



# **Bergen County Homeless Assessment Report**

**2015**

## **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 Management 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.

## **II. Data Source**

This Homeless Assessment Report for Bergen County analyzed data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) administered by the Bergen County Department of Human Services, the HMIS Lead Agency for the CoC. 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, 2015 – December 31, 2015, 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 631 households were served in HMIS participating emergency shelter and transitional housing projects during the January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2015 period
- There were 73 households identified as chronically homeless during this reporting period
- 73% of all adults served either as individuals or as part of a family identified having a disabling condition
- 52% of households moved on to permanent destinations after discharge

### Total Homeless Population.

A total of 631 households composed of 771 persons were housed in Bergen County CoC HMIS participating emergency shelter or transitional housing projects during the January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2015 reporting period. This is a 6% decrease in the total number of households served from

2014 and a 9% decrease from the 771 persons served in 2014. Out of the households served in 2015, the large majority, 89% (562) were individuals, while the remaining 11% (69 households) were families. As shown in Figure 1, the most served population was individuals in emergency shelter projects, which accounted for 70% of the total population.

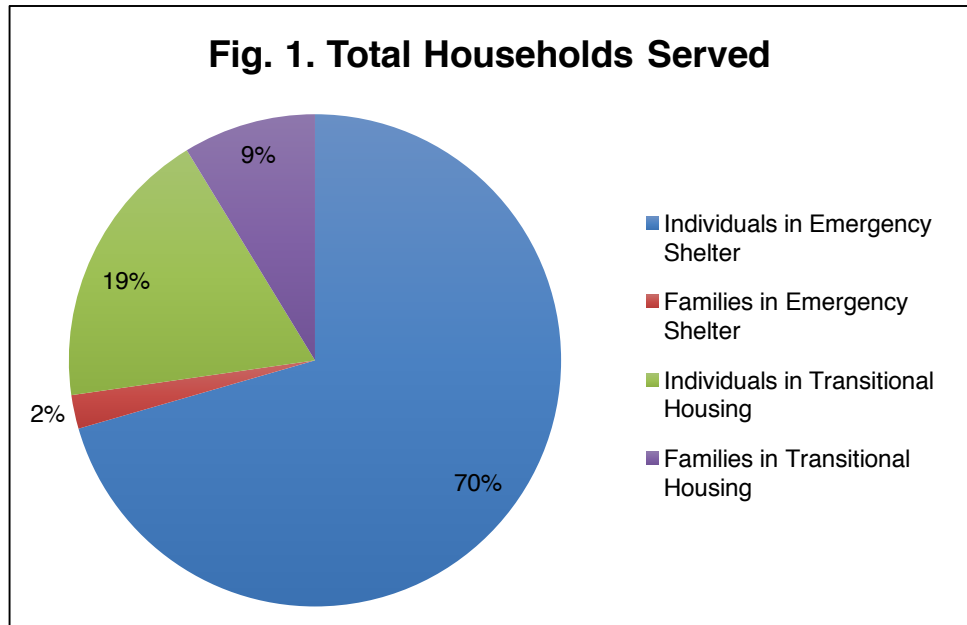
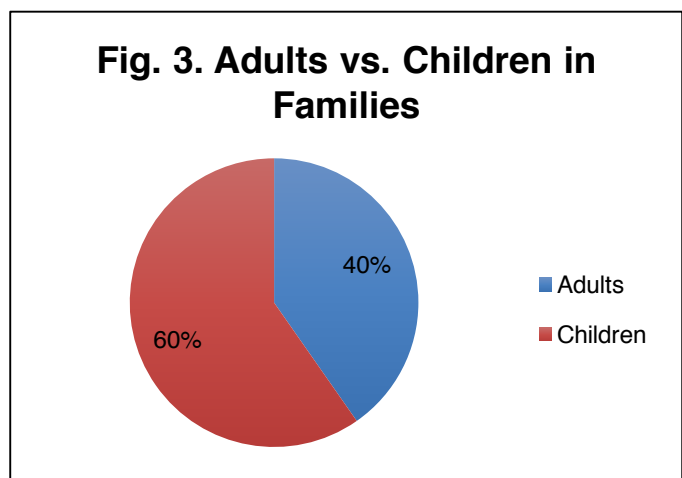
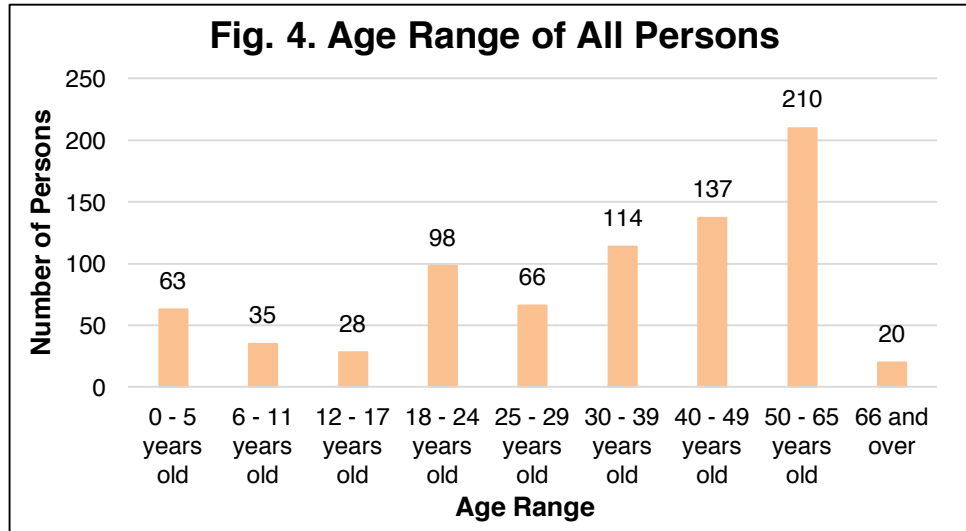


Fig. 2 Total Persons Served		
	Bergen County	New Jersey
<b>Total Persons Served</b>	771	24,519
<b>Emergency Shelter</b>	490	20,337
Individuals	445	13,108
Families	45	7,229
<b>Transitional Housing</b>	281	4,134
Individuals	117	2,116
Families	164	2,018

**Family Composition.** Of the 69 family households served throughout Bergen County in 2015, 68 (99%) were households with adults and children under 18, while the last was an adult 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 2015 was 3 and the average age of a child served between the two project types was 7 years old.



**Demographics.** Of the total homeless population that was served in Bergen County CoC during 2015, the largest percent, 27%, of persons were between the ages of 50 and 65. As Figure 4 shows, the next highest age range served was persons between the ages of 18 and 29, which represented 21% of the total population.

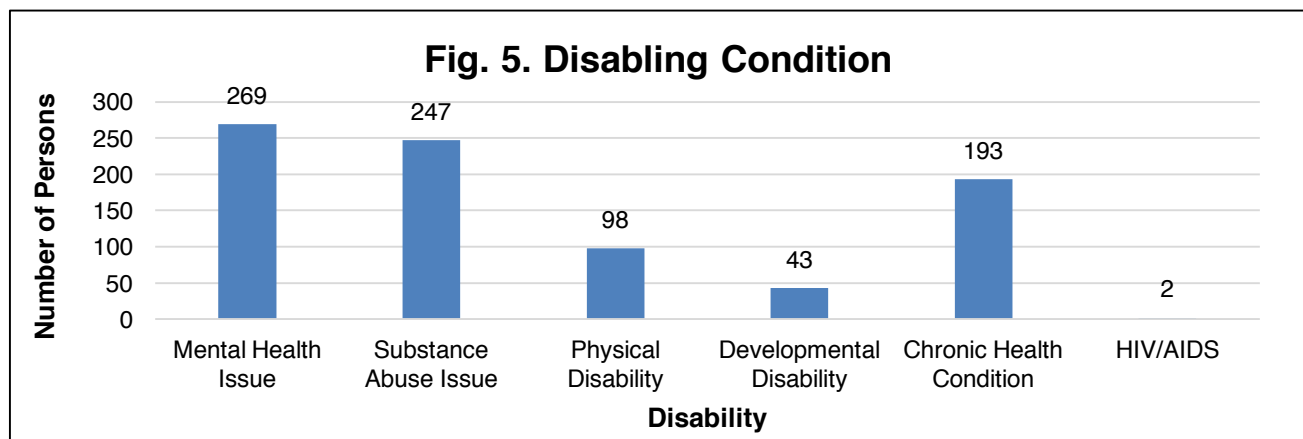


Similar to the 2014 numbers, more than half (61%) of the homeless persons served in Bergen County HMIS participating projects were male, with women representing 39% of the population.

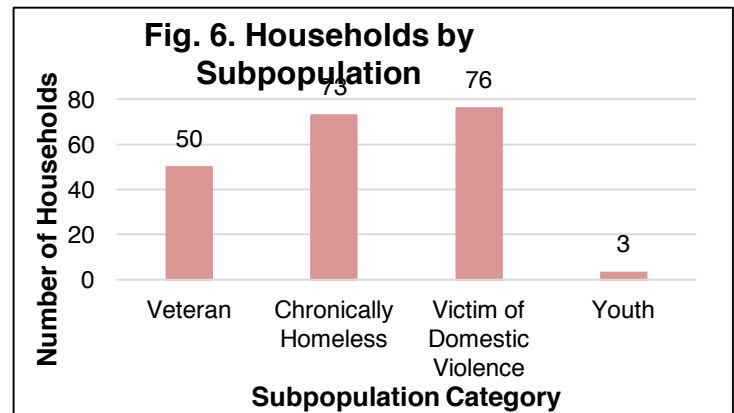
In addition, 61% of the homeless persons served during 2015 identified their race as White, making that the largest racial subgroup. The next largest was Black or African American (34%), followed by Multi-Racial and Asian with 2% each. With regards to ethnicity, 21% identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino.

**Disabling Conditions.** Among all persons served throughout Bergen County's HMIS emergency shelter and transitional housing projects, 64% identified having a disabling condition, this number includes 73% of adults and 20% of children.

Among disabled adults, 56% reported a mental health issue, making this the most prevalent disability; representing 41% of the total adult homeless population. 52% of disabled adults also reported a substance abuse issue. Among disabled children, 44% reported a chronic health condition. Another 40% of disabled children reported a developmental disability.



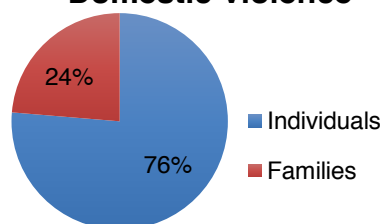
**Subpopulation Characteristics.** In its plan, Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) has prioritized ending youth, veteran and chronic homelessness across the Country. In 2015, Bergen County CoC projects served a total of 73 households that were identified as chronically homeless, a 36% decrease from the 114 chronically homeless households served in 2014. 85% of the chronic households served in 2015 were individuals in emergency shelters. The remaining 15% were served in transitional housing (1 was a family).



Youth only households, households without someone over age 18, represented less than 1% of the total households served throughout Bergen HMIS projects. 3 individual youth only households were served in 2015, 67% of which were served in transitional housing projects.

As far as veterans served, Bergen County projects served a total of 50 veterans throughout 2015. 96% of veterans served were individuals and only 6% were female. 68% of veterans were served in emergency shelter projects. 72% of veterans reported having some kind of disability, with the most common disabilities reported being mental health and substance abuse issues (56% each).

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

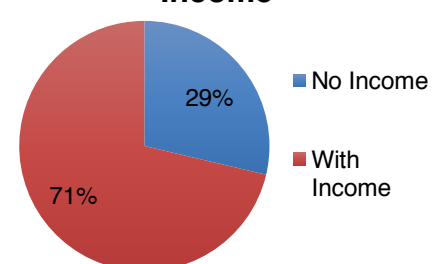


In addition to the chronic, youth and veteran populations, there were 76 homeless households that reported having a victim of domestic violence. 76% of these households were individuals, while the remaining 18 were families. 57% reported that the last episode of domestic violence occurred over a year ago, while 25% reported it happening within the past 3 months. The majority of the domestic violence victims (68%) 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.

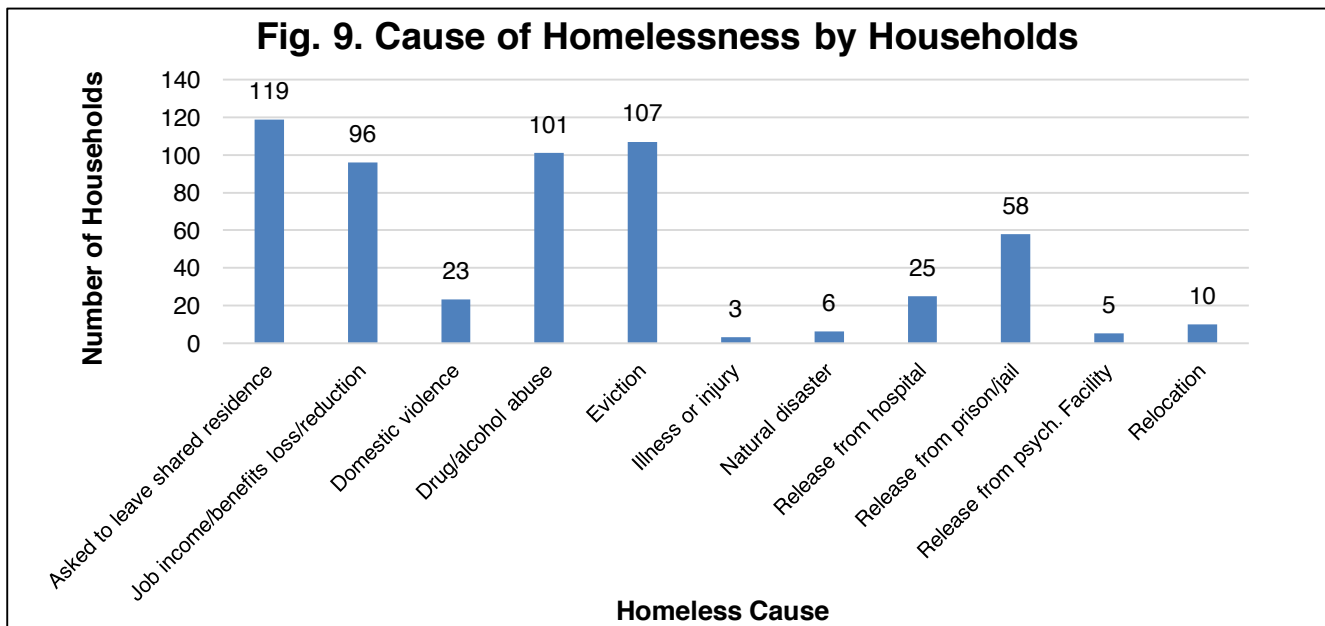
**Income and Benefits.** Among all homeless households served in emergency shelter or transitional housing projects during 2015, 29% had no source of income, while 21% reported receiving some form of earned income. The most common sources of cash income among households were SSI (31%) and earned income (21%). The average monthly income for households was \$486 for emergency shelter and \$811 for households served in transitional housing projects.

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



While 71% of households had some source of income, 78% of households were receiving some kind of non-cash benefit. Medicaid was the top reported non-cash benefit, reported by 55% of households, followed by Food Stamps, reported by 52%.

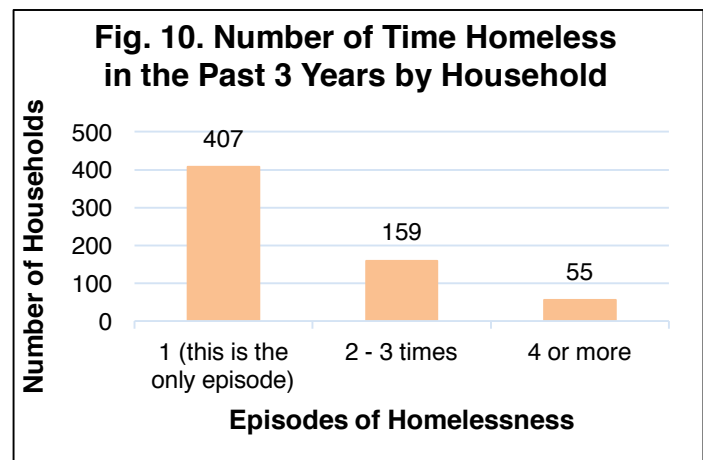
**Cause of Homelessness and Residence Prior to Project Entry.** When asked what the primary factor was that contributed to, or caused, their homelessness, more households attributed their homelessness to being asked to leave a shared residence (19%) than any other cause. As Figure 9 shows, the next most common factors were eviction (17%) and drug or alcohol abuse (16%).



The most common response for residence prior to project entry was emergency shelter, with 25% of households. The next most common response was staying or living with friends or family (20%) followed by place not meant for human habitation (15%).

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

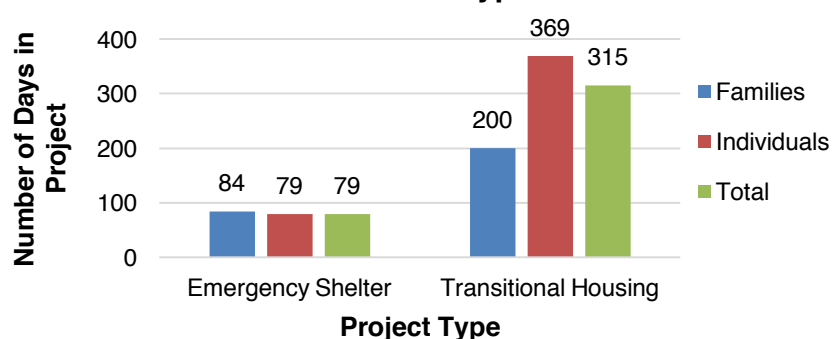
20% of households served during 2015 had stated they resided in their last residence for one year or longer before entering the emergency shelter or transitional housing project, while 35% were there one week or less. Additionally, only 9% of households experienced 4 or more episodes of homelessness in the past 3 years, while 65% of households were experiencing their first episode of homelessness prior to project entry, as shown in Figure 10.



### Average Length of Project Stay.

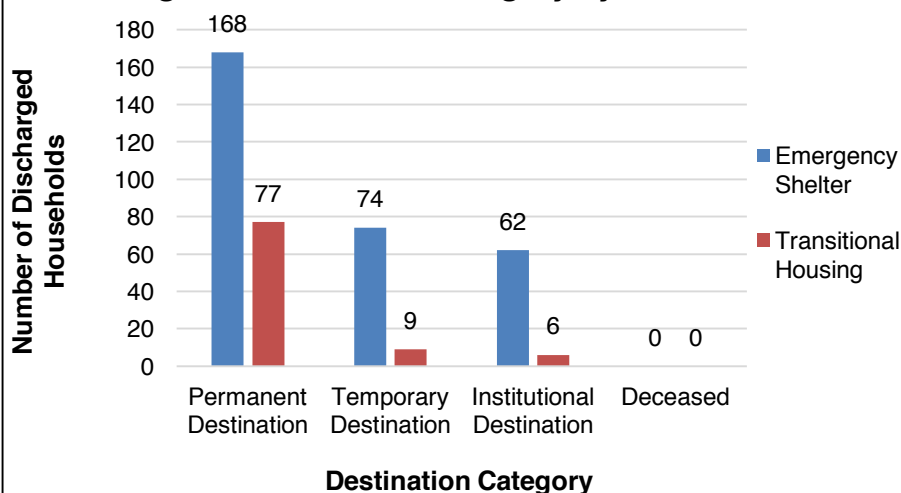
When looking at total length of project stay, families seemed to have longer lengths of stay in emergency shelters while individuals stayed longer in transitional housing projects. When comparing the average lengths of stay in 2015 to those in 2014, the average length of stay increased by 7 days for emergency shelter projects and increased by 16 days for transitional housing projects in 2015.

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



**Reason and Destination at Discharge.** A total of 472 households were discharged from emergency shelter and transitional housing projects during the 2015 reporting period. 50% of these households were discharged upon project completion, while 10% were discharged due to the project's inability to meet the household's needs.

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



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

52% of households discharged in 2015 moved on to permanent destinations upon discharge from the project. A permanent destination includes a unit owned or rented by a client, a permanent housing project, or living with a family

member or friend permanently. The most common permanent destination was rental by client with 39% of total households moving into a rental upon discharge. This rental could be with or without a subsidy. 18% 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 emergency shelter, which was reported by 10% of households. An institutional destination, which was the destination of 14% 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 a medical hospital with 9% of households being discharged to this location.

## Appendix A: HMIS Projects Included in Report

### I. Emergency Shelter Projects

Agency	Project Name
Bergen County Board of Social Services	BCBSS Motel Placement
Bergen County Housing Health and Human Services Center	CCCCDC Center Single Shelter
Family Promise of Bergen County	FPBC Family Shelter Program

### II. Transitional Housing Projects

Agency	Project Name
Bergen County Department of Human Services	Community Hope – AJTHV
	Visions
Comprehensive Behavioral Health Care	CBHC 19 Spruce
	CBHC 292 Newark
Family Promise of Bergen County	FPBC TH Family Apartments
Greater Bergen Community Action	GBCA Family Transitional Housing
	GBCA Ladder
	GBCA Ladder II
	GBCA Phases
	GBCA Shepherd House
Vantage	Vantage – Hille Place