New Jersey
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 the State of New Jersey analyzed data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) administered by the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (NJHMFA), Middlesex CoC HMIS and Bergen CoC HMIS systems. The projects included in this report were all Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing and Safe Haven projects 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.
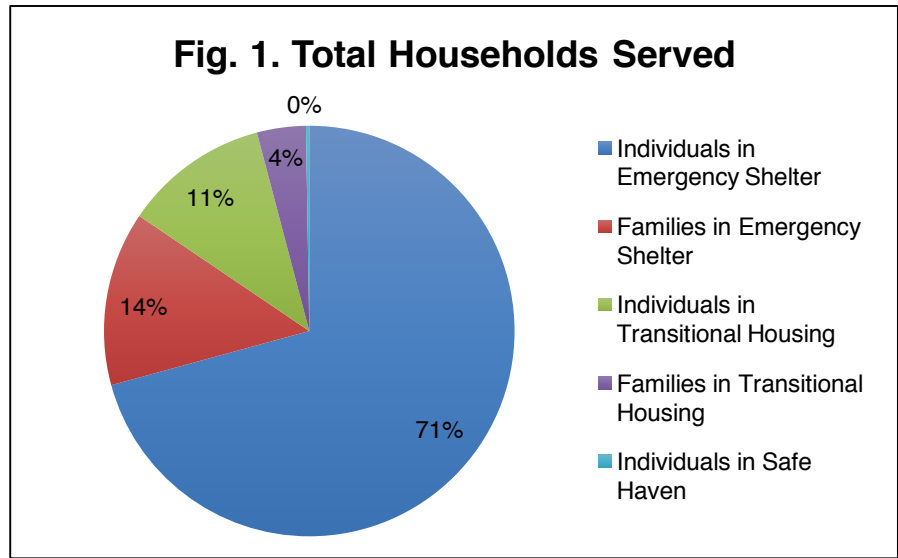
III. Findings for Total Population Served

Key Findings:

- A total of 18,527 households were served in HMIS participating emergency shelter, transitional housing and safe haven projects during the January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2015 period
- There were 1,572 households identified as chronically homeless during this reporting period
- 50% of all adults served either as individuals or as part of a family identified having a disabling condition
- 40% of households moved on to permanent destinations after discharge
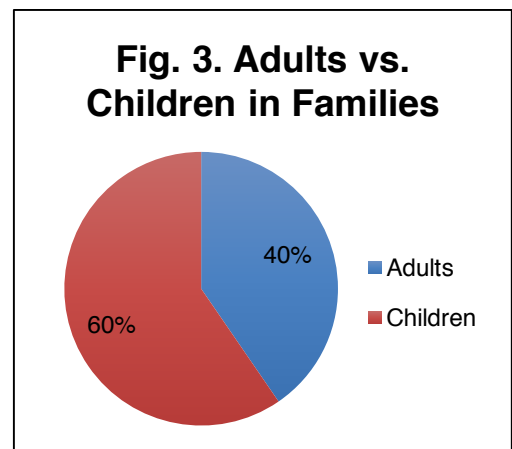
Total Homeless Population. A total of 18,527 households composed of 24,519 persons were housed in New Jersey HMIS participating emergency shelter, transitional housing or safe haven projects during the January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2015 reporting period. This is a 6% decrease in the total number of households served from 2014 and a 3% decrease from the

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

25,327 persons served in 2014. Out of the households served in 2015, the large majority, 82% (15,272) were individuals, while the remaining 18% (3,255 households) were families. As shown in Figure 1, the most served population was individuals in emergency shelter projects, which accounted for 71% of the total population.
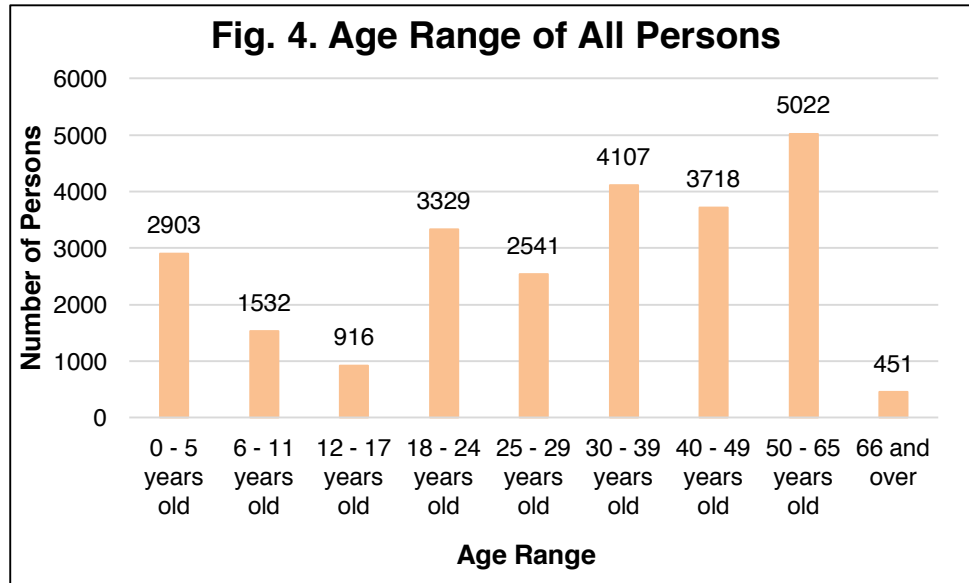
Fig. 2 Total Persons Served Statewide		
	2014	**2015**
Total Persons Served	25,327	24,519
Emergency Shelter	20,800	20,337
Individuals	14,143	13,108
Families	6,657	7,229
Transitional Housing	4,343	4,134
Individuals	2,256	2,116
Families	2,087	2,018
Safe Haven	184	48
Individuals	184	48
Families	0	0

Family Composition. Of the 3,255 family households served throughout New Jersey in 2015, 3,045 (94%) were households with adults and children under 18, 205 (6%) were adult only households, while the remaining 5 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 2015 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

- Adults
- Children

Demographics. Of the total homeless population that was served in New Jersey during 2015, the largest percent, 24%, of persons were between the ages of 18 and 29. As Figure 4 shows, the next highest age range served was children under the age of 18, which represented 22% of the total population.

Fig. 4. Age Range of All Persons

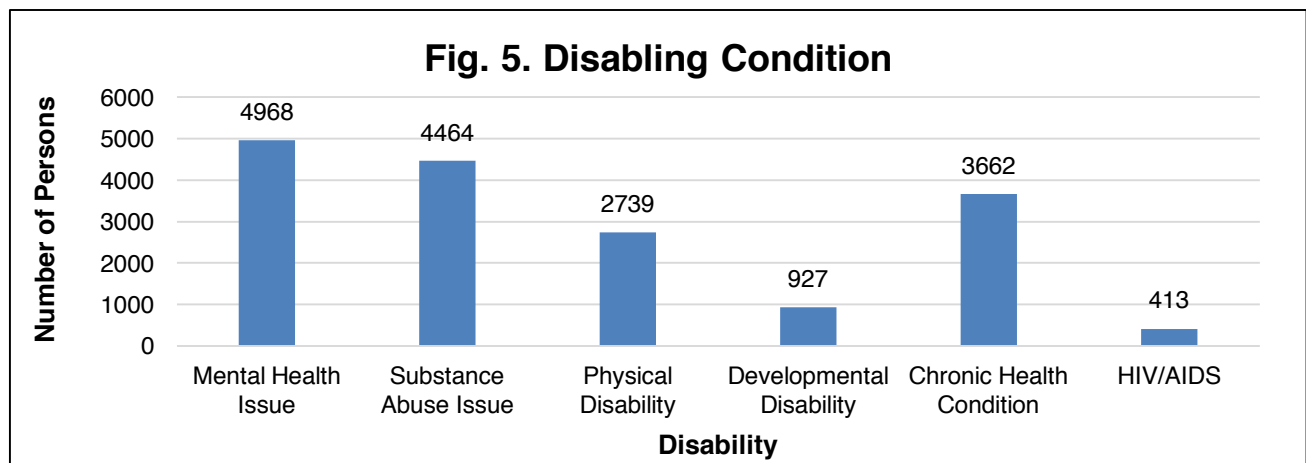| Age Range	Number of Persons
0 - 5 years old	2903
6 - 11 years old	1532
12 - 17 years old	916
18 - 24 years old	3329
25 - 29 years old	2541
30 - 39 years old	4107
40 - 49 years old	3718
50 - 65 years old	5022
66 and over	451

Similar to the 2014 numbers, more than half (58%) of the homeless persons served in New Jersey HMIS participating projects were male, with women representing 42% of the population. 20 persons served in 2015 identified as transgendered.
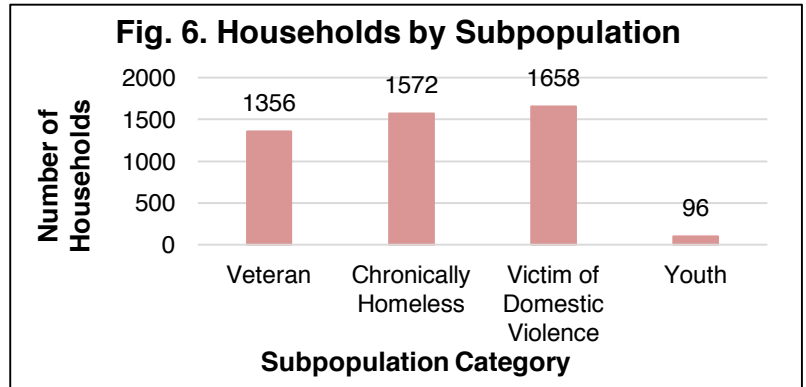
In addition, 54% of the homeless persons served during 2015 identified their race as Black or African American, making that the largest racial subgroup. The next largest was White (41%), followed by Multi-Racial with 2%. With regards to ethnicity, 19% identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino.

Disabling Conditions. Among all persons served throughout New Jersey's HMIS emergency shelter, transitional housing and safe haven projects, 41% identified having a disabling condition, this number includes 50% of adults and 7% of children.

Among disabled adults, 51% reported a mental health issue making this the most prevalent disability; representing 25% of the total adult homeless population. 47% of disabled adults also reported a substance abuse issue. Among disabled children, 42% reported having a developmental disability. Another 40% of disabled children reported a chronic health condition.
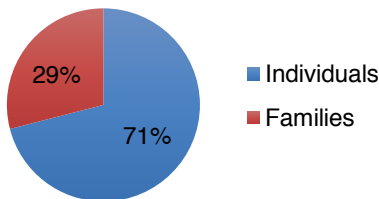
Fig. 5. Disabling Condition

Disability	Number of Persons
Mental Health Issue	4968
Substance Abuse Issue	4464
Physical Disability	2739
Developmental Disability	927
Chronic Health Condition	3662
HIV/AIDS	413

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, New Jersey projects served a total of 1,572

Fig. 6. Households by Subpopulation

households that were identified as chronically homeless, a 15% decrease from the 1,842 chronically homeless households served in 2014. 82% of the chronic households served in 2015 were in emergency shelters (97 were families); 17% were served in transitional housing (30 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 91 individual youth and 5 youth only families, which included a total of 11 persons. The majority of these households (66%) were served in emergency shelter projects.

As far as veterans served, New Jersey projects served a total of 1,356 veterans throughout 2015. 96% of veterans served were individuals and only 9% were female. 58% of the veterans served were served in emergency shelter projects. 72% of veterans reported having some kind of disability, with the most common disability reported being a mental health issue (57%).

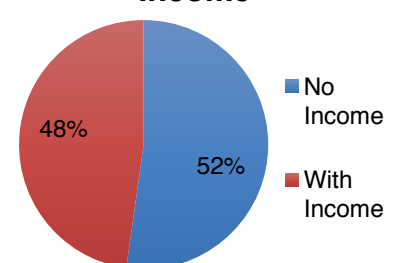**Fig. 7. Household Type Among Victims of Domestic Violence**

In addition to the chronic, youth and veteran populations, there were 1,658 homeless households that reported having a victim of domestic violence. 71% of these households were individuals, while the remaining 481 were families. 43% reported that the last episode of domestic violence occurred over a year ago, while 29% reported it happening within the past 3 months. The majority of the domestic violence victims (90%) 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.
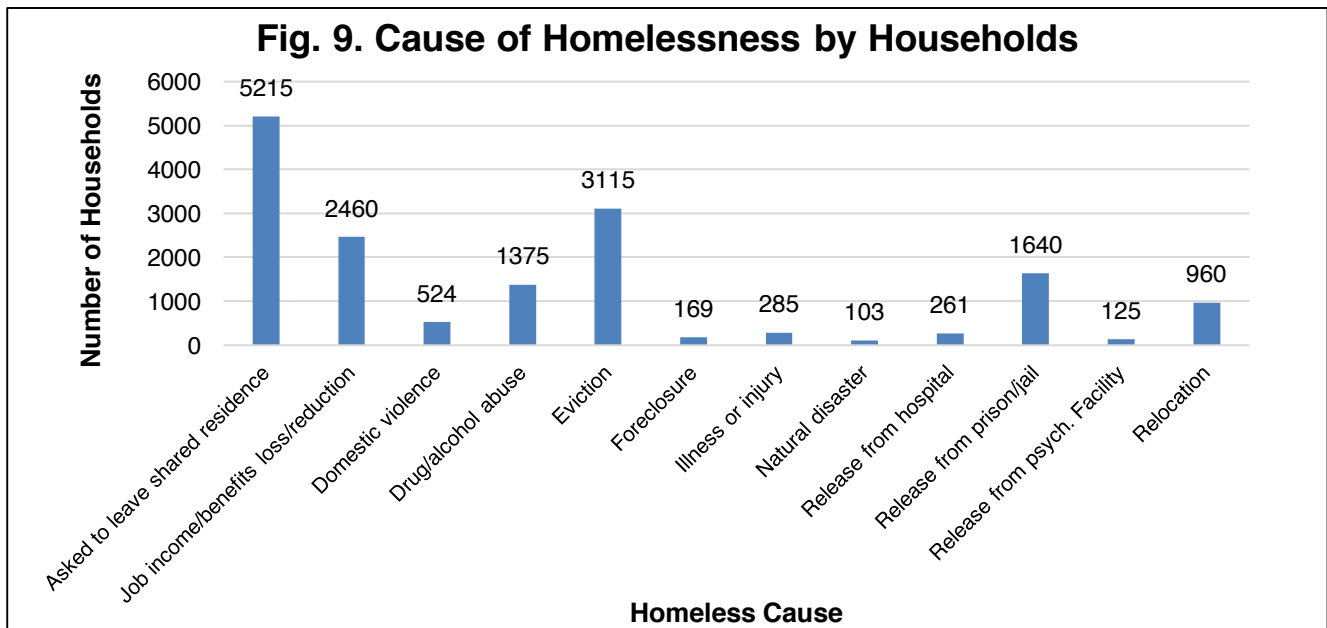
Income and Benefits. Among all homeless households served in 2015, 52% had no source of income, while 12% reported receiving some form of earned income. The most common sources of cash income among households were SSI (20%) and earned income (12%). The average monthly income for households was $285 for emergency shelter, $478 for safe haven, and $627 for households served in transitional housing projects.

Fig. 8. Percentage of Households with Income

While 48% of households had some source of income, 60% of households were receiving some kind of non-cash benefit. Medicaid was the top reported non-cash benefit, which was reported by 44% of households. Another 41% reported receiving Food Stamps.
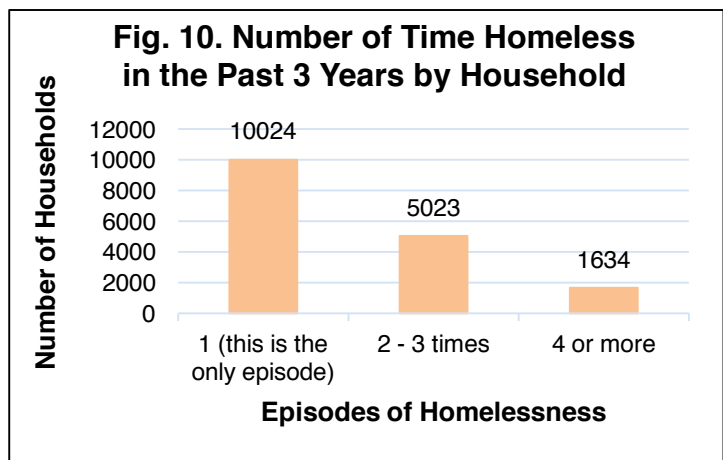
Cause of Homelessness and Residence Prior to Project Entry. When asked what the primary factor was that contributed to, or caused, their homelessness, more households attributed their homelessness to being asked to leave a shared residence (28%) than any other cause. As Figure 9 shows, the next most common factors were eviction (17%) and job income or benefits loss or reduction (13%).

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 38% of households. The next most common response was emergency shelter (19%) followed by place not meant for human habitation (11%).
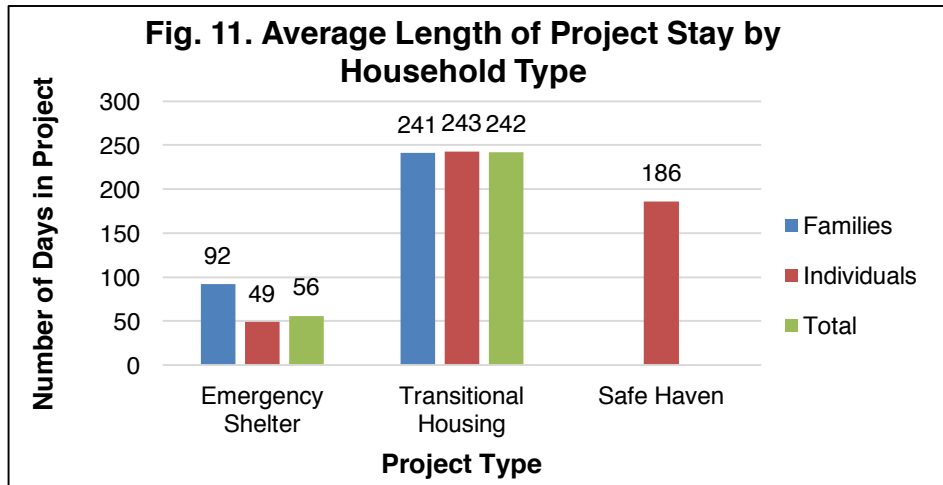
Length of Stay at Prior Residence and Episodes of Homelessness. 28% of households served during 2015 had stated they resided in their last residence for one year or longer before entering the emergency shelter, transitional housing or safe haven project, while 16% were there one week or less. Similarly, only 9% of households experienced 4 or more episodes of homelessness in the past 3 years, while 54% 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
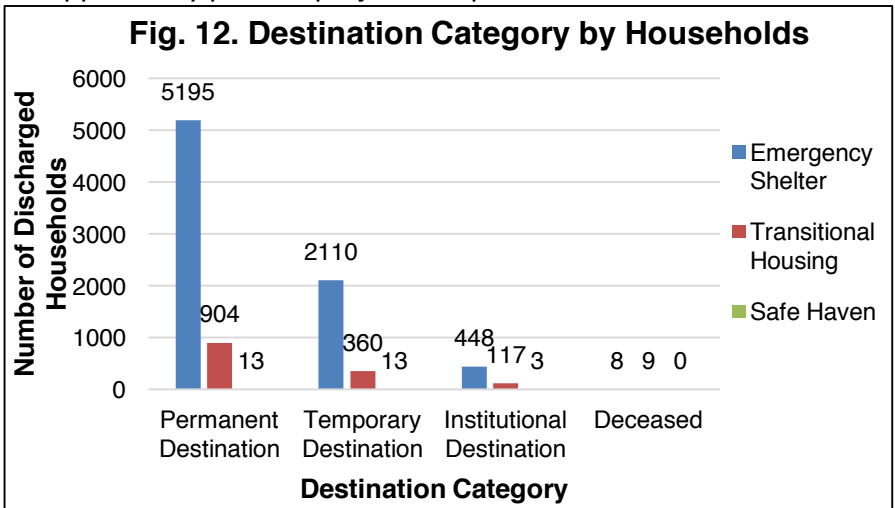
Average Length of Project Stay. When looking at total length of project stay, families seemed to have longer lengths of program stays in emergency shelters but shorter in transitional housing projects. When comparing the average lengths of stay in 2015 to those in 2014, the average

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

length of stay decreased by 14 days for emergency shelter projects, but increased by 15 days for transitional housing, and increased by 111 days for safe havens in 2015.

Reason and Destination at Discharge. A total of 15,275 households were discharged from emergency shelter, transitional housing and safe haven projects during the 2015 reporting period. 25% of these households were discharged upon project completion, while 11% left for a housing opportunity prior to project completion.

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.

40% 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 31% of total households moving into a rental upon discharge. This rental could be with or without a subsidy. 16% 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 7% of 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. The most common institutional destination was jail or prison with 1% of households.