



# Union 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 Union 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 Union 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.

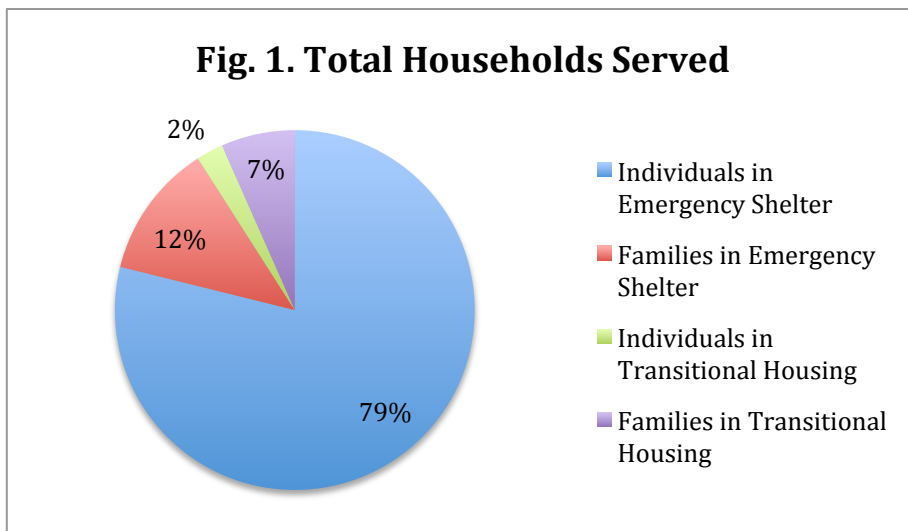
## **III. Findings for Total Population Served**

### **Key Findings:**

- A total of 861 households were served in HMIS participating emergency shelters and transitional housing projects during the January 1, 2014 – December 31, 2014 period
- There were 39 households identified as chronically homeless during this reporting period
- 49% 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
- 42% of households moved on to permanent destinations after project discharge

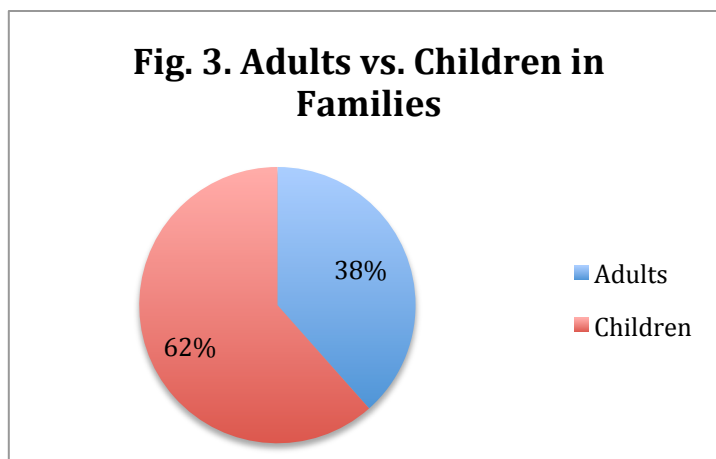
**Total Homeless**

**Population.** A total of 861 households composed of 1,164 persons were housed in Union County CoC HMIS participating emergency shelters or transitional housing projects during the January 1, 2014 – December 31, 2014 reporting period. This is a 3% increase in total households and a 2% increase in total persons served from 2013. Out of the households served in 2014, the majority, 81% (700) were individuals, while the remaining 19% (161 households) were families. As shown in Figure 1, the most served population was individuals in emergency shelter, which made up 79% of the total population served. The 1,164 persons served throughout Union County HMIS projects made up 5% of New Jersey’s total homeless population served in HMIS projects in 2014.

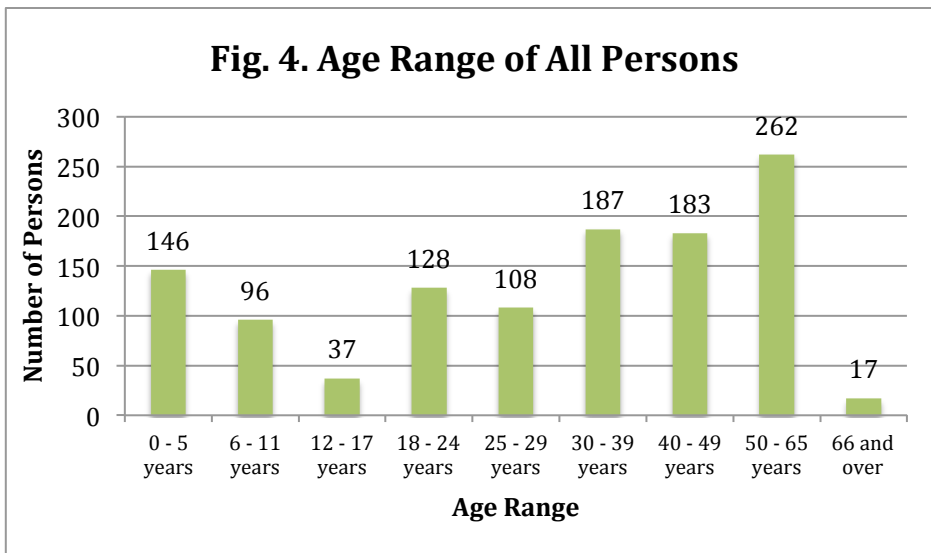


	Union County	New Jersey
<b>Total Persons Served</b>	1,164	25,327
<b>Emergency Shelter</b>	954	20,800
Individuals	679	14,143
Families	275	6,657
<b>Transitional Housing</b>	210	4,343
Individuals	21	2,256
Families	189	2,087

**Family Composition.** Of the 161 family households served throughout Union County in 2014, 154 (96%) were households with adults and children under 18, 6 (4%) were adult only households while the remaining household was a youth only household. As shown in Figure 3, children represented 62% 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.



**Demographics.** Of the total homeless population that was served in the Union CoC during 2014, the largest percent, 24%, of persons were children under age 18, with 279 aged between 0 and 17. As Figure 4 shows, the next highest age range served was persons between 50 and 65 (23%), followed by persons aged 18 to 29 with 20% of the population.

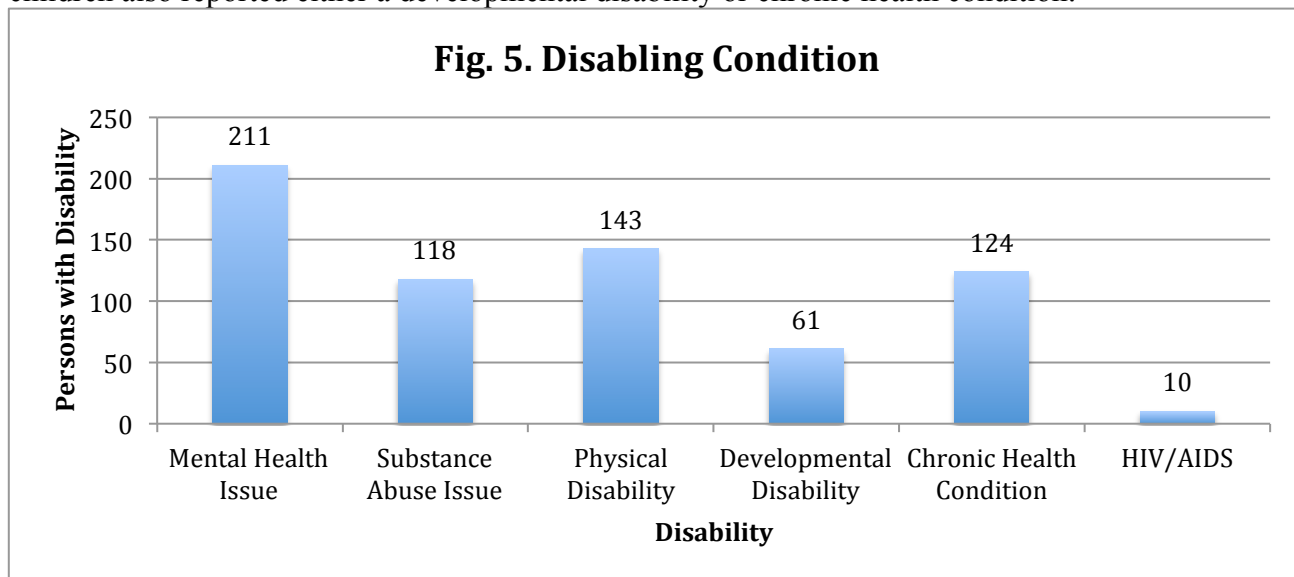


Similar to the 2013 numbers, slightly more than half (56%) of the homeless persons served in Union CoC HMIS participating projects were male, with women representing 44% of the population.

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 American Indian or Alaskan Native with 2%. With regards to ethnicity, 21% identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino.

**Disabling Conditions.** Among all persons served throughout Union County’s HMIS emergency shelter and transitional housing projects, 38% identified having a disabling condition, this number includes 49% of adults and 4% of children.

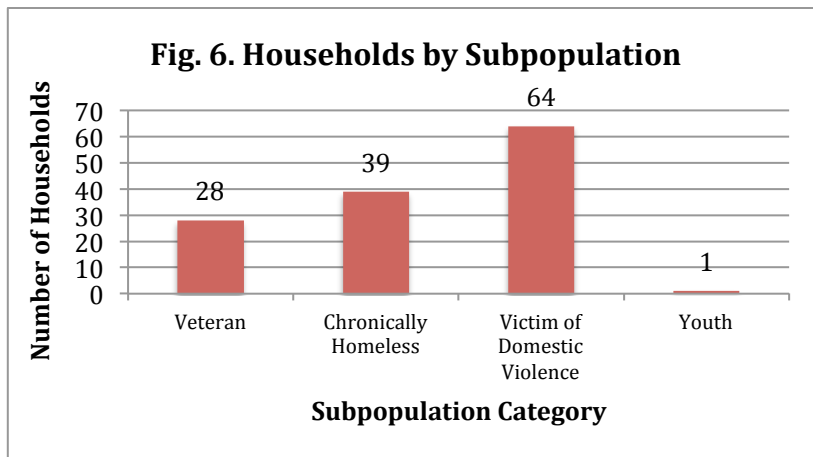
Among disabled adults, 48% reported mental health issues making this the most prevalent disability; representing 24% of the total adult homeless population. 32% of disabled adults also reported a physical disability. Among disabled children, 36% reported a physical disability. 27% of children also reported either a developmental disability or chronic health 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, Union CoC served a total of 39 households that were identified as chronically homeless, a 34% increase from the chronically homeless served in 2013.

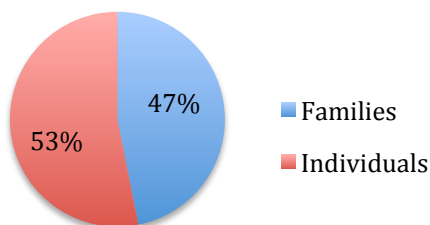
All of the chronically homeless served in the County were served in emergency shelter projects (only 2 were family households).



Youth only households, households without someone over age 18, represented less than 1% of the total households served throughout Union HMIS projects. These households were composed of 2 youth in a youth only household that were served in an emergency shelter project.

As far as veterans served, Union CoC served a total of 28 veterans throughout 2014. 93% of veterans served were individuals and only 18% were female. All but 1 veteran served were served in emergency shelter projects. 54% of veterans reported having some kind of disability, with the most common disability reported being a mental health issue (53%).

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

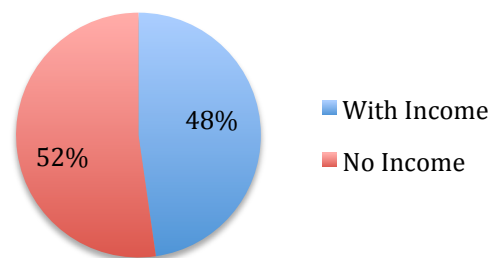


In addition to the chronic, youth and veteran populations, there were 64 homeless households that reported having a victim of domestic violence. 53% of these households were individuals, while the remaining 30 were families. 38% reported that the last episode of domestic violence occurred over a year ago, while 27% reported it happening within the past 3 months. The majority of the domestic violence victims (83%) 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.

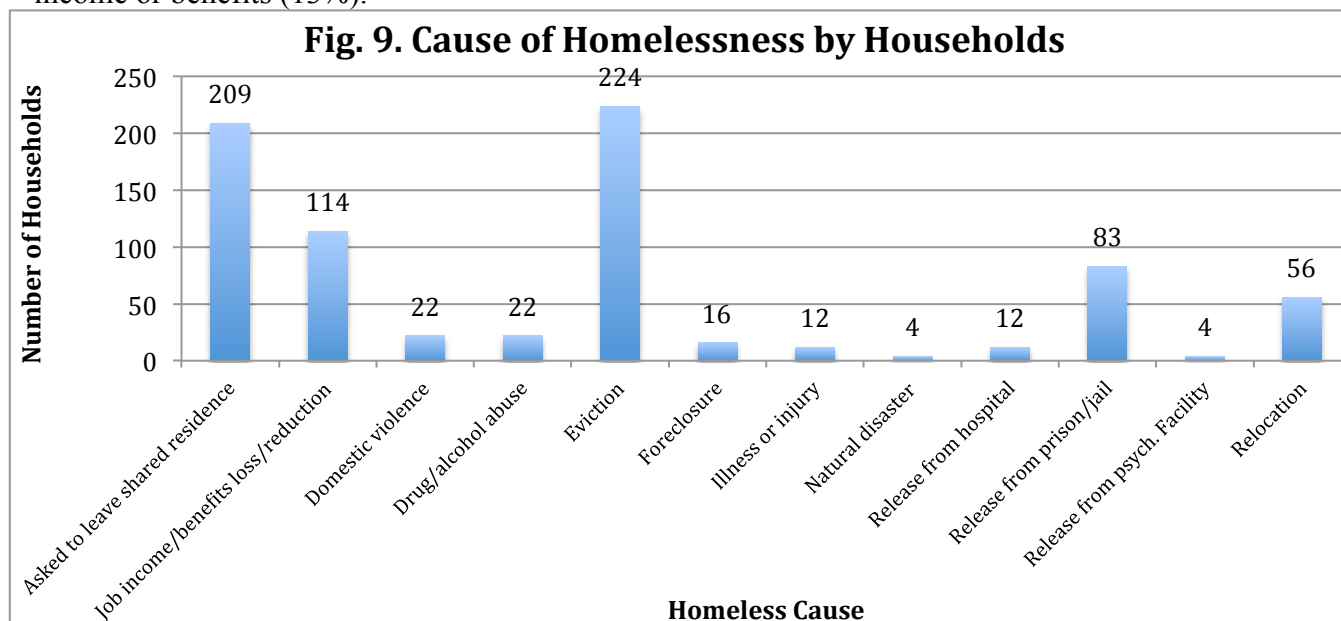
**Income and Benefits.** Among all homeless households served in emergency shelter or transitional housing projects during 2014, 52% had no source of income, while 6% reported receiving some form of earned income. The most common sources of cash income among households were SSI (28%) and General Assistance (18%). The average monthly income for households was \$184 in emergency shelters and \$643 for transitional housing projects.

**Fig. 8. Percentage of Households with Income**



While 52% of households had no source of income, 47% of households were not receiving some kind of non-cash benefit. Food Stamps was the top reported non-cash benefit, which was reported by 48% of the households. Another 19% of households were connected to Medicaid benefits.

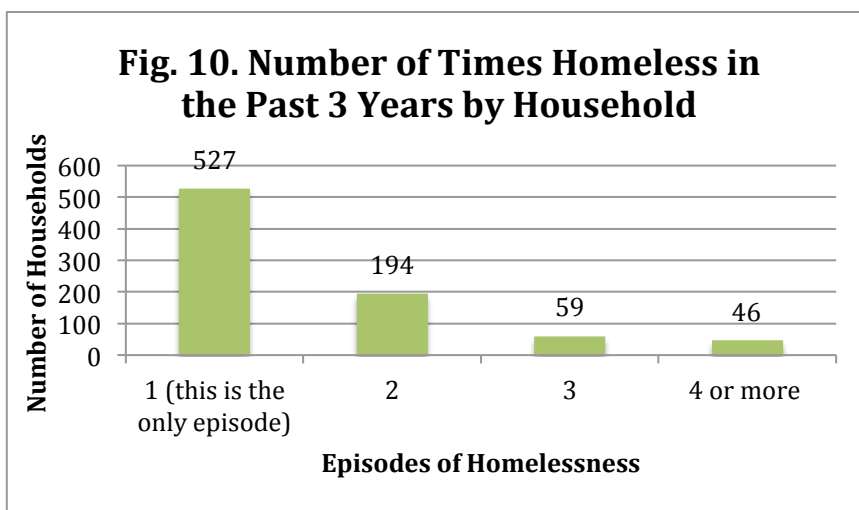
**Cause of Homelessness and Residence Prior to Project Entry.** When asked what the primary factor was that contributed to, or caused, their homelessness, more households attributed their homelessness to eviction (26%) than any other cause. As Figure 9 shows, the next most common factors were being asked to leave a shared residence (24%) and loss or reduction of job income or benefits (13%).



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 rental by client (20%) followed by emergency shelter (19%).

**Length of Stay at Prior Residence and Episodes of Homelessness.**

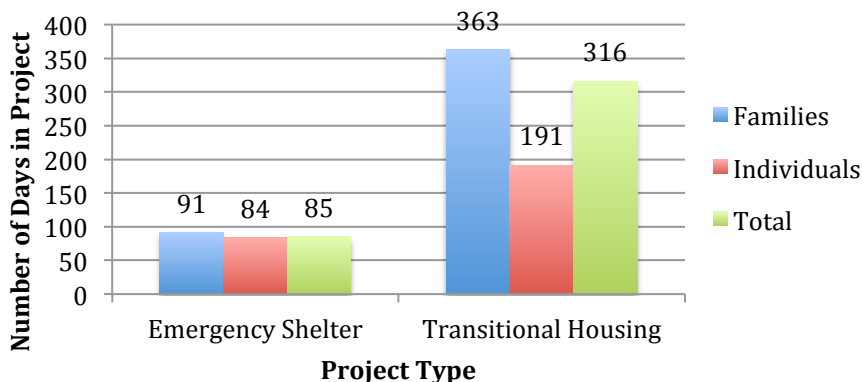
38% of households served during 2014 had resided in their last residence for one year or longer before entering the emergency shelter or transitional housing project. Another 26% were in their prior residence for more than 3 months but less than one year, while only 4% were there one week or less. Similarly, only 5% of households experienced 4 or more episodes of homelessness in the last 3 years, while the majority of households (61%) were experiencing their first episode of homelessness, as seen in Figure 10.



**Average Length of Project Stay.**

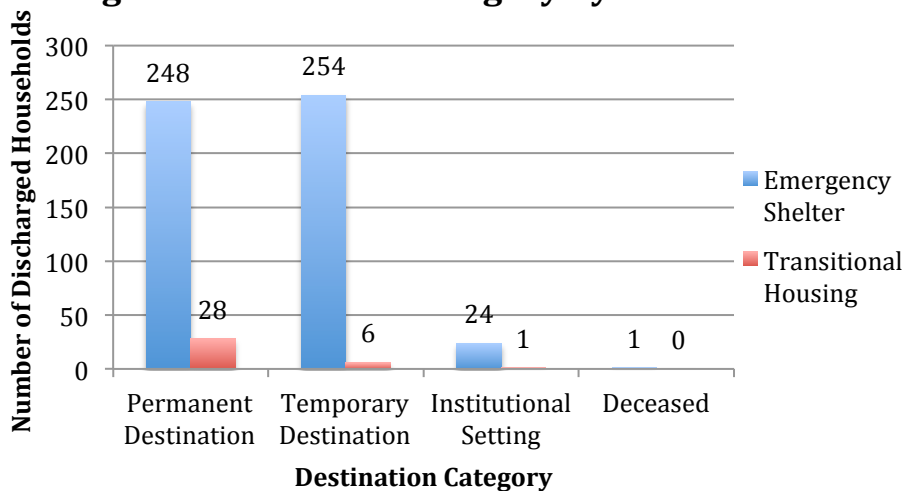
When looking at total length of project stay, families stayed longer in both emergency shelter and transitional housing projects when compared to individuals, staying on average 8 days longer in emergency shelter and 172 days or nearly 6 months longer than individuals in transitional housing. When comparing the average lengths of stay found in 2014 to those of 2013, the average length of stay decreased by 24 days for emergency shelter and 8 days for transitional housing in 2014.

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



**Reason and Destination at Discharge.** A total of 665 households were discharged from emergency shelter and transitional housing projects during the 2014 reporting period. 63% of these households left these projects for another housing opportunity or after project completion, another 15% were discharged from the project due to non-compliance.

**Fig. 12. Destination Category by Households**



42% 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 31% of total households moving into a

rental upon discharge. This rental could be with or without a subsidy. 39% 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 emergency shelter, which involved 27% of the total households. An institutional destination, which was the destination of 4% 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. Jail or prison was the most common institutional destination reported, with 2%.



**Appendix A: HMIS Projects Included in Report**

**I. Emergency Shelter Projects**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Project Name</b>
Community Access Unlimited	CAU E-CAP
Elizabeth Coalition to House the Homeless	ECHH – Operation Warm Heart
Family Promise	FPUC-Family Shelter
FISH Hospitality	FISH Hospitality Program
Salvation Army	Salvation Army Shelter
YMCA of Eastern Union County	Eastern Union YMCA – Madison House
	Eastern Union YMCA – Men’s Dormitory
	Eastern Union YMCA – Project Sustain
YMCA of Plainfield	Plainfield Area YMCA – Y.E.S.

**II. Transitional Housing Projects**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Project Name</b>
Community Access Unlimited	CAI-TIP Morris
Covenant House	Covenant House – Raphael’s Life House
Elizabeth Coalition to House the Homeless	ECHH Hospitality House
	ECHH-Joanie’s House
Homefirst Interfaith Housing and Family Services	IFC Transitional Housing Program
YMCA of Eastern Union County	Eastern Union YMCA – Step Up Transitional House