

Contacts:

- Jay Everett, Monarch Housing Associates, 908-447-4871 (cell) or 908-272-5363 x222 (office)
- Kate Kelly, Monarch Housing Associates, 908-347-1064 (cell)
- Richard Brown, Monarch Housing Associates 908-370-5249 (cell) or 908-272-5363 x 225 (office)

#NJCounts 2016 Finds Overall Homelessness Decreased**Increased Federal Investment in Voucher and Homeless Assistance Needed to Address Unsheltered Homelessness and End Chronic Homelessness**

June 28, 2016 - #NJCounts 2016 found 8,941 homeless men, women and children, in 6,559 households, across the state of New Jersey. This number decreased by 1,270 persons (12.4%) from 2015. NJCounts 2016 counted individuals who were homeless on the night of January 26, 2016.

The full report and county by county reports are available at this link: <http://goo.gl/JPwcbj>

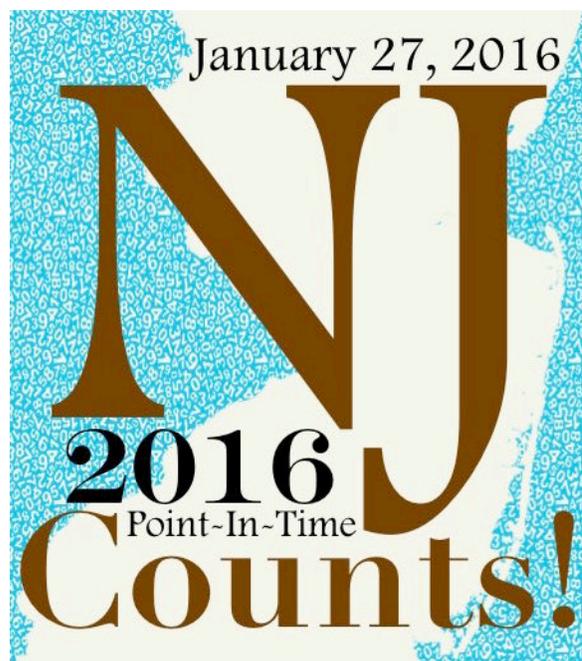
Local county press contacts are available at this link: <http://goo.gl/NrHkKU>. These contacts can provide additional information and details about the local county counts.

Other key findings from NJCounts 2016 as compared to NJCounts 2015 include:

- 836 persons, in 733 households, identified as chronically homeless, showing a decrease of 589 persons (41.3%);
- 1,442 persons living unsheltered, showing an increase of 468 persons (48%);
- 1,142 households counted as families, showing a 15.2% decrease in family homelessness (a family is defined as a household with at least one child under the age of 18 and one adult); and
- 34 unaccompanied youth under 18 were identified in the count. This represents a 26.1% reduction in the number of unaccompanied homeless youth households.

While the overall decrease in homelessness shows progress, the increase in unsheltered households shows the critical need for voucher and homeless assistance funding.

Rental assistance through vouchers provides an important stepping stone that helps working families, people with disabilities, seniors, and veterans to keep a roof over their



heads and make ends meet. Vouchers are key to helping Housing First, Rapid Rehousing and supportive housing - permanent, affordable and independent rental housing with available support services to help address disabilities - end homelessness. Slightly over nineteen percent (19.3%) of households reported that they had been homeless for more than one year.

Increased system coordination and supportive services funding to assist households with disabilities are also key piece to success in ending homelessness. Forty-six percent (46%) of homeless persons reported some type of disability. Among homeless adults over the age of 18, 57.5% reported a disability. The most prevalent disability reported was mental health issues.

“This year’s count shows a significant decrease of individuals experiencing homelessness in New Jersey,” said Katelyn Cunningham, Associate at Monarch Housing. “We hope that the information gathered from NJ Counts 2016 and our reports will help communities continue to work as hard as they can to implement best practices such as Housing First and Rapid Rehousing. These best practices can move people out of homelessness as quickly as possible. The increase in the unsheltered population shows us that there is still a great deal of work to be done to expand the resources needed to assist the homeless individuals and families that are entering the homeless system.” Monarch Housing Associates coordinated this year’s statewide count conducted county-by-county at the local level.

Monarch Housing believes that the barriers to shortening and eliminating episodes of homelessness in New Jersey include:

- Shelters reporting inability to house homeless families throughout 2015,
- A shortage of rental housing driving up demand and costs,
- Failure by Congress to work to increase funding for the Federal Housing Choice Voucher program for fiscal year 2017 (FY2017),
- A foreclosure crisis that causes many renters and owners to lose their homes, and
- The many jobs in New Jersey that do not pay a living wage.

At the state level, the NJCounts 2016 results and their implications are timely given Governor Christie’s recent announcement about the statewide Housing First initiative that will assist New Jersey’s most vulnerable residents. The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) has issued a request for proposals (RFP) for 500 State Rental Assistance Program (SRAP) vouchers for a Housing First initiative.

“This most recent RFP is but one of the initiatives the State is undertaking to address the housing needs of the most vulnerable among us,” said Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Commissioner Charles A. Richman. “DCA’s contribution of rental assistance vouchers along with funding for supportive services is a substantial contribution to the long term quality of life for both the recipients and the communities they live in.”

Across the country homelessness is decreasing. “It’s representative of what’s happening on a national level, so this is good news and shows that our continued efforts on the state and local levels, in partnership with homeless prevention providers and intensive case management agencies is making an impact,” said Elizabeth Connolly, acting Commissioner

for the Department of Human Services, which oversees the administration of social service programs through the county welfare agencies and Boards of Social Services.

On July 13, 2016, Monarch Housing Associates, the Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey and other sponsoring organizations from each of New Jersey's congressional districts will travel to Washington, DC for a congressional reception. Over 300 New Jersey constituents will carry the message "No Cuts for Housing" and push for increased federal funding for vouchers and homeless services.

As expected and looking ahead, 2017 is proving to be another very tight budget year for federal housing programs. While ending homelessness continues to be a bipartisan issue, there is still an opportunity to work together over the coming months to expand supportive housing and services funding. At the federal level, proposed cuts to vouchers and homeless assistance in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) budget threaten to paralyze this progress.

"One of the Obama Administration's top priorities is to end homelessness in the nation. The Point-in-Time (PIT) count is a vital component of ensuring that New Jersey receives the resources it needs to achieve this goal," said Maria Maio-Messano, HUD New Jersey Field Office Director. "HUD appreciates the leadership of Monarch Housing Associates, as well as State and local officials, in organizing the annual PIT count in cities and counties across New Jersey. Through these partnerships and the resulting dedicated resources, we are seeing proof that it is possible to make homelessness a thing of the past."

"Unfortunately, proposed cuts in funding from Congress come at a time when it is more expensive than ever for New Jersey families to afford housing," said Katelyn Cunningham. "According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), in order to afford a two-bedroom apartment at fair market rent in New Jersey in 2015, a family needed to earn \$26.52/hour."

NJ Counts 2016 was designed to understand the nature and needs of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in New Jersey. Volunteers sought out homeless residents in shelters and other locations where they are forced to live because there is insufficient affordable housing available to them.

To end homelessness in New Jersey, it is critical that we know how many individuals and families are in need of housing, what counties they are from, and their service needs and circumstances. Timely data is necessary to implement and expand on strategies that have proven to be effective in ending homelessness.

For more information about Monarch Housing Associates' work to ensure that every person will have quality affordable, permanent supportive housing that fosters freedom, independence and community integration, visit www.monarchhousing.org.

Additional Resources:

- Policy Priorities for Ending Homelessness - <http://goo.gl/60dzRN>
- Best Practices for Homeless Services Delivery- <http://goo.gl/dP3SKS>
- NJCounts 2015 Executive Summary - <http://goo.gl/qbPSXj>