

Homeless Survey Snap Shot Findings August 2004 and March 2004

Methodology

On Wednesday August 18, 2004, providers of services to homeless persons and families were asked to complete the attached survey. The survey instrument is an updated version of the tool used in 2001 and 2002 as a part of the Mercer County Human Services Advisory Council's Homeless Resources Advocate Committee's Homelessness Study. Surveys were distributed to 30 community-based organizations (CBO) in Mercer County. Of these 30 CBOs, 12 responded to the survey for a total of 15 different programs. Of the 15 programs, all provide shelter services to homeless individuals and families.

On Wednesday March 17, 2004, the same survey was distributed to 35 CBOs. Responses were received from 10 agencies providing shelter/emergency housing services.

Findings

In the survey conducted on August 18, 2004, a total of 935 persons were in shelter at one of the 12 agencies responding. Of the 935 persons in shelters on August 18, 2004, 190 were single adults without children (males - 108/females - 82); 230 were single adults with children (males - 48/females - 182); 26 were couples with children; and 463 children. Of the 463 children, 17 were residents of the runaway youth shelter and 446 were shelter with one or more parent in the homeless families shelters.

Data for the date of August 20, 2003 was incomplete, therefore, making comparisons unusable.

In the survey conducted on March 17, 2004, a total of 907 persons were in shelter at one of the 10 agencies responding. Of the 907 persons in shelters on March 17, 273 were single adults without children (males – 190/females – 83); 179 were single adults with children (males – 14/females – 165); 22 were couples; and 416 were children. All 416 children were accompanied by one or more parent in the homeless families shelters.

In contrast to the data submitted for March 19, 2003, 778 persons were in shelter at one of the ten agencies responding. Of the 778 persons in shelter on March 19, 238 were single adults without children (males – 190/females – 48); 168 were single adults with children (males – 7/161 – females); 17 were couples with children; and 338 were children. All 338 children were accompanied by one or more parents in the homeless families shelters.

The drop-in center operated at The Salvation Army reported seeing 178 men and 38 women on that day, compared with 177 men and 29 women on March 19, 2003.

Study Limitations

The limitations of this study need to be acknowledged. First, not all agencies providing care to the homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless have responded. Second, key information on the number of persons homeless but not seeking or receiving help at an agency is unknown. Third, persons who are have developed temporary housing arrangements, such as a mother and child/children living with other family members has not been included.