

CHESTER COUNTY: HOMELESS POPULATION OVERVIEW

CHESTER COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

SPECIAL EDITION 2010

WWW.CHESCO.ORG/CCDCD

The Point in Time Count: Documenting Our Unsheltered Homeless Population

On Wednesday, January 27, 2010, Chester County Department of Community Development (DCD) staff, non-profit organizations, and trained volunteers participated in a one-night survey to count the number of persons experiencing homelessness in Chester County. Approximately 50 people contributed efforts to carrying out this year's unsheltered homeless count.

What does a Point-in-Time do?

- Establishes a baseline of our homeless population, so that we can track progress toward reducing homelessness locally;
- Improves the ability of government and service providers to plan and implement effective services;
- Increases public awareness of homelessness throughout Chester County, and;
- Provides data in federal funding applications for supportive services and the creation of permanent housing.

As part of the PIT count, seven teams canvassed geographic areas of the County to physically count homeless persons. Teams consisted of staff from a homeless service agency and trained community volunteers. Surveys were also distributed to Police Departments, Fire Stations, and Hospitals in Chester County to ask if any homeless citizens were identified that night. In addition, teams incorporated participation of formerly homeless individuals to help in searching places where people might seek shelter.

Collaboration among the many agencies and volunteers provided an annual occasion for networking, resource-sharing and increasing awareness of homelessness in our communities. The collective preparation, communication, and outreach of volunteers involved helped make the 2010 Point-in-Time Count a success in our mission to reduce homelessness in Chester County.

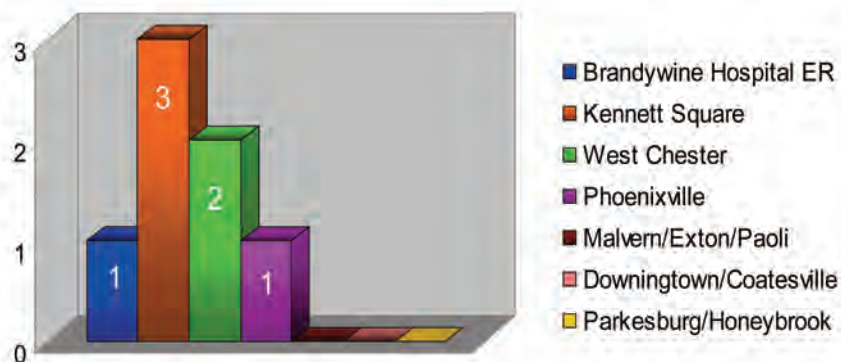
2010 POINT-IN-TIME COUNT VOLUNTEERS COMMENTED ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES:

“EYE-OPENING”

“HUMBLING”

“LIFE-CHANGING”

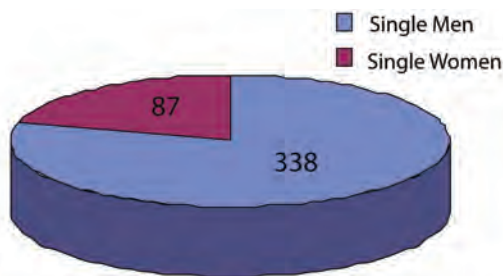
“A SPRINGBOARD FOR INSPIRING COLLABORATION,
PARTNERSHIP AND AWARENESS OF HOMELESSNESS
IN OUR COMMUNITIES.”



Number of unsheltered persons counted in Chester County on January 27, 2010

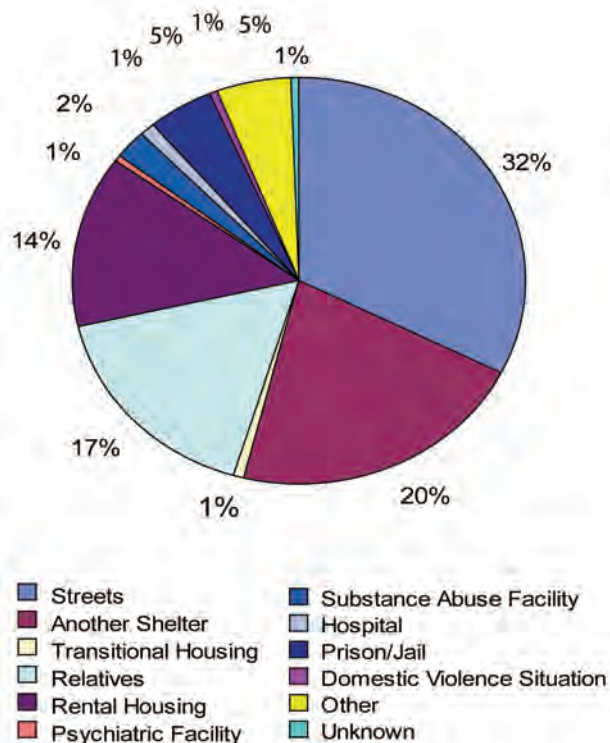
Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR)

The AHAR is an annual report to the U.S. Congress on the extent and nature of homelessness in the United States. Chester County's AHAR provides counts of the local homeless population and describes their demographic characteristics. Based primarily on data from the Chester County Client Information Management System (CCCIMS), Chester County can now electronically track the service-use patterns of homeless individuals to better assess their needs. Chester County currently funds eight emergency shelters. While some of these shelters serve families with children, the AHAR data provided in this report comes only from those shelters serving single men and single women. Additionally,



Gender of individuals served by the DCD funded emergency shelters during 2009

the AHAR statistics do not include shelters which do not receive County funding, such as those at the Coatesville Veterans Affairs Medical Center.



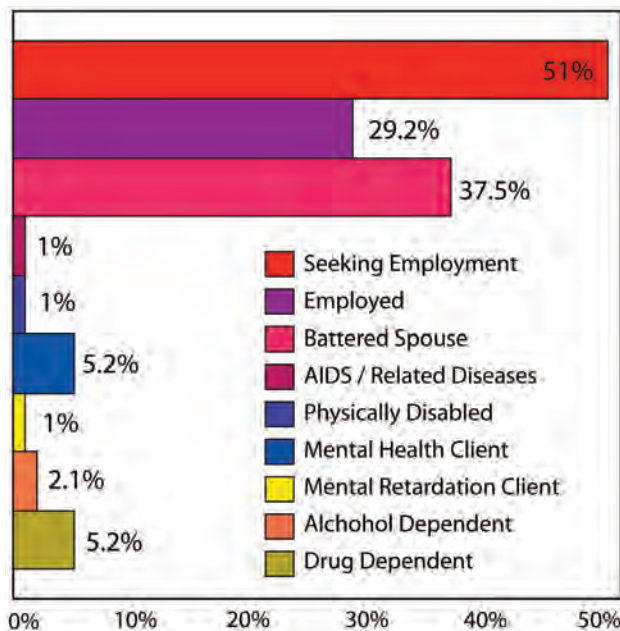
Location reported of individuals served by the DCD funded emergency shelters prior to entering shelter

TOGETHER, AHAR AND QUARTERLY REPORTS HELP PROVIDE A "BIG PICTURE" UNDERSTANDING OF HOMELESSNESS IN CHESTER COUNTY.

Individual & Family Data

All shelters funded through DCD participate in CCCIMS, with client consent, by collecting basic demographic information. Utilization of CCCIMS allows Chester County to comply with the congressional mandate to gather information on the homeless population served and to complete the AHAR report. However, shelters still provide supplemental data via Quarterly Report submissions that are used to assess accuracy of the electronic system.

The figures on the right represent the Quarterly Report submissions provided by all Chester County-funded shelters January through December 2009. These statistics include shelters that serve both individuals and families, as opposed to the individual shelter data provided in the previous article.



Characteristics of adults in family shelters last year

2009 Recovery Act Enhances Homeless Prevention

Delona is a motivated and determined mother who lives with her husband and two small children in Coatesville. Delona and her family faced severe hardship when her husband lost his job due to the economic downturn. As the debt continued to grow, Delona and her family faced eviction.

A friend informed Delona about a new program available that could help stabilize her family. Excited that there may be hope for her family, Delona contacted the Children, Youth & Woman's Alliance (CYWA) in Coatesville and inquired about the Stable Family Program of Chester County.

Delona's main goal was to become debt free. The Stable Family Program gave her family the security and time to re-budget and focus on managing their debt. The program gave her peace of mind and stability that she would not lose their home. Delona states, "Stress like that can ruin a family. Not having that stress allowed my family to focus on getting out of debt."

After four months in the program, Delona's family is now only a few hundred dollars from becoming completely debt free. Her husband has still not found a job, but is working with the CareerLink to gain stable employment.

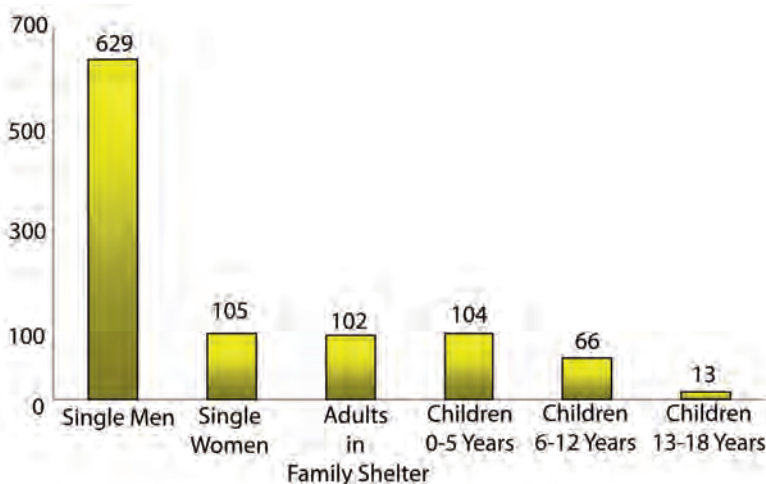


Once Delona completes the Stable Family Program, she plans to re-establish a bank account and trust fund for her children so she can replace the money she had taken from their college savings in order to avoid eviction prior to finding the Stable Family Program. Delona also plans to volunteer at the CYWA.

Delona is grateful to have learned about the Stable Family Program

SIGNED INTO LAW IN FEBRUARY 2009 AS RESPONSE TO THE GREATEST ECONOMIC CRISIS SINCE THE GREAT DEPRESSION, THE ARRA STIMULUS PROVIDED \$1.5 BILLION IN NATIONAL FUNDING TO CREATE THE HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND RAPID RE-HOUSING PROGRAM (HPRP).

THIS PROGRAM HELPS FACILITATE ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENT AND JOB CREATION AND ADDRESSES CONCERNS THAT HOMELESSNESS WOULD INCREASE AS POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT RATES GREW. THROUGH THE PROVISION OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES, THE PRIMARY GOALS OF HPRP ARE TO PREVENT HOUSEHOLDS FROM BECOMING HOMELESS AND/OR HELP THOSE WHO ARE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS TO BE QUICKLY RE-HOUSED AND STABILIZED. CHESTER COUNTY RECEIVED \$1,424,568 IN STATE AND FEDERAL HPRP FUNDS TO USE WITHIN THREE YEARS. IN CHESTER COUNTY, THE HPRP, KNOWN AS THE STABLE FAMILY PROGRAM, IS A WAY TO FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGE THE WAY WE PROVIDE SERVICES TO PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS OR AT RISK OF BECOMING HOMELESS.



Number of individuals in emergency shelters last year

"ALL THE EVIDENCE, FROM PRACTICE KNOWLEDGE TO DATA SYSTEMS, INDICATES THAT WE ARE, INDEED, ON THE RIGHT PATH. GETTING CHRONICALLY HOMELESS PEOPLE INTO PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING; SUPPORTING FAMILIES TO RETURN QUICKLY TO THEIR COMMUNITY; ENSURING VETERANS HAVE A PERMANENT ROOF OVER THEIR HEADS; SHEPHERDING HOMELESS YOUTH WITH HOUSING AND THE GUIDANCE OF A CARING ADULT; FOCUSING ON PREVENTION AND MAINSTREAM SYSTEMS - THESE SOLUTIONS WORK. WE MUST CONTINUE TO IMPLEMENT THEM."

NATIONAL ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS

Federal Policy Puts Greater Focus on Homeless Prevention

In the first significant reauthorization since 1992, President Obama signed a bill for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Programs on May 20, 2009. The new reauthorization provisions are known as the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act.

The HEARTH Act adds to the standard definition of homelessness by including persons at imminent risk of homelessness or instances where a family or unaccompanied youth is living unstably. Prevention and re-housing activities can serve people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including people who earn less than 30% of area median income and move frequently for economic reasons, live doubled up, are facing eviction, live in a hotel or motel, live in severely overcrowded housing, or are exiting an institution. Anybody considered homeless by other federal statutes can also be served with prevention or re-housing assistance.

Under the HEARTH Act, the Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) is renamed the Emergency Solutions Grant, signifying a shift to homelessness prevention and re-housing. Eligible activities under the HEARTH Act include the traditional shelter and outreach activities of the previous ESG program, but more prevention and re-housing services have been added.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES UNDER HEARTH ACT:

- EMERGENCY SHELTER OPERATIONS**
- HOUSING SEARCH**
- MEDIATION OR OUTREACH TO PROPERTY OWNERS**
- CREDIT REPAIR**
- PROVISION OF SECURITY OR UTILITY DEPOSITS**
- RENTAL ASSISTANCE FOR A FINAL MONTH AT A LOCATION**
- ASSISTANCE WITH MOVING COSTS, OR OTHER RELOCATION OR STABILIZATION ACTIVITIES THAT HELP HOMELESS PEOPLE MOVE IMMEDIATELY INTO HOUSING OR WOULD BENEFIT PEOPLE WHO HAVE MOVED INTO PERMANENT HOUSING IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS.**

A 10 Year Plan

Since 1995, the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) has required that communities promote the development of a Continuum of Care (CoC). A CoC is a regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals. DCD coordinates one of the 476 Continuums of Care that exist nationwide.

Although not a federal mandate, HUD has urged CoCs to develop and adopt 10 Year Plans to End Homelessness in their community. With the purpose of serving as a community plan to organize and deliver housing services to meet the specific needs of people who are homeless as they move to stable housing and maximize self sufficiency, action steps are created and assigned to key community groups that help implement the strategies to end homelessness and prevent a return to homelessness.

DCD has initiated the process of developing Chester County's first Continuum of Care 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness. Through a series of community meetings and the development of core working groups, DCD will help facilitate an inventory of mainstream resources for homeless populations and the organization of such

resources in order to support the strategies that are developed in the context of existing homeless. The purpose of the 10 Year Plan is to develop a County-wide coordination plan for the provision of homeless prevention and shelter services. Major goals include:

- Reducing homelessness in Chester County
- Providing a comprehensive profile of homelessness in Chester County
- Assessing Chester County's methods for addressing homelessness, and preparing for changing trends such as the Hearth Act and the Federal Plan to End Homelessness
- Developing and strengthening methods for leveraging other services with the Continuum of Care system, such as workforce, public service, and housing initiatives
- Developing an education, awareness, and advocacy tool for DCD and its partners in order to increase grant funding and strengthen CoC applications to HUD

DCD anticipates releasing the comprehensive profile of homelessness in September 2010 and finalizing the 10 Year Plan by July 2011.