Introduction

Every year, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requests an unduplicated count of the homeless population in order to assess their housing and service needs, known as the Point-in-Time (PIT) count. This count is performed by organizations that receive homeless assistance funding from HUD, under the direction of the local Continua of Care (CoC). CoCs, representing the local networks of homeless assistance and prevention service providers, coordinate the process and provide the resulting information to HUD. Information derived from the PIT count is vital, as it provides necessary feedback as to the success of the Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness\(^1\) effort – goals developed by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) and other federal agencies to address homelessness in America.

The PIT count documents the number of homeless persons residing in emergency shelters, transitional housing projects or safe haven projects (“Sheltered”) annually, while counts of homeless persons residing in places not meant for human habitation (“Unsheltered”) must be conducted no less than every other year, but may be included in the annual count. The PIT is held on one chosen day within a ten-day period each year, usually during the last week in January. Such a project involves many tasks and responsibilities. The Louisiana Services Network Data Consortium (LSNDC), the statewide Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) database management lead organization, is responsible for coordinating both paper and electronic data collection tools, data entry into the HMIS database, and reporting for the entire state. For this report, the LSNDC elected to include data from the PIT counts for years 2011 through 2017 to demonstrate the progress our state has made since the publishing of the Opening Doors initiative and the corresponding standardization of HMIS data collection. Each individual CoC in Louisiana administers, staffs, and performs the regional counts to ensure that the experience and expertise of the local service organizations can be applied, so as to create the most accurate count possible.

Overall Count

Over the past seven years, the annual PIT counts have shown significant changes in the numbers of persons experiencing homelessness surveyed. The 2017 count identified a total of 3,305 sheltered and unsheltered persons; while in comparison, the 2011 count identified a total of 9,291 persons. During the period between the two counts, the number of persons experiencing homelessness was decreased by 64%. This reflects the efforts of the various service providers with encouragement from the USICH, federal agencies, and national organizations that address issues surrounding

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homelessness, such as the National Alliance to End Homelessness.\textsuperscript{2} There is a particularly sharp decrease in the number of unsheltered persons experiencing homelessness between the two counts. The 2017 count identified 975 such persons, while the 2011 count identified 5,886, an 83\% decrease overall (Figure 1).

**Household Count**

The PIT count also records three types of household information about survey participants. These are households without children, households with at least one adult and one child, and households with only children; adults are defined as age 18 and older, and children are defined as age 17 and younger. In 2017, the vast majority of persons in all household types were in sheltered locations, especially in households that included one or more children (Figure 2).

In detail, there were 2,513 persons in households without children. Of these persons, 1,602 or 64\% resided in sheltered locations (710 in transitional housing projects and 892 in emergency shelters), and 911 or 36\% were unsheltered. There were 746 persons in households with at least one adult and one child. Of these persons, 683 or 92\% were in sheltered locations (248 persons in transitional housing projects and 435 in emergency shelters), and 63 or 8\% were unsheltered. Lastly, there were 46 persons in households with only children. Of these persons, 45 or 98\% resided in sheltered locations (9 in transitional housing projects and 36 in emergency shelters), and 1 or 2\% was unsheltered.

Consistent with the overall reduction in the annual PIT count, since 2011, there have been visible reductions in the counts for each of the household types experiencing homelessness. There were 5,428 fewer persons in households without children in 2017, representing a 68\% reduction. There were 604 fewer persons in households with at least one adult and one child in 2017, representing a 45\% reduction. Although households with only children were not treated as a separate household type until 2012, 5 fewer persons in households with only children were counted in 2017, representing a 10\% reduction since the initial count. Of note, the number of persons in households without children has been at least three times the number of persons comprising the other household types during every PIT count since 2011 (Figure 3).
Subpopulation Counts

Three subpopulations that are highlighted in the PIT count are veterans, persons experiencing chronic homelessness, and survivors of domestic violence.

Veterans are defined as those who have served on active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States, not including inactive military reserves or the National Guard, unless called to active duty. The 2017 count identified 383 veterans, with 329 or 86% spending the night of the count in a transitional housing project or emergency shelter, and 54 or 14% spending the night of the count on the streets or in a place not meant for habitation. In comparison, the 2011 count identified 950 such veterans, meaning that Louisiana has seen a 60% decrease in the number of veterans experiencing homelessness (Figure 4).

Chronic homelessness is defined as an individual or the head of a household who has a disabling condition of long duration and has experienced a period of homelessness lasting for a full year or longer, or who has experienced four periods of homelessness in the past three years, adding up to 12 months or longer. The 2017 count identified 618 such persons. Specifically, 183 or 30% spent the night of the count in sheltered locations, and 435 or 70% were unsheltered on the night of the count. In comparison, the 2011 count identified 4,352 such persons; meaning that in the past seven years, Louisiana’s service providers have reduced the number of persons whose experience of homelessness matches the definition of chronic homelessness by 86% (Figure 5).

Since domestic violence is an appreciable contributor to homelessness for many women, this subpopulation is also identified by the PIT count. For the 2017 count, 511 persons self-reported as survivors of domestic violence, which equates to 16% of the total number of people surveyed. Of that subpopulation, 386 or 76% were in emergency shelters or transitional housing on the night of the count, while 125 or 24% were on the street or in places not meant for habitation (Figure 6).
Demographic Information

Demographic information is collected on all respondents as part of the count (Figure 6). For the 2017 count, of the 3,305 persons identified as experiencing homelessness, 2,233 persons or 68% self-identified as male and 1,054 or 33% self-identified as female, and less than 1% identified either as transgender (14) or did not self-identify as male, female or transgender (4). The racial demographic data from the 2017 count showed that 1,921 persons or 58% of respondents identified as Black or African American, and 1,267 or 38% as White, with less than 1% identifying as American Indian or Alaskan Native (28), as Asian (12), or as Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (11). Another 66 persons or 2% identified as multiple races. In addition, 102 persons or 3% of the same respondents identified their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino (Figure 7).

The health status of those surveyed is also recorded as part of the count. The 2017 count identified three particular disabling or chronic health conditions in a significant number of adults: serious mental illness, substance abuse disorders, and HIV/AIDS. Out of a total adult population of 2,778, 530 persons or 20% self-reported mental illness; 436 or 16% self-reported substance abuse; and 25 or less than 1% self-reported HIV/AIDS infection (Figure 8).

### Counts of Adults with Self-Identified Disabling or Chronic Health Conditions (2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability/Chronic Health Condition</th>
<th>Unsheltered</th>
<th>Sheltered</th>
<th>Total number of Persons with Conditions</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Adult Population (N=2,778)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adults with a Serious Mental Illness</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults with a Substance Abuse Disorder</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults with HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Floods of 2016

The year 2016 brought significant challenges to the state of Louisiana due to two periods of major flooding that impacted all but five of the state’s 64 parishes, with after-effects impacting communities well into 2017. In March 2016, heavy rains caused record flooding in Northern Louisiana, damaging nearly 5,000 homes and causing the federal government to declare 36 parishes as disaster areas on March 13, 2016. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provided assistance to 15,994 households related to this flood. In August, another round of torrential rain created even more record flooding in Southern Louisiana, damaging a further 109,000 homes and leading the government to designate 22 parishes as federal disaster areas – seven of which were still covered by the March flooding designation. For the August floods, FEMA provided assistance to a further 83,066 homes. Both devastating events led to persons becoming displaced and requiring housing assistance, which was provided via FEMA disaster funding. On the night of the Point-in-Time count, 1,056 persons were checked into the FEMA Transitional Shelter Assistance program, which provides short-term lodging assistance for evacuees who cannot return to their homes for an extended or indefinite period of time (Figure 9). As FEMA collects different data points than HUD, these persons could not be integrated into the statewide HUD Point-in-Time count.

Conclusion

Louisiana’s communities have embraced the call to find solutions to end the experience of homelessness across the state. The results of their sustained dedication and caring are visible in annual Point-in-Time count of sheltered and unsheltered persons. This hard work has resulted in a more than 60% reduction in the number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness throughout the state. In particular, efforts to aid those who are sleeping on the streets or in cars, abandoned buildings and other places not intended to serve as housing has yielded an 83% reduction in unsheltered persons since 2011. With that said, there are still many persons suffering with the effects of homelessness, and the work necessary to prevent and end homelessness is not finished. With continued diligence and cross-partnerships of public and private organizations that are focused upon making safe, affordable housing accessible to all, it is possible that within a very short time - years rather than decades - all residents of Louisiana will have a place to call home.