
Interagency Council on Preventing and Reducing Homelessness

Preliminary Report

October 2010

Executive Summary

The Council on Preventing and Reducing Homelessness was created by Executive Order in November of 2008 (see Appendix A), when New Jersey was one of only two states that did not have such a body. The mission of the Council mirrors and expands that of the Federal Interagency Council – to coordinate the State response to homelessness through government, private and non-profit agencies in order to ensure housing stability for all New Jersey residents.

Appointed members serving on the Council bring deep and diverse experience, and are assisted by advisory staff provided by the Departments of Human Services, Community Affairs, Education, Children and Families, Labor and Workforce Development, Health and Senior Services, Military and Veteran’s Affairs, Corrections, and the NJ Housing Mortgage Finance Agency, State Parole Board, and the Governor’s Office.

The Council was charged with reviewing data on activities, programs, and funding, which are part of New Jersey’s response to homelessness. A variety of factors were examined which may place people at risk of becoming homeless, or which might contribute to chronic homelessness. These factors include issues such as housing availability, health care, employment, education and access to substance abuse services. The Council studied homelessness policies and programs in New Jersey and throughout the country and heard advice from high-level federal officials. Two public hearings were convened by the Council in order to hear from private citizens, local government officials, housing advocates, and people experiencing or who had experienced homelessness.

Homeless people in New Jersey include single men and women of all ages,

mothers with children, veterans, people with serious addiction issues, people struggling with mental illness, high school dropouts to college graduates, and individuals living in the streets after discharge from foster care, jails, and institutions. We also found that a slow economic recovery, linked with continued growth in the number of people who are unemployed or underemployed, have been making homelessness worse in New Jersey. People who have lost their homes to foreclosure, incurred monumental debt or have been challenged by rising costs of health care coverage contribute to a new reality: the face of homelessness is changing in New Jersey.

In New Jersey, thousands of people contribute time and resources to an array of service organizations that help those in need. We have learned, however, that these groups cannot rely on charitable contributions or volunteers alone. They must be bolstered by funds and expertise from both the government and the private sector.

As called for in the original Executive Order, this document comprises the preliminary report of the Council. It neither completes the Council’s work nor represents what may become actual policy. We respectfully submit this report to Governor Christie in order to comply with our original charge, and also to give the new administration a sense of our work and findings as of January 2010.

The Inter-Agency Council to Prevent and Reduce Homelessness recommends that the following strategies serve as a basis for forming policy that can develop a cost-effective and humane response to reduce homelessness in New Jersey:

1. Preventing homelessness is easier and cheaper than curing homelessness

Most homeless programs are triggered only upon eviction notices or actual homelessness. There is a need for a systematic change in this strategy. In many cases relatively minor interventions can prevent homelessness before it occurs. Identifying risk factors and providing proactive prevention services can be a strategic and cost-effective method of reducing homelessness.

2. Permanent housing is the cure for homelessness

Rapidly moving people into permanent housing has been demonstrated to be an effective strategy for ending homelessness in many communities throughout the country. The dignity and security of one's own home makes it more likely that the person will respond to needed services and emerge from despair. Each working group of the council urged a change of strategy, toward "Housing First" and "Rapid Re-housing" models. The Council reviewed 65 national studies demonstrating the cost effectiveness of these strategic models. Not counting savings in public safety and EMS costs, studies indicate that it costs roughly \$500 a month less to provide housing and appropriate services than to place people in shelters or motels.

3. New Jersey needs a streamlined system to identify the specific needs of homeless people in order to provide appropriate, timely and cost-effective intervention

Homeless people face an array of agencies at both the state and county levels. However, these services often are not linked in ways that provide a comprehensive response to an individual or a family's immediate needs. Comprehensive case management should be provided in order to coordinate and avoid duplication of services so that people can move through the system quickly toward the goal of permanent housing.

Significant public money can be saved by adding flexibility to appropriations and regulations. State funding currently spread across State agencies and divisions should be consolidated to meet the changing needs of homelessness reduction and prevention.

Currently charities and agencies which shelter homeless people must adapt to a sometimes bewildering array of government programs to serve their clients within a set of complicated and sometimes conflicting regulations. Our consensus is that a more streamlined, accountable and focused sheltering strategy would be cost effective and more helpful to providers, the clients they serve, and the taxpayers.

4. Focusing the role of shelters on providing immediate care and limited transitional services to the homeless

Current sheltering programs offer a temporary place to live and, in some cases, education, training, counseling, and treatment services which can prepare people to qualify for permanent housing. This Council recommends that shelters place priority on assessing people's immediate needs and moving people quickly from sheltering programs into permanent housing with appropriate supportive services.

5. End practices that discharge people from public institutions into homelessness

Studies and testimony indicate that people are often discharged into homelessness from hospitals, inpatient care, foster care and incarceration. The State can create, revise, and enforce policies applied to all mainstream systems to ensure that people are released into safe and stable housing.

6. Provide supportive housing to reduce and end homelessness for individuals and families with special needs

Projections of need should be developed based on accepted modeling techniques and baseline data available to New Jersey. It is especially crucial that additional funding be made available for the Special Needs Housing Trust Fund, which is effectively utilizing state funding, but will run out of money within two years.

7. A Statewide Housing Plan is needed in order to reduce and prevent homelessness

An adequate number of affordable housing units need to be made available throughout the State of New Jersey. An effective and comprehensive plan to do this is crucial to any strategy to reduce and prevent homelessness.

8. Implementation Phase

This preliminary report is intended to serve as a beginning stage in new program and policy development. Building on what has been learned to date, the Council should continue under the leadership of the Commissioners of the Department of Community Affairs and the Department of Human Services. Next steps should further examine laws, regulations, and appropriations in the context of this report's policy and program recommendations. Progress will need to be monitored in order to determine that changes indeed save taxpayer money and move toward ending homelessness.

Data and detailed action steps for each of these recommendations are included in the Detailed Preliminary Report that follows.

Detailed Preliminary Report

In order to respond to its mission, the Council established three (3) working groups to address specific areas related to the prevention and reduction of homelessness.

The Prevention Work Group examined data related to homelessness and determined needs that must be met in order to break the cycle of homelessness, prevent long-term homelessness, and reduce and prevent entrance into homelessness. Those needs include:

1. Establishing a system that moves people who become homeless into safe, stable, permanent housing that is appropriate to their needs as quickly as possible, and provides support;
2. Providing a mechanism to assist people in remaining in their housing;
3. Devising cross-system policies to prevent people from being discharged from mainstream systems into homelessness.

The Production Work Group examined housing development, funding, existing resources, public housing, new construction, and set asides to reduce and end homelessness. During the course of the committee's work, the group considered homeless populations, which included the chronically homeless, youth/young adults, families, persons with special needs, and newly homeless.

The Systems Integration Work Group examined the presently existing national, state, and local programs in an effort to identify solutions that will enable the multiple systems involved in the prevention and amelioration of homelessness in New Jersey to more effectively coordinate their efforts.

The Council conducted two public hearings on November 23, 2009 at Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital and New Lisbon Devel-

opmental Center. Comments from over twenty presenters informed the Council members and influenced each Work Group report.

The Council was co-chaired by the Acting Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, Charles Richman, and the Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Jennifer Velez. Public members were appointed by the Governor and staff members from a variety of State departments assisted the Council in preparing the report. The Council members are volunteers who are dedicated to creating recommendations that they believe will result in change. The breadth of knowledge and experience among the Council provides the foundation for innovation and establishing a cost-effective, humane and progressive agenda for future policy. See Appendix B for Council Membership.

Who is homelessness in New Jersey?

Each year the *New Jersey Point in Time Count of the Homeless* attempts through intentional outreach to count and survey homeless people. It is generally accepted that the actual number of homeless people is as much as two to three times higher than the count indicates, since outreach efforts vary in effectiveness, and it is often difficult to reach people whose homelessness is hidden. According to the 2009 *New Jersey Point in Time Count of the Homeless*, 12,035 adults and children were homeless on the night of the count (January 28, 2009). 36% of homeless adults surveyed during the count reported that they had been homeless for more than one year, while an additional 19% reported that they had been homeless for more than six months. 27% reported that they had been homeless at least four times in the past three years.

The *New Jersey 2009 Point in Time Count of the Homeless* also documents the diverse needs of the homeless population, including the need for employment, dental care, transportation, education, housing, emergency food assistance, routine medical care, assistance obtaining ID and legal assistance. Factors that contribute to homelessness also provide evidence of needs that cut across many other boundaries: alcohol/drug use, mental illness, medical problems, physical or developmental disability, incarceration, eviction, utility costs, job loss, family breakup or death, and domestic violence. The chronically homeless are especially likely to have these cross-cutting needs, including mental health, substance abuse and disability issues.

Contributing Factors to Homelessness

Homeless adults surveyed during the 2009 *New Jersey Point in Time Count of the Homeless* reported the following contributing factors (see Table 1) to their homelessness (respondents were able to choose more than one response):

Discharge from Mainstream Institutions

In addition to the contributing factors listed above, many who responded to the 2009 *New Jersey Point in Time Count of the Homeless* reported that within the past three years they had been discharged into homelessness from foster care and mainstream institutions (such mental health care facilities, hospitals, prisons, substance abuse treatment centers).

Figure 1 shows the number of homeless people in the 2009 *New Jersey*

Table 1: Contributing Factors to Homelessness in NJ

Contributing Factor	Percentage
Lost job/cannot find work	32.4%
Housing costs too high	27.3%
Alcohol or drug abuse problem	26.0%
Eviction	25.3%
Relationship/family breakup or death	24.2%
Mental illness/emotional problems	18.9%
Med. problem/phys. or developmental disab.	18.5%
Incarceration	13.2%
Have work but wages too low	11.6%
Utility costs too high	11.2%
Domestic violence	9.7%
Lost job due to lack of transportation	6.5%
Foreclosure	2.3%
Loss of child support	2.0%
House condemned	1.9%
Natural disaster	0.6%

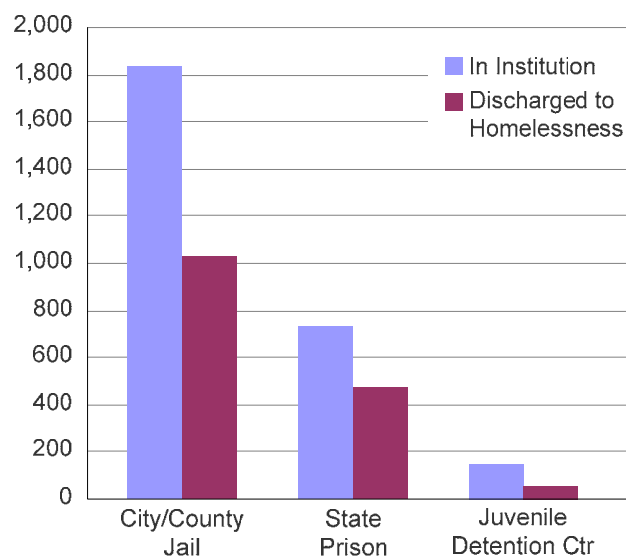


Figure 1: Homelessness and incarceration

Point in Time Count of the Homeless who reported having been in state prison, city / county jail, or juvenile detention in the past three years, as well as the

number of people who reported having been discharged from those locations directly into homelessness.

Figure 2 shows the number of homeless people in the 2009 *New Jersey Point in Time count of the Homeless* who reported having been hospitalized in a medical hospital, state inpatient mental health institution, city/county inpatient mental health institution, or an inpatient substance abuse treatment center *in the past three years*, as well as the number of people who reported having been discharged from those locations directly into homelessness.

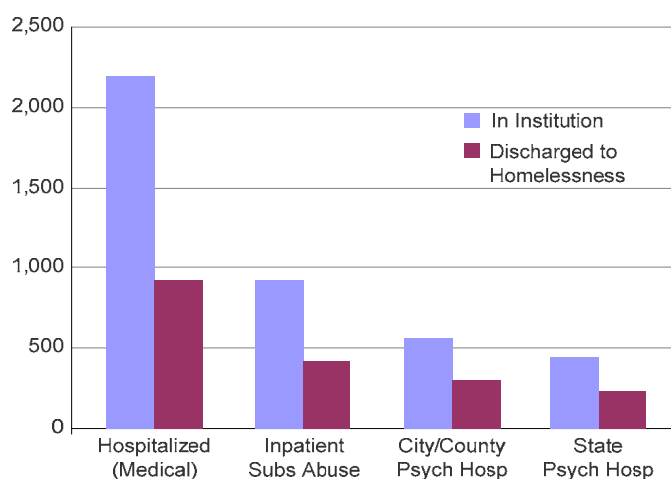


Figure 2: Inpatient care.

171 homeless respondents to the 2009 *New Jersey Point in Time Count of the Homeless* indicated they had been in foster care as children and 61 reported that they had been discharged from foster care into homelessness (35%).

According to the NJ Department of Children and Families, as of September 2009, 8,353 children were in a DYFS out of home placement:

- 219 were in independent living placement
- 1,017 were in group home or residential placement
- 2,905 were in kinship care
- 4,212 were in a resource family
- 668 were 18 years of age and older
- 1,085 were 16 and 17 years of age
- 1,002 were 13-15 years of age

Table 2, provided by the NJ Department of Education, tallies the number of homeless students enrolled in school by county in 2007-2008.

Table 2: Homeless student count by county.

County	Homeless Student Count
Atlantic	150
Bergen	113
Burlington	413
Camden	703
Cape May	28
Cumberland	723
Essex	732
Gloucester	265
Hudson	186
Hunterdon	39
Mercer	255
Middlesex	601
Monmouth	280
Morris	54
Ocean	124
Passaic	115
Salem	253
Somerset	22
Sussex	38
Union	145
Warren	26
Total	5,265

According to the National Center of Family Homelessness's report *America's Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness*, homelessness severely impacts children's health, educational achievement, and lifelong economic potential. The National Center for Family Homelessness calculated the long-term economic consequences of childhood homelessness and determined its significant negative impact on NJ:

Loss in lifetime earnings: \$130 million

Loss in contributions to society: \$960 million

Affordability of Housing in New Jersey

As evidenced by the contributing factors to homeless listed above, as well as studies

such as *Legal Services of New Jersey's Real Costs of Living in New Jersey*, the lack of affordable housing, especially for people with very low incomes, plays a significant role in causing homelessness. According to 2007 data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 51.2% of NJ households were "housing cost-burdened," which is defined as spending more than 30% of its income on housing, while 25.6% of NJ households were "severely cost-burdened", spending 50% or more of its income on housing.

Table 3 lists the Fair Market Rent for a two-bedroom apartment, as set by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) in October 2009, for each county

Table 3: HUD Fair Market Rent.

County	HUD Fair Market Rent	Amount House holds Must Earn Annually to Afford Rent	Low Income Level	Very Low Income Level	At \$10/Hour, Number of Hours an Adult Must Work Each Week to Afford Fair Market Rent
Atlantic	\$1,101	\$44,040	\$30,267	\$18,160	85
Bergen	\$1,379	\$55,160	\$36,268	\$21,761	106
Burlington	\$1,095	\$43,800	\$35,010	\$21,006	84
Camden	\$1,095	\$43,800	\$35,010	\$21,006	84
Cape May	\$1,246	\$49,840	\$30,267	\$18,160	96
Cumberland	\$1,014	\$40,560	\$30,267	\$18,160	78
Gloucester	\$1,095	\$43,800	\$35,010	\$21,006	84
Essex	\$1,279	\$51,160	\$39,381	\$23,629	98
Hudson	\$1,227	\$49,080	\$36,268	\$21,761	94
Hunterdon	\$1,409	\$56,360	\$45,045	\$27,027	108
Mercer	\$1,208	\$48,320	\$39,712	\$23,827	93
Middlesex	\$1,409	\$56,360	\$45,045	\$27,027	108
Monmouth	\$1,271	\$50,840	\$39,712	\$23,827	98
Morris	\$1,279	\$51,160	\$39,381	\$23,629	98
Ocean	\$1,271	\$50,840	\$39,712	\$23,827	98
Passaic	\$1,379	\$55,160	\$36,268	\$21,761	106
Salem	\$1,095	\$43,800	\$30,267	\$18,160	84
Somerset	\$1,409	\$56,360	\$45,045	\$27,027	108
Sussex	\$1,279	\$51,160	\$36,267	\$21,761	98
Union	\$1,279	\$51,160	\$39,381	\$23,629	98
Warren	\$1,042	\$41,680	\$39,381	\$23,629	80

in New Jersey. Using HUD's guideline that households should pay no more than 30% of their income on housing costs, the second column lists the annual income a household must make in order to afford the Fair Market Rent. The third and fourth columns list the income levels considered Low Income and Very Low Income by the NJ Council on Affordable Housing (50% or less of Area Median Income and 30% or less of Area Median Income, respectively), while the last column lists the number of hours an adult would have to work each week, at a salary of \$10 per hour (more than the minimum wage), to afford the Fair Market Rent.

As Table 2 shows, in every county families that are considered Low Income (earning 50% or less of AMI) earn too little to afford an apartment at the fair market rent without being considered cost-burdened or severely cost-burdened. In every county, the head of the household would have to work well over a forty-hour work week at \$10 per hour to afford an apartment at the fair market rent – in three counties, an adult must work 108 hours per week to afford a two-bedroom apartment at HUD's fair market rent.

Inventory of Homeless Program Beds

New Jersey has 7,896 publicly funded emergency shelter, transitional housing and designated permanent supportive housing beds for the homeless. As illustrated in Figure 3, the overwhelming numbers of beds are emergency shelter and transitional housing beds (62%), with less than a third (27%) identified as permanent supportive housing beds.

According to a study produced by the NJ Housing Mortgage Finance Agency, *Homelessness in NJ: A Six Month Study of Sheltered Homeless Persons*, 6,708 homeless adults and/or unaccompanied youth used the shelter system in a six-month period. Of those in the study, 69% left the shelter for unknown reasons, while only 19% left for an identified

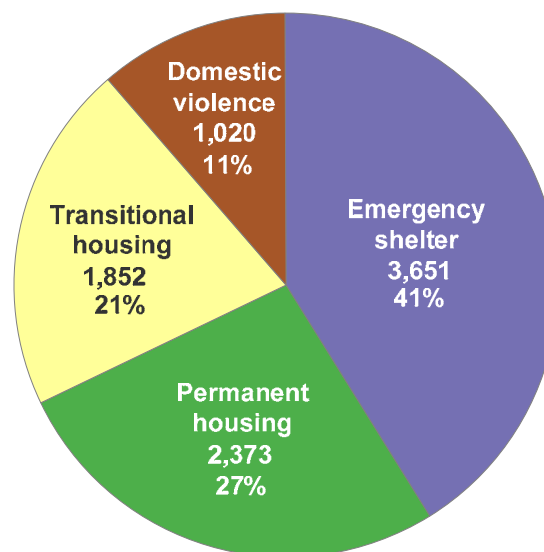


Figure 3: Shelter and permanent housing beds in NJ. N = 7,896. Source: 2008 and 2009 NJ Continuum of Care NOFA Housing Inventory Charts.

housing opportunity (including staying with friends or family).

Services Available to the Homeless in New Jersey

Many programs at the national, state and local level are charged with preventing and reducing homelessness, while others are administered variously by community organizations, both secular and faith-based. Some programs target specific segments of the homeless population, such as the elderly, the disabled, individuals with AIDS and veterans. Others include housing development programs, rental and economic assistance, supportive services, food, health care, help with utilities, legal assistance, employment and job training, among other services. At the state level, multiple departments contribute resources, generate policies and regulations, and support models with the common objective of alleviating homelessness.

In response to the current economic situation, the federal government is providing additional funding, state departments are work-

ing together to help prevent the loss of housing, and legislation allowing for the creation of County housing trust funds has been signed.

Existing plans and programs, although well-intentioned, have at times been established piecemeal to address homeless issues as they arose and funding emerged. From the standpoint of the consumer, the promise of these programs sometimes fell short. A homeless person attempting to navigate diverse systems could lose hope in the face of multiple and complex processes, eligibility criteria and documentation and the logistics of dealing with staff at multiple agencies. From the standpoint of organizations confronting limited fiscal resources and potentially costly duplicative efforts, the existing systems are also not optimal. For these reasons, systems integration is a key component for any long term solution to homelessness.

Costs of Shelters/Transitional and Institutional Housing for the Homeless in Comparison With the Cost of Permanent Housing

Homelessness remains a continuing expense for the state's taxpayers. Homelessness also is a continuing and visible social problem that exacts indirect costs in productivity and dignity for the men, women, and children affected by it.

There are high public funding costs associated with the affordable housing needs of homeless populations, including people with special needs. As indicated earlier, these include costs expended in emergency rooms and acute care hospitals; public entitlement programs; and institutional settings including prisons, jails and psychiatric hospitals. Additionally, there are significant financial and personal costs to society and individuals related to the loss of productivity, illness, and family instability.

The public cost of providing shelter and institutional care for homeless persons could

be significantly reduced by creating housing opportunities and programs consistent with Housing First models and Rapid Rehousing efforts. Both Housing First and Rapid Rehousing are best practice models supported by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development as well as several New Jersey communities (Mercer County, Passaic County, Bergen County, Camden County, Middlesex County, and Hudson County). Local county and city 10 year homeless plans in New Jersey consistently endorse both approaches to ending homelessness and local communities are targeting federal, state and local resources to support these efforts through local Continuum of Care homeless planning.

Rapid Rehousing is a recent design intended for individuals and families who primarily need financial assistance to obtain and maintain housing. This model is employed to prevent homelessness or facilitate a rapid exit from homelessness. Its key features are rapid access to permanent housing and the time-limited provision of supports.

The Housing First model emerged in part to address the difficulties for individuals with low income who need housing and also present significant non-residential service needs such as mental illness, substance abuse, and health problems. Housing First models place individuals and families in permanent housing and facilitate access to services.

The Special Needs Housing Trust Fund, administered by the Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency, and local Homeless Trust Funds provide capital and other wrap-around supports that enable systems to be responsive to homelessness.

Although state regulations indicate that the preferred use of emergency assistance for homeless people is Temporary Rental Assistance, significant resources are still spent to shelter homeless people in emergency shelter and motels. During August 2009, the NJ Department of Human Services (DHS) reports

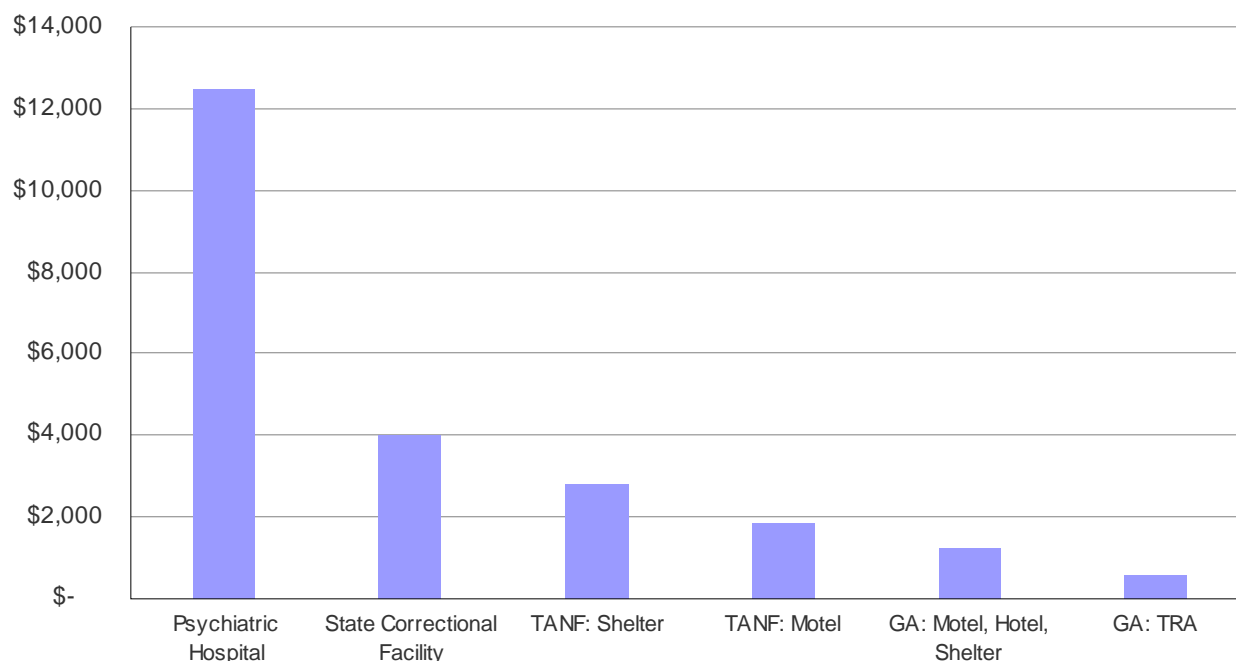


Figure 4: Average monthly costs. Source: NJ Department of Human Services, NJ Department of Corrections.

spending \$3,033,184 to shelter 2,464 homeless General Assistance (GA) recipients in motels or shelters.

As Figure 4 displays, in SFY 2009, the average monthly TANF EA cost to house a homeless family was \$2,795 for a shelter and \$1,844 for a motel. In August 2009, the average monthly GA cost to house a homeless individual in shelter, hotel, or motel was \$1,231. The average monthly cost for housing someone in a state correctional facility is \$4,027. It is estimated that the cost of care for a person living in a State psychiatric hospital is approximately \$12,500 per month or \$150,000 per year.

In contrast, the average monthly cost of rental housing for a one-bedroom apartment is approximately \$1,023 (2008 data) and the average monthly cost of rental housing for an efficiency apartment is approximately \$906.

In fiscal year 2009, DHS reports that an average of 320 Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) families were sheltered each month for an average monthly cost of \$590,000.

Table 4 compares the current monthly cost to shelter GA or TANF recipients with the cost of providing permanent housing with case management services.

Table 4: Shelter cost vs. permanent housing with case management

	Average monthly cost for motel	Average cost for rent plus case management services ¹ (monthly)
GA Recipients	\$1,231	\$750
TANF Recipients	\$1,844	\$1,392

¹For single individuals on GA, the average permanent housing cost is calculated at the TRA rent of \$583, while for TANF families the average permanent housing cost is calculated at \$1,225, the median Fair Market Rent for a 2-BR in NJ. Case management services are estimated at cost of \$167/person per month (calculated by a \$60,000 total personnel cost for a case manager with a caseload of 30 people).

For the cost of placing 2,464 homeless GA recipients in motels/shelters in August, the state of NJ could have housed & provided case management to 4,044 homeless GA recipients.

For what New Jersey currently spends each month to place 320 TANF cases in motels and shelters using Emergency Assistance funds, the state could house 425 homeless families in permanent housing and provide case management services to assist them in stabilizing their lives and regaining independence.

Barriers to meeting the needs of homeless people

The Council identified the following as primary barriers to meeting the needs of those who are homeless in New Jersey:

1. Barriers related to the varied needs found among people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
 - a. Needs of "frequent flyers" - homeless people with persistent needs who remain homeless for long periods of time, have multiple episodes of homelessness, or cycle through mainstream systems such as prison/jail, hospitals and/or shelters;
 - b. Lack of income and/or employment;
 - c. Lack of education/literacy, employment and social skills.
2. Lack of Resources
 - a. Lack of quality, affordable housing for people with very low incomes;
 - b. Inability of some homeless people to access shelters if they do not have funding (such as GA);
 - c. Lack of mainstream services for low income people (such as community-based mental health care, mainstream substance abuse treatment, etc.);
 - d. Lack of supportive services to em-

power people to live more independently and maintain permanent housing;

- e. Additional resources needed for youth aging out of foster care.

3. System Failures

- a. Inability to assess need and risk factors for homelessness and provide the appropriate intervention for those needs;
- b. No coordinated statewide system of homeless prevention, which is not only important from a national homeless, but also a public health policy perspective;
- c. Programs of many different agencies (federal, state, county, local and community-based) result in varied eligibility requirements, distinct data collection requirements and reporting systems, and separate funding streams;
- d. Too often, persons who are homeless must deal with an array of agencies providing homeless services. Individuals and families must often visit several agencies in order to cobble together services to meet their needs.

As has been noted, systems integration is a key component for any long term solution to homelessness. New Jersey does not have a statewide policy dedicated to preventing and reducing homelessness. State government is complex with departments that have diverse responsibilities, regulations and programs that directly and/or indirectly address homeless issues. Overlap in service delivery creates unnecessary administrative expenditures which could otherwise be directed to service delivery. Also, there is a lack of consensus across departments regarding objectives, for example, the Department of Community Affairs' shelter support program funds the creation of new emergency shelter beds when the emphasis on the federal level is to limit shel-

ter use and invest resources in permanent housing.

In addition, knowing which services an individual or family has received is critical to providing comprehensive case management and avoiding duplication. County human services departments, Human Services Advisory Committees (HSAC), Comprehensive Emer-

gency Access System (CEAS) committees, and Boards of Social Services are local governmental agencies involved in homeless issues on a daily basis. County government also has direct links with the US Department of Housing and Urban Development for various funding mechanisms, such as the McKinney-Vento program and Community Development Block Grants, to support local efforts.

Recommendations and Action Steps

The Inter-Agency Council to Prevent and Reduce Homelessness recommends that the following strategies serve as a basis for forming policy that can develop a cost-effective and humane response to reduce homelessness in New Jersey

Homelessness will not be “cured” by simply building houses. It is crucial that supportive services, employment and education efforts be created to assist individuals and families to become self-sufficient and thereby a part of the greater fabric of the community. Based upon all of the material we have been able to gather to date, the following is this Council’s proposal to address the ongoing problems facing the delivery of services to New Jersey’s homeless.

1. Preventing homelessness is easier and cheaper than curing homelessness

Most homeless programs are triggered only upon eviction notices or actual homelessness. There is a need for a systematic change in this strategy. In many cases relatively minor interventions can prevent homelessness before it occurs. Finding risk factors and providing proactive prevention services can be a strategic and cost-effective method of reducing homelessness.

Action Steps

Create and implement a proactive state-wide system to assess risk factors for homelessness whenever any government system (such as food stamps, FamilyCare, LIHEAP, etc.) is utilized, and provide outreach to people determined to be in risk of homelessness, before conditions lead to a loss of housing.

Establish a program to provide "virtual one-stops" for prevention, where households at risk of homelessness can access appropriate proactive services to prevent loss of housing. These might include job training and

placement, financial management training, long- or short-term rental assistance, wage supplement programs, debt reduction planning and relief, utility assistance, child care assistance, case management, mental health services, legal aid, family and individual counseling, child nutrition assistance, transportation assistance, or other services to stabilize households;

Increase funding for the State Rental Assistance Program (SRAP). The program should have a cost of living increase each year to maintain the current number of vouchers.

Create incentives, such as tax credits, to the private sector, including New Jersey businesses to provide housing, job training and employment opportunities for homeless and special needs populations

Adopt new rules and procedures that help homeless people who have lost their identification to quickly access birth certificates or other forms of identification without incurring fees.

2. Permanent housing is the cure for homelessness

Ending homelessness by moving people quickly into permanent housing has become a proven effective strategy in many places throughout the country. The dignity and security of one’s own home makes it more likely that the person will respond to needed services and emerge from despair. Each working group of the council urged a change of strategy, toward “Housing First” and “Rapid Re-housing” models. The Council reviewed 65 national studies demonstrating the cost effectiveness of these strategic models. Not counting savings in public safety and EMS costs, studies indicate that it costs roughly \$500 a month less to provide housing

and appropriate services than to place people in shelters or motels.

Action Steps

Review existing Department of Human Services regulations for Emergency Assistance and Services for the Homeless to determine the most effective and efficient use of Social Services for the Homeless and TANF funding streams for homeless persons and households.

Discontinue maxing-out Emergency Assistance and/or Temporary Rental Assistance Vouchers (TRA's) in transitional housing by rapidly housing people in permanent housing so they don't expend their limited resources in transitional housing.

Incorporate job training, education and employment in supportive housing and rapid re-housing programs to assist people so that they can increase their income and move towards self-sufficiency.

3. New Jersey needs a streamlined system for identifying the specific needs of homeless people in order to provide appropriate, timely and cost-effective intervention

Homeless people face an array of agencies on state and county levels. However, these services often are not linked in ways that provide a comprehensive response to an individual or a family's immediate needs. Comprehensive case management should be provided in order to coordinate and avoid duplication of services so that people can move through the system quickly toward the goal of permanent housing.

Significant public money can be saved by adding flexibility to appropriations and regulations. State funding currently spread across state agencies and divisions should be consolidated to meet the changing needs of homelessness reduction and prevention.

Currently, charities and agencies which shelter homeless people must adapt to a sometimes bewildering array of government programs to serve their clients within a set of complicated and sometimes conflicting regulations. Our consensus is that a more streamlined, accountable and focused sheltering strategy would be more cost effective and helpful to providers, the clients they serve, and the taxpayers.

Action Steps

Each State department and agency should quantify the amount of funding within its budget that directly or indirectly funds homelessness programs or services.

For Fiscal Year 2012, the Governor should direct each department and agency to collaborate in an annual review to identify efficiencies and redirect funds toward State policy that emphasizes homeless prevention, housing stability and rapid re-housing models. It is anticipated that this should result in 1 % of each department or agency's budget reallocated for homelessness.

Identify capital, operating and supportive funding sources, including redirection of existing local, state and federal resources.

Review existing Department of Human Services regulations for Emergency Assistance and Services for the Homeless to determine the most effective and efficient use of Social Services for the Homeless and TANF funding streams for homeless persons and households.

Create a uniform program to track services to the homeless which should measure where people go after exiting programs, the use of mainstream resources, as well as increases in employment, education and appropriate life activities. Public funding should be connected to performance outcome measures.

4. Focusing the role of shelters to providing immediate care and limited transitional services to the homeless

Current sheltering programs offer a place to live temporarily and, in some cases, obtain education, training, counseling, and treatment services which can prepare people to qualify for permanent housing. This Council recommends that shelters place priority on assessing people's immediate needs and moving people quickly from sheltering programs into permanent housing with appropriate supportive services.

Action Step

Shelters and transitional housing should have a designated source of operating funding, tied to outcome measures that are connected to people accessing permanent housing, education, employment and income.

5. End practices that discharge people from public institutions into homelessness

Study and testimony indicate that people are often discharged into homelessness from hospitals, inpatient care, foster care and correctional facilities. The State can create, revise, and enforce policies applied to all mainstream systems to ensure that people are released into safe and stable housing.

Action Steps

Develop a centralized discharge planning system for all mainstream institutions, increasing efficiencies within the system, making it easier for affected individuals and their families to be connected to appropriate housing, treatment and support services in their communities.

Enact legislation to allow expungement of criminal records for some first time drug distribution and certain other non-violent offenders after a number of years without additional offenses.

Reduce recidivism in all systems by improving access to services, e.g. through expunging some criminal records, improved SSI determination, employment opportunities, access to outpatient services, etc.

Locate and assist youth aging out of foster care, homeless youth and youth leaving the criminal justice system to prevent future homelessness.

Educate the public and the legislature on the costs of failing to provide permanent housing for people discharged from systems, including the recidivism rates of ex-offenders unable to access housing and services and the costs incurred by people cycling through mainstream systems such as hospitals and mental health institutions.

6. Provide supportive housing to reduce and end homelessness for individuals and families with special needs

Projections of need should be developed based on accepted modeling techniques and baseline data available to New Jersey. It is especially crucial that additional funding be made available for the Special Needs Housing Trust Fund, which is effectively utilizing state funding, but will run out of money within two years.

Action Step

As an incentive and encouragement for the development of more special needs housing units, the Council on Affordable Housing should provide bonus units of credit for each unit provided for the special needs and homeless populations.

7. A Statewide Housing Plan is needed in order to reduce and prevent homelessness

An adequate number of affordable housing units need to be made available throughout the state of New Jersey. An effective and

comprehensive plan to do this is crucial to any strategy to reduce and prevent homelessness.

Action Steps

Initially, the Governor's Office should convene an advisory body of representatives from all State agencies, including the Department of Treasury and the Office of Management and Budget to coordinate, review, and modify policies to promote housing affordability in New Jersey. Each State agency should appoint an executive-level employee to serve as the local coordinator and member to the advisory body. The advisory body should utilize best practice models from the Federal Government and various other states. This body should also avail itself of the data in this document, and the ongoing work of the Inter-Agency Council to Prevent and Reduce Homelessness. Review of previous reports and studies from various bodies in New Jersey, such as the New Jersey State Policy Academy Team Preliminary Action Plan to End Homelessness in New Jersey (December 2003) will be crucial in developing an initial working plan.

Populations in need include chronic homeless individuals, long term homeless families with special needs, youth, veterans, people living with AIDS/HIV, ex-offenders and re-entry populations.

8. Implementation Phase

This preliminary report is intended to serve as a beginning stage in new program

and policy development. Building on what has been learned to date, the Council should continue under the leadership of the Commissioners of the Department of Community Affairs and the Department of Human Services. Next steps should include further examination of laws, regulations, and appropriations with an eye toward this report's recommended policy and programmatic shifts. Progress will need to be monitored in order to determine that changes indeed save taxpayer money and move toward ending homelessness.

Action Steps

The Interagency Council on Preventing and Reducing Homelessness should continue under its current mandate with original membership and/or with additional appointees. With the review and approval of the Governor, current active members should be contacted to determine if they desire to continue on the Council. Potential new members might be identified by the Governor for their particular expertise, especially in light of the policy recommendations in this preliminary report.

Crucial to systems integration efforts is a commitment to action by all levels of State government. The Governor should direct all State departments and agencies to identify current policies, programs and regulations that may duplicate or be inconsistent with statewide homeless policy. Coordination of services is important.

Appendix A

State of New Jersey Executive Order #126 Governor Jon S. Corzine

WHEREAS, housing constitutes one of the basic needs of all families and individuals within the State of New Jersey, and safe and affordable housing creates a foundation for stable lives, secure families, and thriving communities; and

WHEREAS, the State has among the costliest housing markets in the United States and average wages have failed to keep pace with the average cost of housing in the State for at least two decades, causing many individuals and families to spend increasing proportions of their income on housing and causing others to live in overcrowded, inaccessible, unsafe, or unsanitary conditions simply because they have no other option; and

WHEREAS, significant numbers of individuals and families in New Jersey, through illness, low wages, the loss of a job, divorce or family conflict, or struggles with mental health or substance abuse, lose their ability to earn a sufficient income or obtain adequate benefits to remain in their homes; and

WHEREAS, over the course of each year, thousands of individuals and families lose their housing and become homeless; and

WHEREAS, the multiple economic, social, physical, and emotional consequences of an episode of homelessness often exacerbate the factors that led to an individual's or family's loss of housing, thereby making it even more challenging for a single person or a family to regain housing and recreate a stable home; and

WHEREAS, multiple State agencies, commissions, and boards working in fields as diverse as housing, health care, employment, hunger, education, mental health and substance abuse treatment assist individuals and families to remain in their homes with a range of economic and social programs, and these agencies, commissions, and boards, as well as other organizations, also are charged with helping homeless individuals and families to obtain stable housing; and

WHEREAS, all these State agencies, commissions, and boards share the common goals of preventing and eliminating homelessness, especially chronic homelessness; and

WHEREAS, coordinating the work of these State entities will help to foster necessary system changes and maximize the impact of federal, State, and local governmental programs and non-profit and voluntary efforts to help individuals and families remain in their homes and, if they become homeless, to speed their return to housing;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JON S. CORZINE, Governor of the State of New Jersey, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and by the Statutes of this State, do hereby ORDER and DIRECT:

1. There is hereby established in the Department of Community Affairs the Interagency

Council on Preventing and Reducing Homelessness (the “Council”).

2. The Council shall be comprised as follows: (i) the Commissioners of the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Community Affairs, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Senior Services, the Department of Human Services, and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the Executive Director of the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency, the Chairman of the State Parole Board, the Adjutant General of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, and a representative of the Office of the Governor, each of whom shall serve ex officio and may appoint a designee; and (ii) 14 public members appointed by the Governor as follows: a representative of county government, a representative of municipal government, two persons who are or recently were homeless, two representatives of the private sector, four representatives of non-profit agencies providing housing, social, behavioral health, or health-care services to homeless individuals or families, a representative of public housing authorities, an individual with academic expertise in homelessness issues, and two representatives from faith communities. In addition, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the Assembly, the Senate Minority Leader, and the Assembly Minority Leader each may appoint a member of the Legislature to serve on the Council, and that member may appoint a designee.
3. The Commissioners of the Departments of Community Affairs (DCA) and Human Services (DHS) shall act as co-chairs of the Council.
4. The public members of the Council shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor and without compensation, except that members who are or recently were homeless may be reimbursed for reasonable expenses within funds available to DCA or DHS.
5. The Council shall meet on a regular basis, as determined by the co-chairs.
6. The Council shall:
 - a. Prepare a preliminary report to the Governor by or before December 31, 2009, containing findings and recommendations for preventing and reducing homelessness, ending chronic homelessness, and improving services to individuals and families who lose their housing, and additional reports as the Council may deem necessary;
 - b. Review data, activities, funding, and programs in areas including but not limited to housing, health care, employment, education, and mental health and substance abuse services that (i) help individuals and families at-risk of becoming homeless retain their housing and (ii) provide housing and other services for individuals and families who become homeless;
 - c. Identify statutory and regulatory impediments to the effective provision of services to homeless individuals and families and recommend changes to relevant laws, programs, and policies;
 - d. Review service delivery models and examine best practices to maximize the cost effectiveness of those models and their results; and
 - e. Examine and evaluate programs and activities to prevent, reduce, and end homelessness and to assist homeless families and individuals.
7. The Council shall organize and meet as soon as practicable after the appointment of a majority of its members.
8. Staffing for the Council shall be undertaken and coordinated by DCA and DHS. The Council shall seek information and advice, conduct hearings, and take testimony from individuals and families at-risk of losing their homes, or who have lost their housing;

providers of housing or services to such persons; research organizations; and others to fulfill its duties.

9. The Council is authorized to call upon any department, division, office, or agency of State government to provide such information, resources, or other assistance deemed necessary to discharge its responsibilities under this Order. Each department, division, office, and agency of this State is hereby required, to the extent not inconsistent with law, to cooperate with the Council and to furnish it with such information, personnel, and assistance as is necessary to accomplish the purposes of this Order.
10. The Council shall operate until December 31, 2011. This period may be extended by Executive Order.
11. This Order shall take effect immediately.

GIVEN, under my hand and seal this 26th day of November, Two Thousand and Eight, and of the Independence of the United States, the Two Hundred and Thirty-Third.

/s/ Jon S. Corzine

Governor

[seal]

Attest:

/s/ Edward J. McBride, Jr.

Chief Counsel to the Governor

Interagency Council on Preventing and Reducing Homelessness

Membership

Public members appointed by the Governor as follows:

Representative of county government – Bruce Nigro

Representative of municipal government – Carolyn Lewis-Spruill

Persons who are or recently were homeless – Scott A. Fairman, Steven Taylor

Representatives of the private sector – Clifford A. Goldman, Victor J. Herlinky, Jr., Esq.

Representatives of non-profit agencies providing housing, social, behavioral health, or health-care services to homeless individuals or families, a representative of public housing authorities – Daniel Altilio, Janel Winter, Gina R. Williams Deas, Tory J. Gunsolley, William R. Southrey

Individual with academic expertise in homelessness issues – Victor B. Carlson, Psy.D.

Representatives from faith communities – Reverend Bruce Henning Davidson, Reverend Dr. Robert C. Wade

NJ Department representatives, served as ex officio members:

Department of Children and Families – Kathy Enerlich, Nancy Caruso, Cindy Herdman-Ivins

Department of Community Affairs – Paul Stridick, Deborah Heinz, Chanda Dawadi

Department of Education – Charles Webster, David McNair

Department of Human Services – Kevin Martone, Patti Holland, Joseph Maag, Beth Connolly

Department of Labor and Workforce Development – Michele Richardson,

New Jersey Housing Mortgage Finance Agency – Pamela McCrory, Gira Bose, Julian Fowler

State Parole Board – Maurice Scully

Office of the Governor - Alison Badgett