



34,657 Homeless

in Pennsylvania's Emergency Housing System Executive Summary - July 2013

Congress is deliberating on key issues that affect Pennsylvanians who experience homelessness and is seeking to identify how local communities succeed at ending homelessness. The McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Program, the Low Income Housing Tax Credit and other key parts of the federal budget have a profound influence on how local communities successfully manage strategies to end homelessness. What is not well known by national decision makers is the actual scale of homelessness within their constituencies. This policy brief provides data that national decision makers can use when deliberating on critical issues.

An estimate by the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) found that¹ 235,000 Pennsylvanians were homeless, living doubled up with family or friends in 2011. These data suggest that families and friends are taking care of our homeless neighbors. By contrast, the public homeless housing system served 34,657 in fiscal year 2012. The 34,657 number does not include homeless persons from one region who did not submit data for this report, who were denied or not allowed in shelter, census from domestic violence shelters, runaway youth, and people living on the street or other public places. Any change in federal resources will affect how local housing systems can respond to their constituents.

The Data of Homelessness

PEC continues a series of reports on data collected by the homeless system with the intention of informing practitioners and policy makers.

Readers are encouraged to use caution when interpreting the data. 34,657 Homeless shows measures of activity (i.e. service utilization), not of outcomes that would demonstrate if housing programs are succeeding or failing. The causes of homelessness are complex and no one set of data has been satisfactory in answering the question 'is homelessness increasing or decreasing?' Together, these reports will help policy makers understand certain aspects of homelessness in Pennsylvania.



PEC's

Figure 1

Emergency housing in Philadelphia



Trends for Persons in Families Served

- The overall number of persons in families served by emergency or transitional housing programs remained stable – however, there was great variability across regions.
- The number of persons in families served in Delaware and Beaver decreased by around 10% and by 37% in Montgomery.
- The number of persons in families served in Luzerne, Central, and Northwest regions increased by 11-17%. The number of persons served in Allentown/Northeast region increased by about 27%.

THE DATA: The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires Pennsylvania’s regions to submit data in a number of ways, including the Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) – which is based on data collected by Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS). Of the eighteen CoC’s in Pennsylvania, seventeen have a HMIS. The data in this summary are representative of the number of persons who spent at least one night in emergency or transitional housing programs that report their data to HMIS. These numbers are likely an underestimate because they do not include data from one region that does not have an HMIS nor are they representatives of persons served by emergency or transitional housing providers that do not participate in HMIS.

Chart: Comparing 16 Regions 2011 and 2012

The chart below compares data on the number of persons served in emergency and transitional housing in 2011 and 2012 across sixteen of the eighteen CoCs. In 2011, only sixteen CoCs had a HMIS – and thus only data from these sixteen regions are included in the chart below. The total number of persons served in emergency and transitional housing across the state declined slightly from 2011 to 2012; however, regional variations are present.

Comparison of 2011 & 2012 annual counts for total persons residing at least one night in either emergency or transitional housing in 16 Continuum of Care (CoC) programs in Pennsylvania*							
	2010-2011			2011-2012			Total Percent Change
	Emergency Housing (EH)	Transitional Housing (TH)	Total Homeless Persons Served (adjusted for duplicates)	Emergency Housing (EH)	Transitional Housing (TH)	Total Homeless Persons Served (adjusted for duplicates)	
<i>Pennsylvania</i>	27,128	9,401	34,750	26,448	9,301	34,008	-2.14%
<i>Philadelphia</i>	12,237	2,971	14,467	11,366	2,931	13,601	-6.0%
<i>Delaware Co.</i>	1,140	364	1,431	12,08	313	1,447	1.1%
<i>Luzerne Co.</i>	854	180	984	827	189	967	-1.74%
<i>Montgomery Co.</i>	610	174	746	467	144	581	-22.1%

- Your U.S. House representative can be found at <http://www.pec-cares.org/clientfolders/pdf/PA%20Congressional%20Delegation-2013-06-13.pdf>

***What Works?** Data are needed to figure out what works and to answer key questions. Are homeless families, children and individuals better off after leaving the services that they received? Is the number of Pennsylvania's homeless increasing or decreasing? What are the cost-effective strategies for preventing homelessness and reducing recidivism? Will any region's "10 year plan to end homelessness" succeed? No single data source can answer these questions. Future efforts are needed at the local and state levels to better understand the complex dynamics of homelessness. A concerted effort focused on program and system evaluation is needed to help understand which strategies are cost effective and successful.*

The **People's Emergency Center's** mission is to nurture families, strengthen neighborhoods and drive change in West Philadelphia. Through a community of more than 200 housing units and four educational centers offering job training, parenting and early childhood education, and technology coursework, PEC seeks to change the life trajectory for the women and children who seek its services and inspire them to aspire to new heights. PEC's policy work department collaborates with its Visiting Scholar, Dr. Staci Perlman, to forge a community-based research practice designed to improve how service providers improve its capacity to serving families and children who experience homelessness.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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¹ National Alliance to End Homelessness: [The State of Homelessness in America 2013: A Research Report on Homelessness](#), April 2013.