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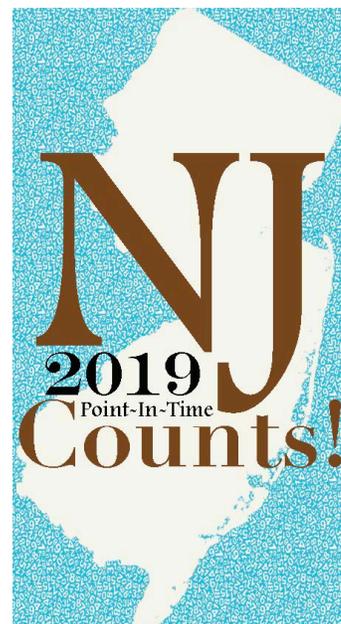
#NJCounts 2019 Finds Overall Homelessness Decreased**Funding for Housing and Services Critical to Ending Homelessness in NJ**

July 29, 2019 - #NJCounts 2019 found 8,864 men, women and children, in 6,748 households, experienced homelessness across New Jersey. This number decreased by 439 persons (5%) from 2018. NJCounts 2019 counted individuals who were homeless on the night of January 22, 2019.

The full report and county by county reports are available at this link: <https://monarchhousing.org/njcounts-2019/>

Local county press contacts are available at this link:

<https://cdn.monarchhousing.org/wp-content/uploads/njcounts2019/NJCounts2019PressContacts%20.pdf>. These contacts can provide additional information and details about the local county counts.



Other key findings from NJCounts 2019 as compared to NJCounts 2018 include:

- 1,462 persons, in 1,351 households, identified as chronically homeless representing 16.5% of the total homeless population, an increase of 174 persons (13.5%) from 2018;
- 1,482 persons living unsheltered, showing a decrease of 141 persons (9%);
- 992 households counted as families, showing a 6% 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 3% decrease in the number of unaccompanied homeless youth households.

“While the slight decrease in homelessness in New Jersey is a positive result, unfortunately it is not indicative of a statewide trend as decreases were not demonstrated across the board in all communities.” said Taiisa Kelly, CEO of Monarch Housing Associates. “We know that the Point in Time numbers provide a snapshot of homelessness in a particular area but, often the reality is that the number of individuals experiencing homelessness is 2 – 3 times larger than the number counted. However, the count provides a consistent benchmark from which we can evaluate the effectiveness of strategies being implemented, the quality of data collection within communities, and the impact of larger societal factors.”

Counties across the state annually conduct NJCounts as required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to secure federal funding for programs serving persons experiencing homelessness. Commissioned by the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (NJHMFA), NJCounts reflects the collaborative efforts of social service providers, local government, community advocates and volunteers, to identify and enumerate persons experiencing homelessness within each county. Monarch Housing Associates coordinates NJCounts activities and completes analysis of data collected from the Point-in-Time survey. NJCounts aims to provide communities with valuable information as they develop strategies and plans to end homelessness.

The changes in the Point-in-Time Count results reflect community efforts to not only improve data quality, but to also implement effective strategies to end homelessness. As communities refine their data collection and data analysis protocols, they increase their ability to sharpen their planning activities to better target programs to meet community needs as they currently exist.

The NJHMFA Hospital Partnership Subsidy Pilot Program provides an example of a program meeting current community needs. For years, providers understood that people experiencing unsheltered homelessness utilize emergency department services at an unusually high rate. Through improved accuracy of homeless service data (HMIS) and connection of that data system to hospital databases, communities have been able to identify high frequency users of hospital systems and target housing resources and services to end their homelessness and decrease costly use of emergency services.

Pilots of innovative partnerships with Hospital systems have spread to communities across the state including Camden, Middlesex, and Hudson Counties. NJHMFA's launch of the Hospital Partnership Subsidy Pilot Program will take these efforts to a new level involving healthcare partners in efforts to end homelessness in a new way.

The new partnerships with local hospitals and homeless service providers highlight both the critical importance of new resources to end homelessness and the need for increased collaboration between a variety of sectors. Providers are working in their communities to build coalitions of partners emphasizing the foundational nature of having a place to call home.

On July 24, 2019 Monarch Housing Associates along with 37 partner organizations and over 350 constituents from all over New Jersey traveled to Washington DC to emphasize to elected officials that 'Housing is a Right'. Supporting the Opportunity Starts at Home Campaign, organized by the National Low Income Housing Coalition, New Jerseyans highlighted that homes which are affordable to all are the foundation for healthy individuals and healthy communities.

In order to position themselves to end homelessness, communities need increased funding for Housing Choice Vouchers and housing development programs such as the Low Income Housing Tax Credit and National Housing Trust Fund, as well as funding for support services through Medicaid and other federal programs. The federal government must also support and strengthen Fair Housing laws to increase access to opportunities once the housing and service resources are in place.

“NJCounts 2019 data is critical to understanding community trends but the data only tells part of the story. We need to remember the real people behind these numbers and that housing is a right for all people,” said Taiisa Kelly, “The speakers at the Congressional Reception impacted by housing instability reminded us how all these issues intersect in the lives of regular people struggling to get back on their feet.”

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

- limited access to programs providing that can provide stability and services to those experiencing homelessness,
- Inadequate funding to support housing and services dedicated to those experiencing homelessness
- A shortage of rental housing driving up demand and costs,
- A lack of understanding of the many factors that contribute to households experiencing homelessness which fosters negative stereotypes making it difficult for people to identify and access housing, and
- Many jobs in New Jersey that do not pay a living wage.

“Unfortunately, New Jersey continues to be one of the most expensive states to live in. According to the National Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) Out of Reach report, NJ is the 6th most expensive state in the nation,” said Taiisa Kelly. “A family renting a 2-bedroom apartment would have to earn \$28.86 per hour in order to afford an apartment within the state. We applaud New Jersey’s work to raise the minimum wage but it is still not quite enough. It is critical we invest in our future by assisting those experiencing homelessness to regain stability.”

To end homelessness in New Jersey, we need to know how many individuals and families need housing, what counties they live in, 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 and permanent supportive housing that fosters freedom, independence and community integration, visit www.monarchhousing.org.