



Somerset 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 Somerset 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 240 households were served in HMIS participating emergency shelter and transitional housing projects during the January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2015 period
- There were 70 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
- 72% of households moved on to permanent destinations after discharge

Total Homeless Population.

A total of 240 households composed of 282 persons were housed in Somerset County CoC HMIS participating emergency shelter or transitional housing projects during the January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2015 reporting period. This is a 53% increase in the total number of households served from 2014 and a 32% increase from the

213 persons served in 2014. Out of the households served in 2015, the large majority, 91% (219) were individuals, while the remaining 9% (21 households) were families. As shown in Figure 1, the most served population was individuals in transitional housing projects, which accounted for 76% of the total population.

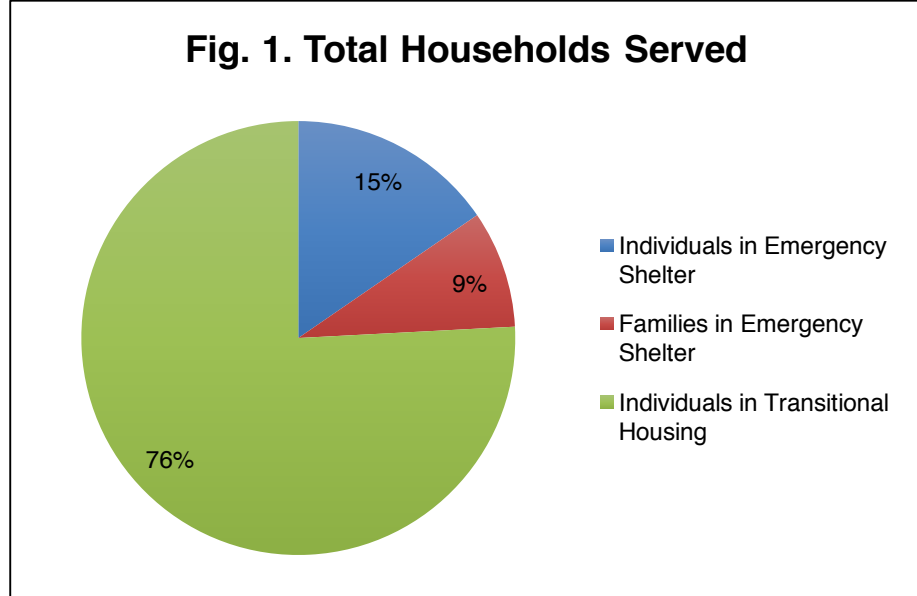
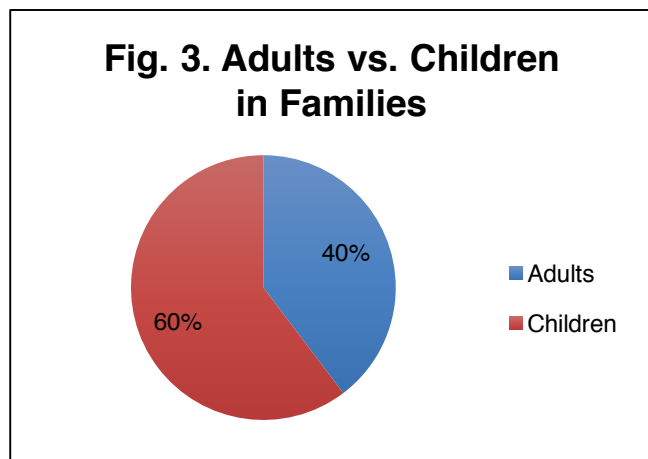
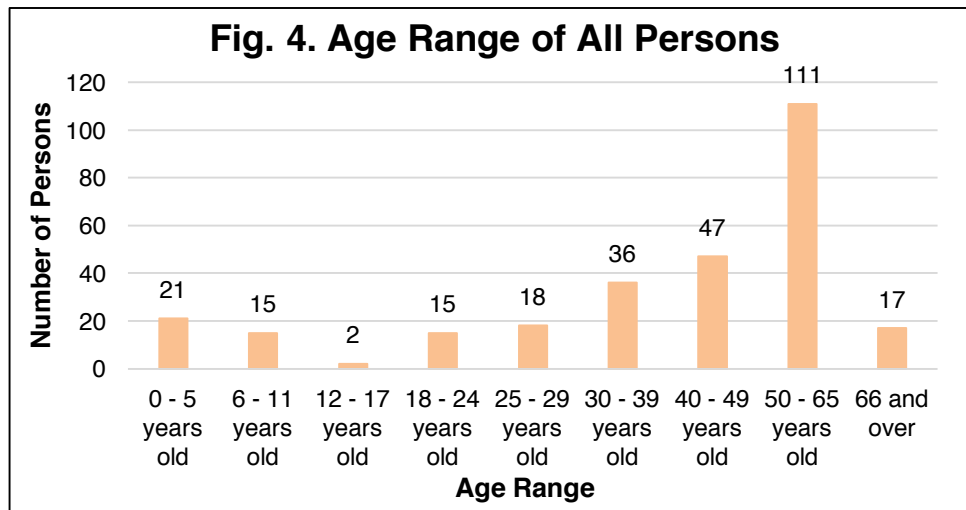


Fig. 2 Total Persons Served		
	Somerset County	New Jersey
Total Persons Served	282	24,519
Emergency Shelter	100	20,337
Individuals	37	13,108
Families	63	7,229
Transitional Housing	182	4,134
Individuals	182	2,116
Families	0	2,018

Family Composition. Of the 21 family households served throughout Somerset County in 2015, all were households with adults and children under 18. 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 5 years old.



Demographics. Of the total homeless population that was served in Somerset County CoC during 2015, the largest percent, 39%, 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 40 and 49, which represented 17% of the total population.

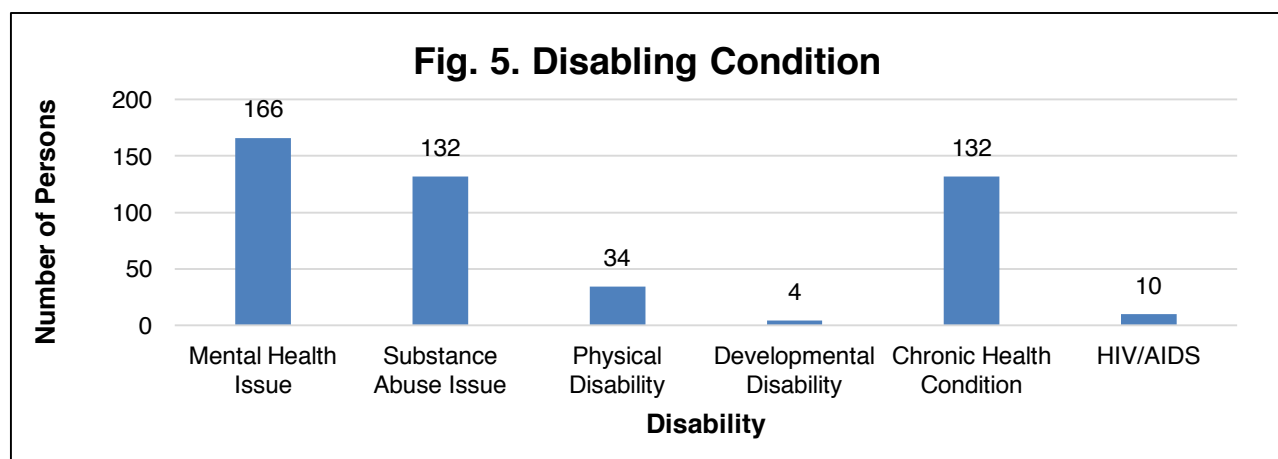


Similar to the 2014 numbers, more than half (68%) of the homeless persons served in Somerset County HMIS participating projects were male, with women representing 32% of the population.

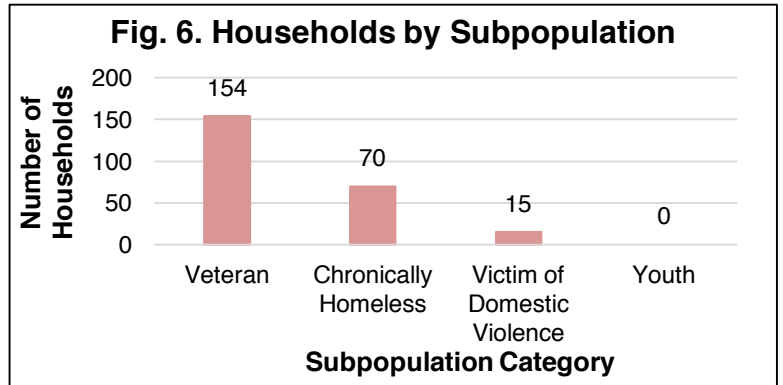
In addition, 51% of the homeless persons served during 2015 identified their race as Black or African American, making that the largest racial subgroup. The next largest was White (43%), followed by Multi-Racial with 4%. With regards to ethnicity, 18% identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino.

Disabling Conditions. Among all persons served throughout Somerset County's HMIS emergency shelter and transitional housing projects, 74% identified having a disabling condition, this number includes 84% of adults and 8% of children.

Among disabled adults, 81% reported a mental health issue, making this the most prevalent disability; representing 68% of the total adult homeless population. 64% of disabled adults also reported a substance abuse issue. Among disabled children, 67% reported a developmental disability. Another 33% of disabled children reported a chronic health condition.



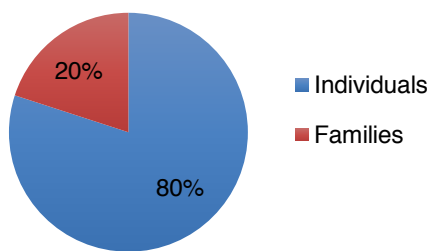
Subpopulation Characteristics. In its plan, Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) has prioritized ending youth, veteran and chronic homelessness across the Country. In 2015, Somerset County CoC projects served a total of 70 households that were identified as chronically homeless, a 67% increase from the 42 chronically homeless households served in 2014. 93% of the chronic households served in 2015 were individuals in transitional housing. The remaining 7% were served in emergency shelter (3 were families).



There were no youth only households, households without someone over age 18, served throughout Somerset County CoC HMIS projects in 2015.

As far as veterans served, Somerset County projects served a total of 154 veterans throughout 2015. All of the veterans served were individuals in transitional housing projects and only 6% were female. 99% of veterans reported having some kind of disability, with the most common disability reported being a mental health issue (81%).

Fig. 7. Household Type Among Victims of Domestic Violence

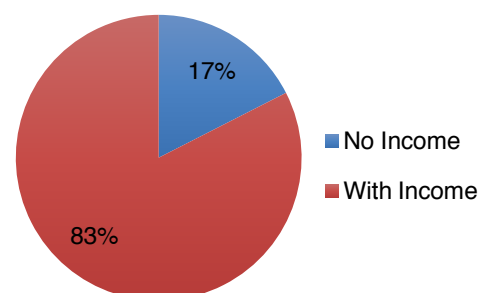


In addition to the chronic, youth and veteran populations, there were 15 homeless households that reported having a victim of domestic violence. 80% of these households were individuals, while the remaining 3 were families. 27% reported that the last episode of domestic violence occurred over a year ago, while 27% reported it happening within the past 3 months. The majority of the domestic violence victims (73%) were served in emergency 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.

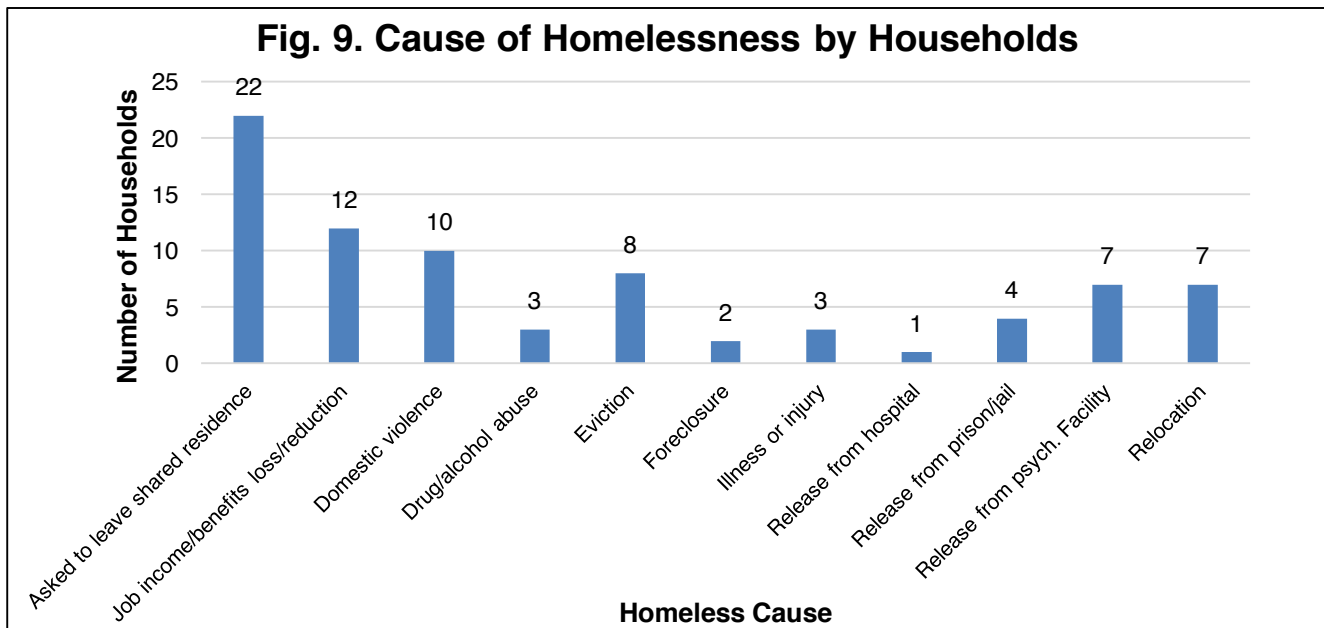
Income and Benefits. Among all homeless households served in emergency shelter or transitional housing projects during 2015, 17% had no source of income, while 23% reported receiving some form of earned income. The most common sources of cash income among households were SSI (26%) and earned income (23%). The average monthly income for households was \$390 for emergency shelter and \$1,320 for households served in transitional housing projects.

Fig. 8. Percentage of Households with Income



While 83% of households had some source of income, 93% of households were receiving some kind of non-cash benefit. VA Medical Services was the top reported non-cash benefit, reported by 63% of households, followed by Food Stamps, reported by 37%.

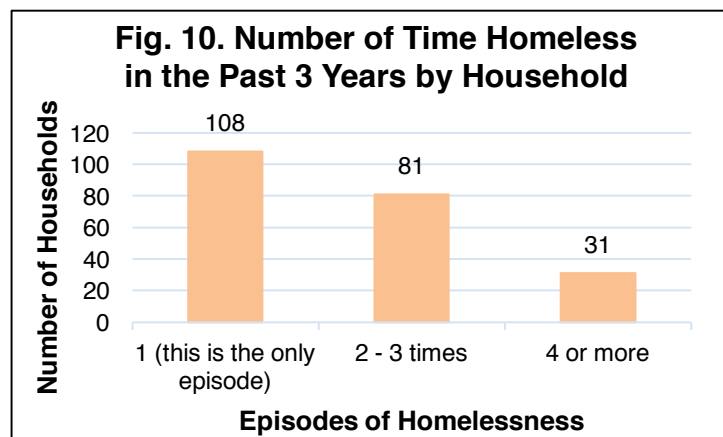
Cause of Homelessness and Residence Prior to Project Entry. When asked what the primary factor was that contributed to, or caused, their homelessness, more households attributed their homelessness to being asked to leave a shared residence (9%) than any other cause. As Figure 9 shows, the next most common factors were job income or benefits loss or reduction (19%) and domestic violence (4%).



The most common response for residence prior to project entry was a transitional housing program, with 35% of households. The next most common response was emergency shelter (22%) followed by staying or living with friends or family (16%).

Length of Stay at Prior Residence and Episodes of Homelessness.

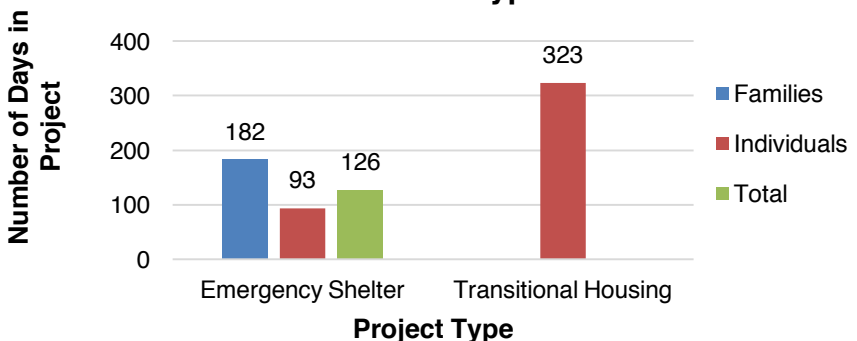
18% of households served during 2015 had stated they resided in their last residence for one year or longer before entering the emergency shelter or transitional housing project, while 2% were there one week or less. Additionally, only 13% of households experienced 4 or more episodes of homelessness in the past 3 years, while 45% of households were experiencing their first episode of homelessness prior to project entry, as shown in Figure 10.



Average Length of Project Stay.

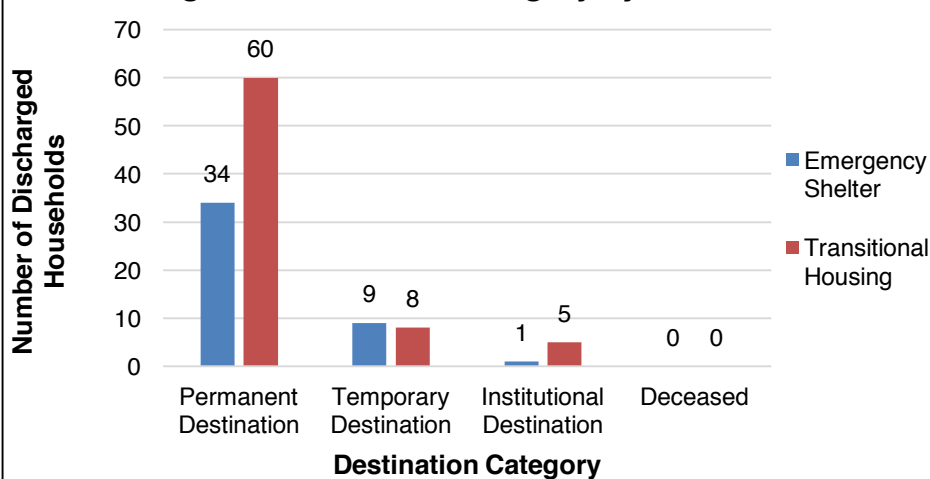
When looking at total length of project stay, families seemed to have longer lengths of program stay in emergency shelter projects than individuals. When comparing the average lengths of stay in 2015 to those in 2014, the average length of stay increased by 6 days for emergency shelter and increased by 53 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 131 households were discharged from emergency shelter and transitional housing projects during the 2015 reporting period. 21% of these households were discharged upon project completion, while 6% left for a housing opportunity prior to completing 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.

72% 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 47% of total households moving into a rental upon discharge. This rental could be with or without a subsidy. 13% 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 5% of households. An institutional destination, which was the destination of 5% 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 psychiatric hospital or facility and a residential project or halfway house with 2 households each.

Appendix A: HMIS Projects Included in Report**I. Emergency Shelter Projects**

Agency	Project Name
Volunteers of America Delaware Valley	VOADV-Agape House

II. Transitional Housing Projects

Agency	Project Name
Alternatives	Alt-Franklin House
	Alt-Transitional Housing
Community Hope	Community Hope – Hope for Veterans A
	Community Hope – Hope for Veterans B