Burlington 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 Burlington County analyzed data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) administered by the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (NJHMFA), 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 502 households were served in HMIS participating emergency shelter and transitional housing projects during the January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2015 period
- There were 79 households identified as chronically homeless during this reporting period
- 40% of all adults served either as individuals or as part of a family identified having a disabling condition
- 30% of households moved on to permanent destinations after discharge

Total Homeless Population. A total of 502 households composed of 1,177 persons were housed in Burlington County CoC HMIS participating emergency shelter or transitional housing projects during the January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2015 reporting period. This is a 21% increase in the total number of households served from 2014 and an

Fig. 1. Total Households Served

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

8% increase from the 1,085 persons served in 2014. Out of the households served in 2015, the majority, 56% (283 households) were families, while the remaining 44% (219) were individuals. As shown in Figure 1, the most served population was families in emergency shelter projects, which accounted for 54% of the total population.
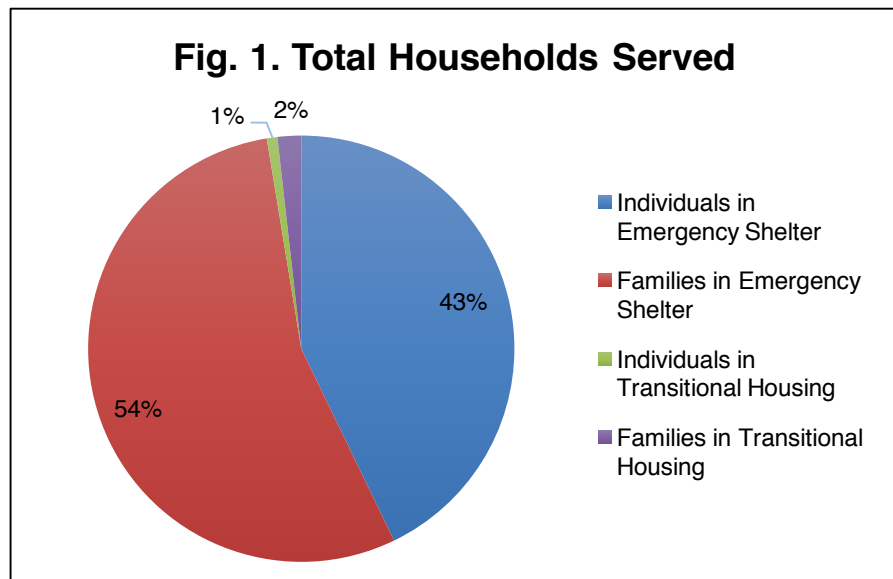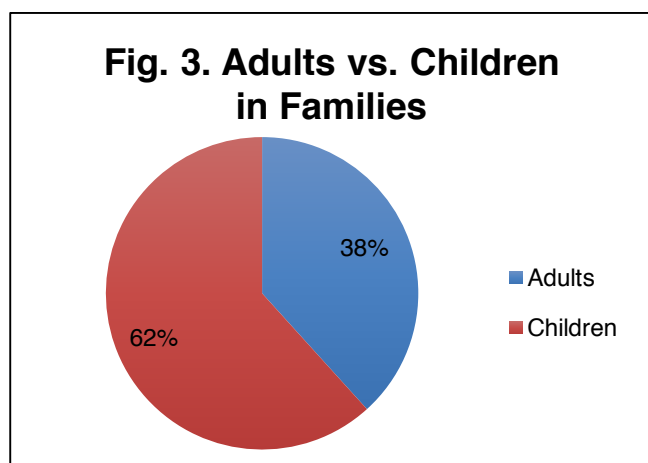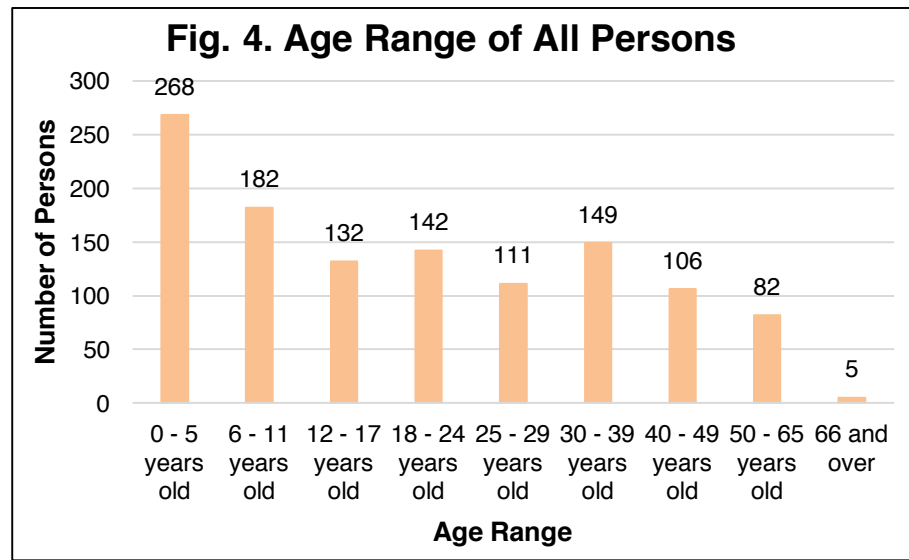
Fig. 2 Total Persons Served		
	Burlington County	**New Jersey**
Total Persons Served	1,177	24,519
Emergency Shelter	1,140	20,337
Individuals	215	13,108
Families	925	7,229
Transitional Housing	37	4,134
Individuals	4	2,116
Families	33	2,018

Family Composition. Of the 283 family households served throughout Burlington County in 2015, 272 (96%) were households with adults and children under 18, 9 (3%) were adult only households while the remaining 2 (1%) were youth only households. 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 2015 was 3 and the average age of a child served between the two project types was 7 years old.

Fig. 3. Adults vs. Children in Families

- Adults
- Children

Demographics. Of the total homeless population that was served in Burlington County CoC during 2015, the largest percent, 49%, of persons were children under 18. 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.
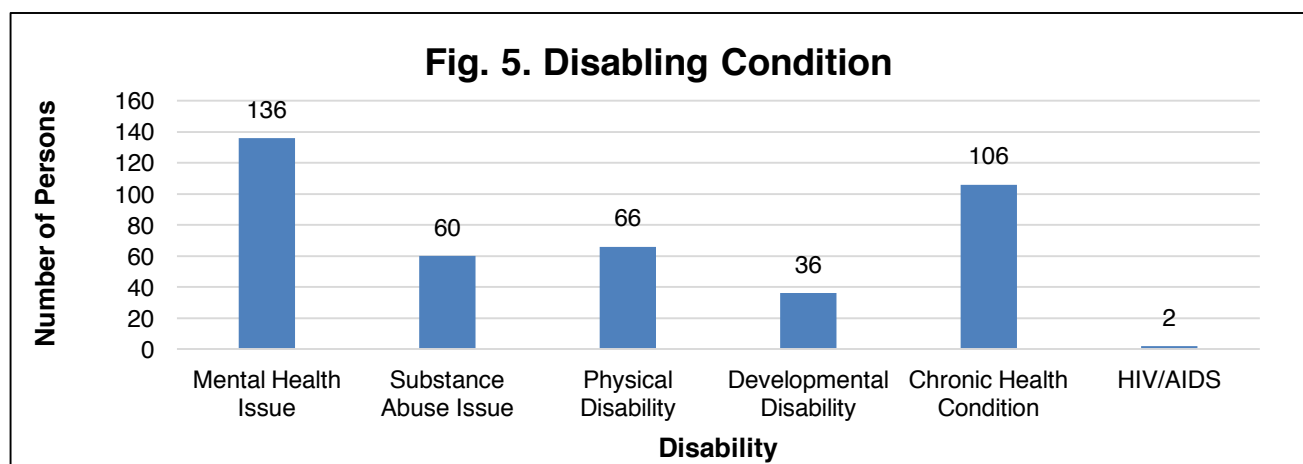
Fig. 4. Age Range of All Persons

Similar to the 2014 numbers, more than half (53%) of the homeless persons served in Burlington County HMIS participating projects were female, with men representing 47% of the population.

In addition, 62% of the homeless persons served during 2015 identified their race as Black or African American, making that the largest racial subgroup. The next largest was White (32%), followed by Multi-Racial with 3%. With regards to ethnicity, 10% identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino.

Disabling Conditions. Among all persons served throughout Burlington County's HMIS emergency shelter and transitional housing projects, 23% identified having a disabling condition, this number includes 40% of adults and 6% of children.

Among disabled adults, 54% reported a mental health issue, making this the most prevalent disability; representing 21% of the total adult homeless population. 37% of disabled adults also reported a chronic health condition. Among disabled children, 54% reported a chronic health condition. Another 40% of disabled children reported a developmental disability.

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 2015, Burlington County projects served a total of 79 households that

Fig. 6. Households by Subpopulation

were identified as chronically homeless, an 80% increase from the 44 served in 2014. 100% of the chronic households served in 2015 were served in emergency shelters (46 were families).

There were 3 youth only households, households without someone over age 18, served throughout Burlington County CoC HMIS projects in 2015. All 3 were served in emergency shelters. One was an individual youth while the other 2 were youth families.

As far as veterans served, Burlington County projects served a total of 30 veterans throughout 2015. 60% of veterans served were individuals and 30% were female. All of the veterans served were served in emergency shelter projects. 57% of veterans reported having some kind of disability, with the most common disability reported being a mental health issue (53%).
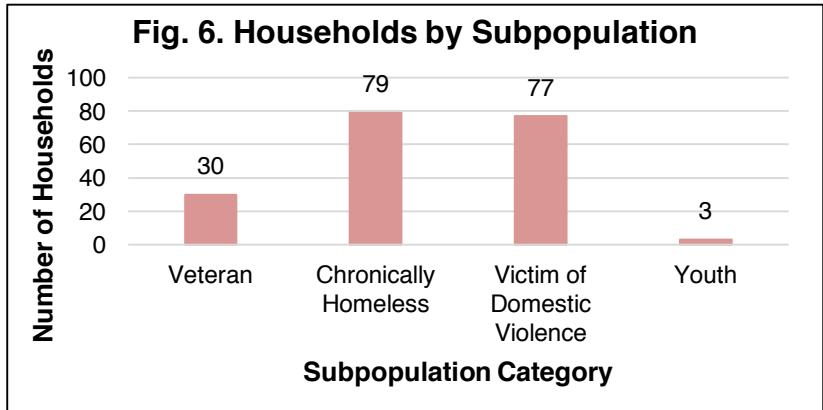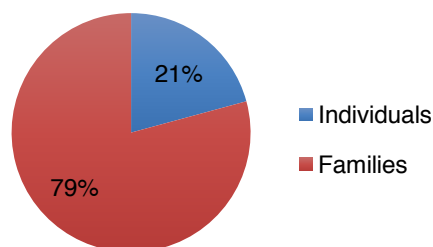
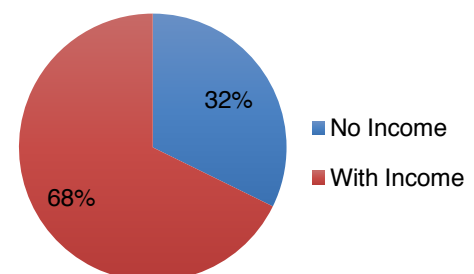**Fig. 7. Household Type Among Victims of Domestic Violence**

In addition to the chronic, youth and veteran populations, there were 77 homeless households that reported having a victim of domestic violence. 79% of these households were families, while the remaining 16 were individuals. 34% reported that the last episode of domestic violence occurred over a year ago, while 32% reported it happening within the past 3 months. The majority of the domestic violence victims (99%) 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.
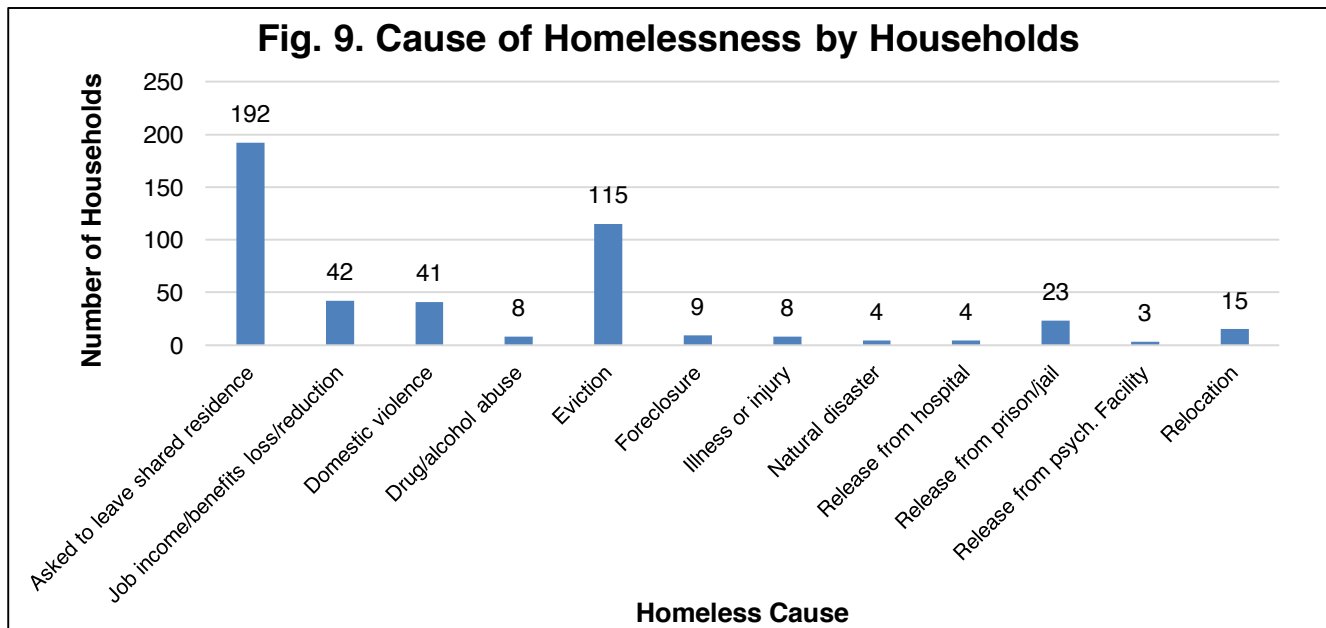
Income and Benefits. Among all homeless households served in emergency shelter or transitional housing projects during 2015, 32% had no source of income, while 7% reported receiving some form of earned income. The most common sources of cash income among households were TANF (38%) and SSI (21%). The average monthly income for households was $384 for emergency shelter and $694 for households served in transitional housing projects.

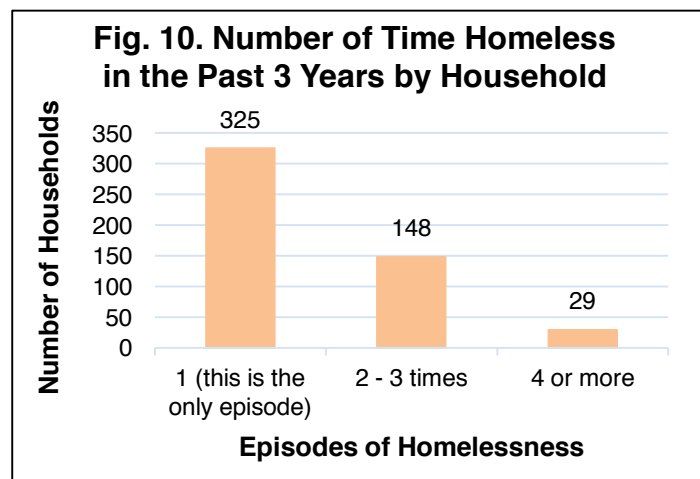**Fig. 8. Percentage of Households with Income**

While 68% of households had some source of income, 83% of households were receiving some kind of non-cash benefit. Medicaid was the top reported non-cash benefit, reported by 70% of households, followed by Food Stamps, reported by 68%.

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 (38%) than any other cause. As Figure 9 shows, the next most common factors were eviction (23%) and job income or benefits loss or reduction (8%).

Fig. 9. Cause of Homelessness by Households

The most common response for residence prior to project entry was staying or living with family or friends, with 43% of households. The next most common response was emergency shelter (28%) followed by rental by client (6%).
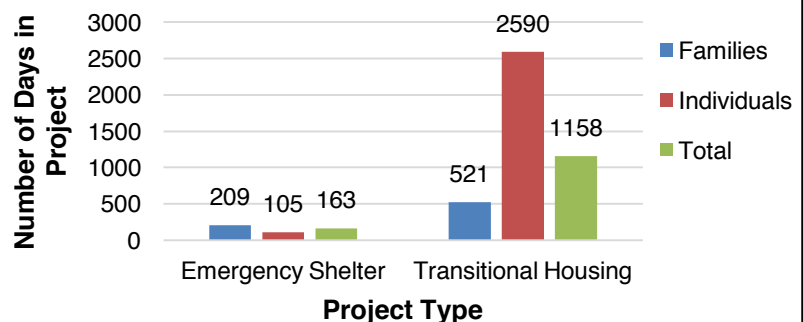
Length of Stay at Prior Residence and Episodes of Homelessness. 25% of households served during 2015 had stated they resided in their last residence for one year or longer before entering the emergency shelter or transitional housing project, while 11% were there one week or less. Additionally, only 6% 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.

Fig. 10. Number of Time Homeless in the Past 3 Years by Household
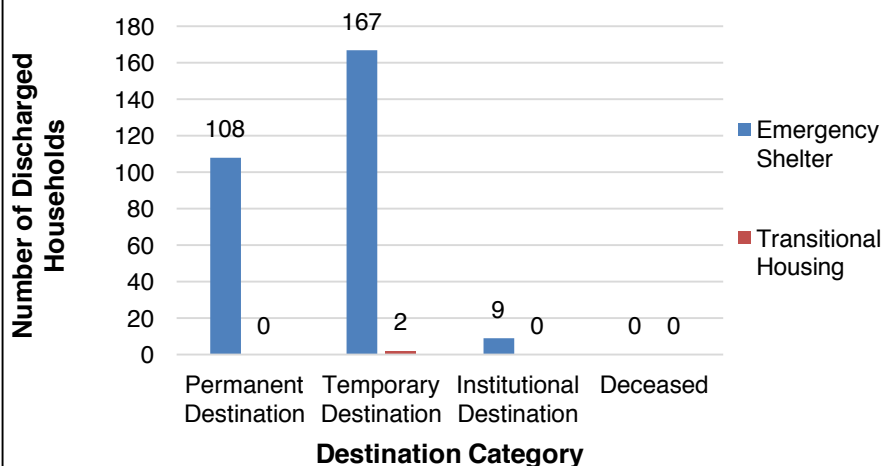
Average Length of Project Stay.
When looking at total length of project stay, families seemed to have longer lengths of program stay in emergency shelters, but shorter stays in transitional housing projects. When comparing the average lengths of stay in 2015 to those in 2014, the average length of stay decreased by 21 days for emergency shelter projects, but increased by 325 days, or just over 10 months, for transitional housing projects in 2015.

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

Reason and Destination at Discharge. A total of 360 households were discharged from emergency shelter and transitional housing projects during the 2015 reporting period. 30% of these households were discharged upon project completion, while 19% were discharged due to reaching the maximum time allowed in the program.

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.

30% 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 21% of total households moving into a rental upon discharge. This rental could be with or without a subsidy. 47% 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 25% 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 destinations were a medical hospital or jail, with 3 households being discharged to each location.

Appendix A: HMIS Projects Included in Report

I. Emergency Shelter Projects

Agency	Project Name
Belmont Home Housing Program	Belmont Homes ES
Christian Caring Center	CCC-Citizens Serving the Homeless
	CCC-Code Blue
	CCC-Jack Stelle Men's Shelter
Extended Hand Ministries	TEHM-Extended Hand Ministries Code Blue
Interfaith Hospitality Network	IHN Emergency Shelter
	IHN-Triple Towns Code Blue Initiative
Transitional Housing Services Inc	EA THSI Transitional Housing

II. Transitional Housing Projects

Agency	Project Name
Burlington County Community Action Program	BCCAP – Veterans TH Program
	BCCAP – Working Poor Program
Transitional Housing Services Inc	THSI TH
Twin Oaks Community Services	TOCS-Family Service Haven