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Code Blue Legislation May Impact Sheltered #NJCounts 2018 Homeless Numbers #NJCounts 2018 Reaches out to Homeless Families, Youth and Veterans

January 22, 2018 – On Wednesday, January, 24, 2018, #NJCounts 2018, the statewide Point-in-Time count of the homeless will take place across the state counting individuals and households who experience homelessness. Exact times of the count may vary by county. Local county press contacts are available [here](#).

Organizations, agencies and others that plan community efforts to end homelessness will conduct the local counts. For the fifth year, Monarch Housing Associates is coordinating the annual statewide NJCounts.

NJCounts 2017 found 8,532 homeless men, women and children, in 6,340 households, across the state of New Jersey. This 2017 number decreased by 409 persons (4.6%) from 2016. Statewide and individual county NJCounts 2017 reports are available [here](#).

“NJCounts 2018 showcases local communities’ work to end homelessness by illustrating the depth and breadth of the need for housing resources,” said Taiisa Kelly, Senior Associate with Monarch Housing which directs NJCounts 2017. “Many NJ communities make great strides in ending homelessness using a Housing First approach, rapidly re-Housing homeless households, and implementing coordinated assessment to strategically prioritize scarce resources.”

“However, there are still thousands of our fellow New Jerseyans who do not have a home in the middle of winter,” said Kelly. “This year, Code Blue legislation ensures that our unsheltered homeless neighbors have warming centers to go to on the coldest nights. However, our resolution to end homelessness for everyone in our state calls for understanding the need through NJCounts, wisely utilizing our existing resources, and advocating for the funding for affordable housing that is needed to finish the work.”

Monarch Housing expects to make the final report available in spring 2018.

“HUD remains committed to eliminating homelessness in the Garden State and has continued to support successful actions like the ones that certified Bergen and Middlesex Counties for ending veteran homelessness,” said Lynne Patton, HUD Regional Administrator for New York and New Jersey. “Earlier this month, HUD provided \$2 billion to Continuums of Care - \$45.9 million in New Jersey - so they can continue to serve this vulnerable population while making Housing First a priority.”

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) mandates the statewide Point-in-Time count of the homeless. HUD mandates that local communities conduct a sheltered count each year and additionally an unsheltered count every other year. Although, 2018 is not a mandated unsheltered count year, HUD strongly encourages communities to conduct unsheltered counts this year.

According to Monarch Housing Associates, factors that will contribute to this year’s count of homeless families, youth and veterans include:

- New Jersey enacted Code Blue legislation requiring all counties to provide emergency warming centers to all individuals experiencing homelessness during severe winter weather events and when temperatures are frigid,
- An increased demand on the homelessness system,
- A shortage of rental housing driving up demand and costs and putting more stress on homelessness services,
- Failure by Congress to increase funding for the federal Housing Choice Voucher program,
- New Jersey continues to have a higher than national average rate of foreclosures; foreclosures cause many owners and renters to lose their homes, and
- Many jobs in New Jersey do not pay a living wage and jobs with living wage are leaving the state.



“The annual Point in Time Count has taken place on some of the most dangerously cold days of the year. Activating Code Blue warming centers on these days would allow counties to capture a more accurate count of their homeless residents that could ultimately lead to resources to help end homelessness,” said Staci Berger, President and CEO, Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey. “It is absolutely essential that counties comply with the state law and develop robust Code Blue plans.”

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), in 2016, a family in New Jersey must earn a housing wage of \$27.31/hour to rent a two-bedroom apartment and the Fair Market Rent for a two-bedroom apartment in is \$1,420/month. The State of New Jersey has the opportunity to support the creation of new affordable housing across the state through the enforcement of the Council of Affordable Housing (COAH.)

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 165,800 people in 70,000 New Jersey households use a voucher to afford decent, privately owned housing. In 2018, New Jersey could lose 5,500 vouchers if Congress does not increase renewal funding sufficiently to cover rising rents and other costs. This loss of vouchers would worsen homelessness and housing instability among low-income residents. In July 2018, advocates plan to return to Washington, DC for a Congressional Reception to push for increased federal funding for vouchers and homeless services. Congress must continue to increase and sustain its commitment to ending homelessness.

“Recent figures show that homelessness is increasing across the country but decreasing in New Jersey,” said Kelly. “We need to fight cuts to federal funding that ends homelessness. I urge service providers, advocates and concerned citizens to join Monarch Housing in Washington in July to advocate for increased federal funding for vouchers and homeless services.”

The solution to homelessness includes creating the necessary supply of supportive housing – permanent, affordable and independent rental housing with available support services. The NJCounts 2018 results will help to implement and expand on strategies proven to be best practices in ending homelessness. NJCounts 2017 helped design state initiatives creating permanent supportive housing including Housing First and Moving On initiatives and project based voucher programs.

Volunteers will seek out homeless residents who spent the night of January 23, 2018 in shelters, in the woods, under bridges, in vacant buildings and at other locations where they are forced to live because there is insufficient affordable or supportive housing. On January 24, 2018, many local communities will hold Project Homelessness Connect events that connect homeless individuals with a hot meal, warm clothes, services and housing applications.

For more information about Monarch Housing’s work to ensure that every person will have quality affordable, permanent supportive housing that fosters freedom, independence and community integration, visit <http://www.monarchhousing.org>