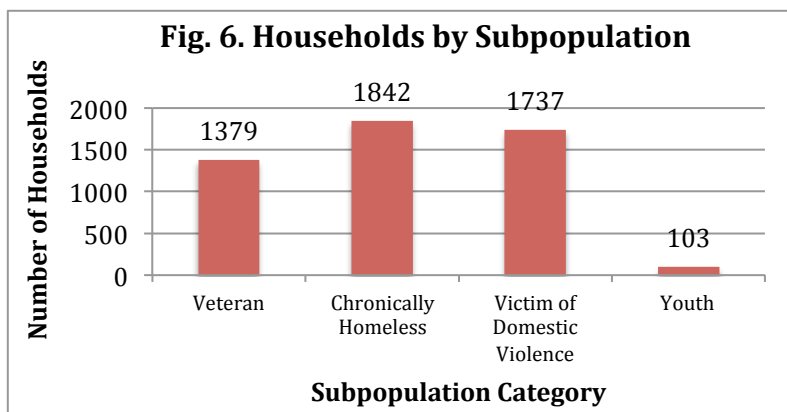
Disabling Conditions. Among all persons served throughout New Jersey HMIS emergency shelter, transitional housing and safe haven projects, 40% identified having a disabling condition, this number includes 48% of adults and 7% of children.

Among disabled adults, 51% reported a substance abuse issue making this the most prevalent disability; representing 25% of the total adult homeless population. 51% of disabled adults also reported a mental health issue. Among disabled children, 39% reported having a developmental disability. Another 32% of disabled children reported a chronic health condition.

Fig. 5. Disabling Condition
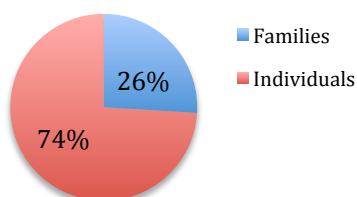
Subpopulation Characteristics.
In its plan, *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) has prioritized ending youth, veteran and chronic homelessness across the Country. In 2014, New Jersey projects served a total of 1,842 households that were identified as chronically homeless. This is a 6%

Fig. 6. Households by Subpopulation

increase from the 1,742 served in 2013. 80% of the chronic households served in 2014 were in emergency shelters (50 were families); 18% were served in transitional housing (37 were families) and the remaining 2% were individuals in safe haven projects.

Youth only households, households without someone over age 18, represented 1% of the total households served throughout New Jersey HMIS projects. These households were composed of 88 individual youth and 15 youth only families, which included a total of 37 persons. The majority of these households (59%) were served in emergency shelter projects.

As far as veterans served, New Jersey projects served a total of 1,379 veterans throughout 2014. 96% of veterans served were individuals and only 8% were female. 59% of the veterans served were served in transitional housing projects. 70% of veterans reported having some kind of disability, with the most common disability reported being a substance abuse issue (60%).

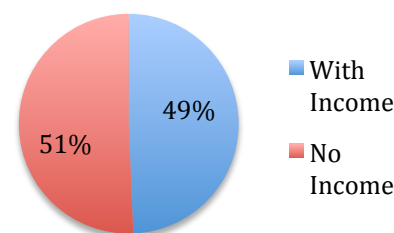**Fig. 7. Household Type Among Victims of Domestic Violence**

In addition to the chronic, youth and veteran populations, there were 1,737 homeless households that reported having a victim of domestic violence. 74% of these households were individuals, while the remaining 451 were families. 43% 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 (81%) were served in emergency shelters. 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.
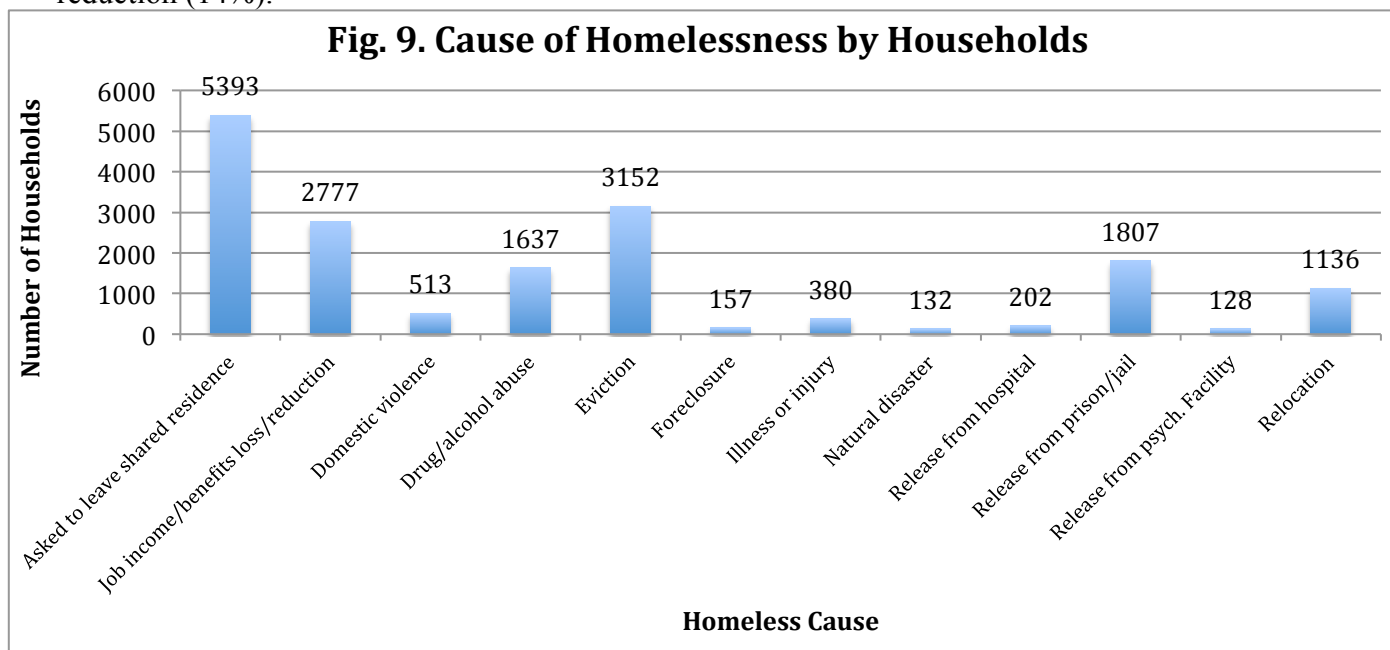
Income and Benefits.
Among all homeless households served in emergency shelter, transitional housing or safe haven projects during 2014, 51% had no source of income, while 11% reported receiving some form of earned income. The most common sources of cash income among households were SSI (23%) and General Assistance (12%). The average monthly income for households was $267 for emergency shelter, $256 for safe haven, and $537 for households served in transitional housing projects.

Fig. 8. Percentage of Households with Income

While 51% of households had no source of income, 52% of households were not receiving some kind of non-cash benefit. Food Stamps was the top reported non-cash benefit, which was reported by 41% of the households. Another 19% of households were connected to Medicaid benefits.
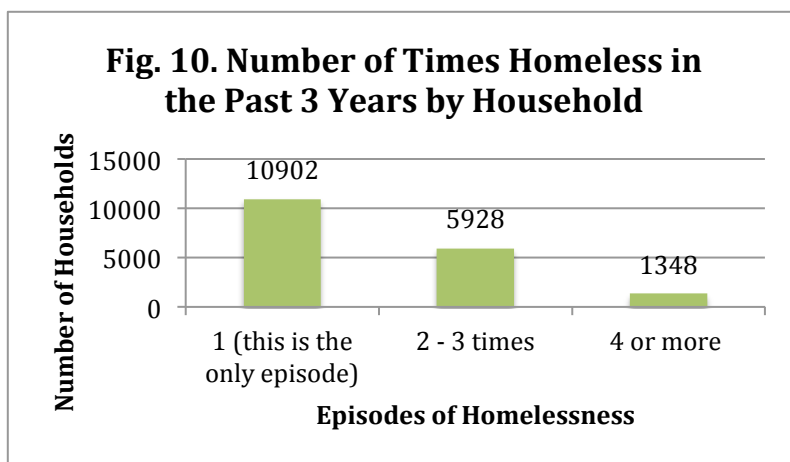
Cause of Homelessness and Residence Prior to Project Entry. When asked what the primary factor was that contributed to, or caused, their homelessness, more households attributed their homelessness to being asked to leave a shared residence (27%) than any other cause. As Figure 9 shows, the next most common factors were eviction (16%) and job income or benefits loss or reduction (14%).

Fig. 9. Cause of Homelessness by Households

These causes of homelessness coincide with the common response for residence prior to project entry with 39% of households staying or living with family or friends prior to project entry. The next most common response was emergency shelter (19%) followed by rental by client (10%).

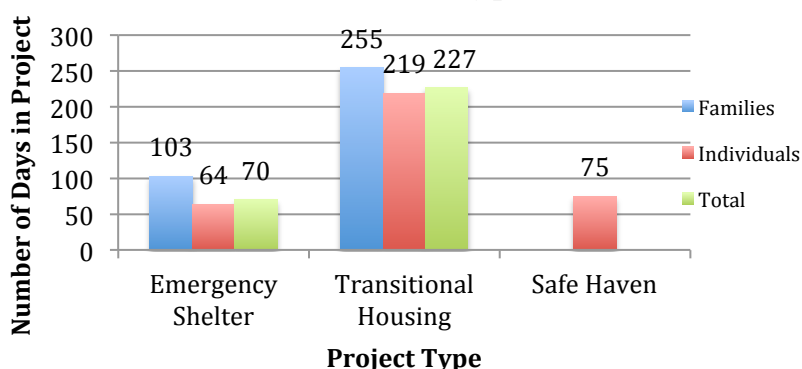**Length of Stay at Prior Residence and Episodes of Homelessness.** 32% of households served during 2014 had stated they resided in their last residence for one year or longer before entering the emergency shelter, transitional housing or safe haven project. Another 21% were in their prior residence for more than 3 months but less than one year, while only 12% were there one week or less. Similarly, only 7% of households experienced 4 or more episodes of homelessness in the past 3 years, while 56% of households were experiencing their first episode of homelessness prior to project entry, as shown 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 across the state, families seemed to have longer lengths of program stay than individuals in both emergency shelter and transitional housing projects. When comparing the average lengths of stay in 2014 to those in 2013, the average length of stay decreased by 3 days for emergency shelters, 58 days for transitional housing projects, and 7 days overall for safe havens in 2014.
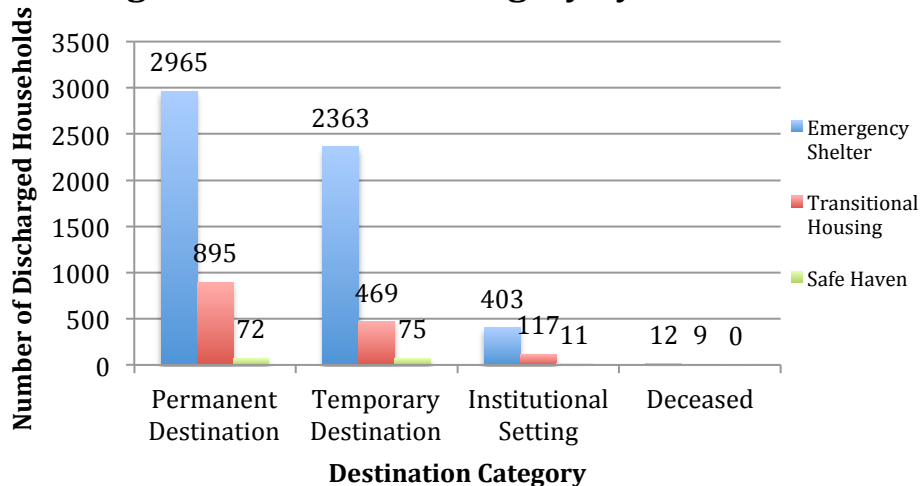

Fig. 11. Average Length of Project Stay by Household Type

Reason and Destination at Discharge. A total of 15,260 households were discharged from emergency shelter, transitional housing and safe haven projects during the 2014 reporting period. 21% of these households were discharged upon project completion, while 13% left for a housing opportunity before project completion.

Fig. 12. Destination Category by Households

Due to the nature of some of the emergency shelter projects, discharge information was not able to be collected for all discharged households.

26% 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 20% of total households moving into a rental upon discharge. This rental could be with or without a subsidy. 19% 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 temporary destination was staying with friends or family, which was reported by 9% of households. An institutional destination, which was the destination of 3% 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. The most common institutional destination was jail or prison with 218 households.