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PRESS ADVISORY

Government Shutdown, Affordable Housing Crisis and Code Blue to Impact #NJCounts 2019

Reaching out to Families, Individuals, Youth and Veterans in NJ Experiencing Homelessness

When: Wednesday, January 23, 2019 (Exact times will vary by county)

Where: Across New Jersey's twenty-one counties

Who is counting: Organizations, agencies and others planning community efforts to end homelessness

January 10, 2019 - On January 23, 2019, all twenty-one New Jersey counties will participate in NJCounts 2019 conducting a state-wide Point-In-Time Count of the sheltered and unsheltered homeless. NJCounts 2019 of homeless families, youth and veterans will continue to guide efforts to end homelessness across the state.

NJCounts 2018 found 9,303 homeless men, women and children, in 6,982 households, across the state of New Jersey. This number increased by 771 persons (9%) from 2017. NJCounts 2018 counted individuals who were homeless on the night of January 23, 2018.

In this year's NJCounts, the many factors expected to impact an increase or decrease from NJCounts 2018 numbers include:

- The current shutdown of the federal government impacts housing and homelessness programs funded by the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), puts furloughed government workers living pay check to pay check at risk of eviction and foreclosure and leaves programs receiving HUD funding worrying about making payroll;
- More specifically, formerly homeless persons housed through HUD funded rental assistance vouchers face increased risk of losing their housing and once again becoming homeless as the government shut down freezes agencies' ability to drawdown rental assistance funding for those individuals and families increasing the likelihood of eviction;
- Even when the federal government is open and all workers are receiving their paychecks, many jobs in New Jersey do not pay a living wage and jobs with living wage are leaving the state;
- A shortage of funding for affordable rental housing in New Jersey drives up both the demand and costs;
- A growing body of data shows the connection between poor health outcomes, increased health system costs and homelessness. As hospital systems look into this issue more closely, we hope to see increased participation from local hospitals in NJCounts; and
- As more communities work to refine their Code Blue response system and provide warming center services to unsheltered persons coupled with the cold temperatures for this winter, the overall NJCounts numbers will likely be impacted.

NJCounts 2019 is designed to understand the nature of New Jersey's homeless population so that limited resources can meet its needs. On January 23, 2019, volunteers will seek out our neighbors experiencing homelessness in shelters, woods, under bridges, in vacant buildings and other locations. Due to the lack of affordable or supportive housing available to them, individuals and families are forced to find alternatives to housing they can afford.

HUD mandates the statewide point-in-time count of the homeless known in New Jersey as NJCounts 2019. Monarch Housing Associates coordinates this year's statewide count being conducted county-by-county at the local level. The New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency funds NJCounts 2019.

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