

Leading People Home



TJACH

Thomas Jefferson Area
Coalition for the Homeless

2010 Point-in-Time Count

The 2010 Point-in-Time(PIT) census for central Virginia reveals an increase in the number of people identified as homeless and an increase in the number of homeless individuals who report being unsheltered. Data reveal that fewer homeless individuals benefitted from employment in the last year than in the year before, reflecting the national unemployment trend. 58% of people surveyed in 2009 reported having some form of employment and only 30% of the people surveyed for 2010 reported having a job. Not surprisingly, unemployment was identified as the primary cause for people losing their last housing arrangement. While many emergency shelter beds are available in January, there are significantly fewer emergency shelter beds available year round and open to the general population. Finally, this count demonstrates the need for improved and additional services in the areas of job training and placement, dental services and preventive medical care.

Background

The Thomas Jefferson Area Coalition for the Homeless (TJACH) has completed its annual prevalence count of the area homeless population. This Point-in-Time count provides valuable information to area service providers, decision-makers and the general public on the number of people experiencing homelessness and the challenges facing them. Data collected is useful for deciding how and where to allocate limited public service dollars, applying for grants from government and private sources, and assessing where new programming is needed. This data is also required in order to apply for annual funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Point-in-Time counts can provide meaningful information about our system of care for very poor and homeless people and can provide a reasonable basis for estimating the number of people in need in a given community. These counts have significant limitations as well. Conducting the count on one particular day can skew data results. For example, if the day of the count is an unusually cold day in a normally temperate climate, the number of people seeking shelter may be abnormally high and not reflective of consistent numbers throughout the year. In this region, conducting the count in January, as is required by HUD, results in a higher number of homeless individuals that are sheltered than is true for half of the year. People and Congregations Engaged in

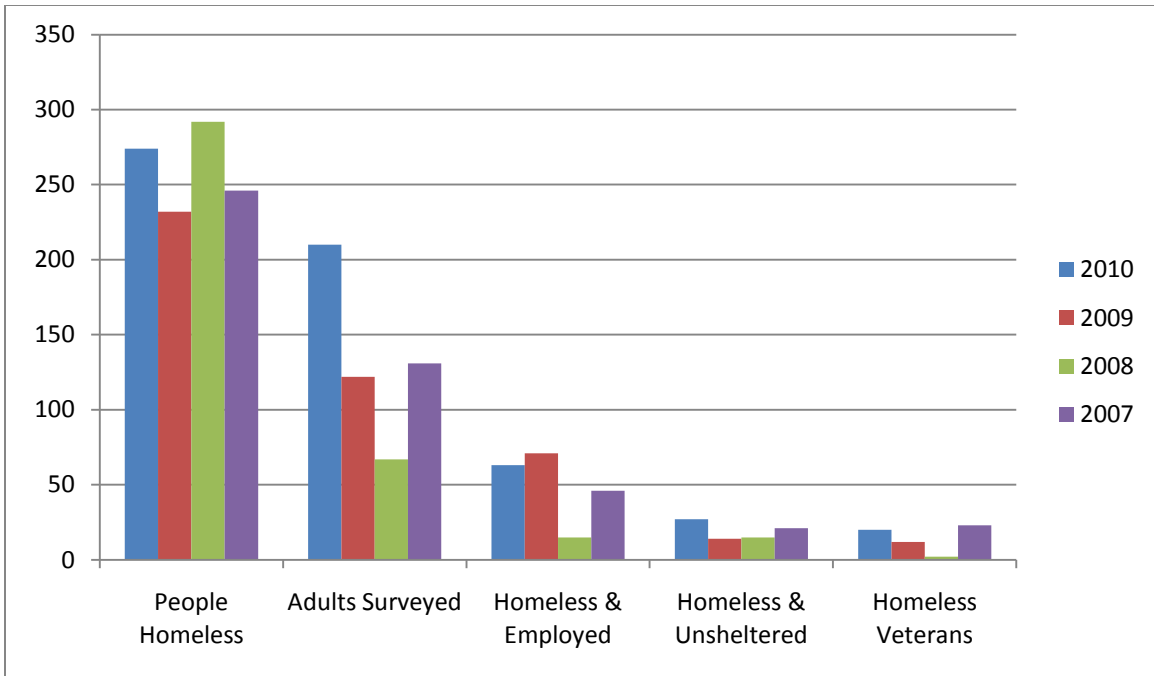
Ministry (PACEM) operates a seasonal shelter for the homeless and is open in January, but closed between April and October. If the count were conducted during these months, the number of unsheltered homeless individuals would be significantly higher.

Methodology

TJACH collects information in two distinct ways for the PIT count. Service providers are asked to submit reports containing the number of beds available to homeless individuals and the number that are occupied on the date of the count, in this case, January 26, 2010. These reports also contain some limited descriptive demographic data. In addition, surveys are administered to homeless individuals at soup kitchens, in tent communities, at area overnight and day shelters, at local parks and on the streets. These surveys contain twenty-eight questions about the needs and circumstances of the participants. They provide a strong basis for making decisions and assumptions about this population in need; however, there are also limitations to drawing conclusions based on survey data. For example, if surveys are administered in only one section of a community, they will not reveal information that can be legitimately generalized. In this case, outreach workers, service providers, and volunteers administered surveys at soup kitchens, day shelters, overnight shelters, in tent cities, and on the streets in an effort to ensure an appropriate cross-section of the homeless population. During regular debriefing sessions, however, providers identified several difficult-to-reach populations that were not likely adequately represented in the survey administration including a group of traveling musicians and young music fans that squat in abandoned apartments and a group of recently released ex-offenders that do not access traditional homeless prevention and intervention services. These discussions will inform our 2011 Point-In-Time survey process.

RESULTS

274 people were found to be homeless on January 26, 2010. 219 homeless adults with 28 dependent children were residing in emergency shelters, or transitional or permanent supportive housing. (There were 191 sheltered adults and 27 children in 2009). Unsheltered persons were identified through surveys. A total of 210 surveys were completed, indicating 27 people unsheltered, compared to 14 in 2009. Schools, which use different reporting criteria, reported 394 children homeless: in shelters, doubled up, in motels, or in substandard housing (327 in 2009).



During this PIT count, there were 177 emergency shelter beds available. (70 of these beds are seasonal beds provided by PACEM.) 139 of these beds were occupied on January 26, 2010, reflecting an excess of 38 emergency shelter beds available in this community. Despite this excess of available beds, 21 households with 27 people reported being unsheltered and living outside, in vehicles or in abandoned buildings. 28% of survey respondents reported having difficulty accessing emergency shelter or transitional housing in the past year. Finally, it is important to note that many of the ‘excess’ shelter beds are designated for specific subpopulations of the homeless, such as individuals experiencing domestic violence or significant mental illness.

20 survey respondents reporting veteran status, a rate of 10%, reflecting a 2% reduction from the 2009 PIT count results.

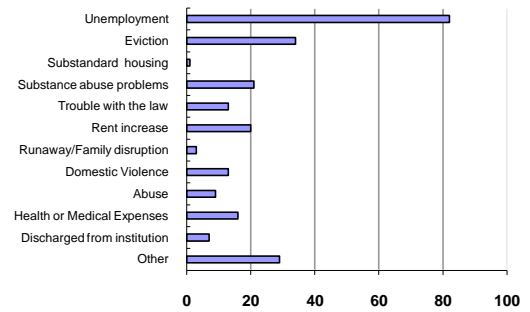
General Characteristics	
# of surveys administered	210
Gender – male	68%
Gender - female	32%

Length of Homelessness	
Less than 30 days	6%
Less than 6 months	35%
Less than 1 year	47%
More than 2 years	19%
More than 1 year	45%

Education Level	
Do not have HS diploma or equivalency	35%
Achieved at least HS diploma/equivalency	65%
Achieved technical, vocational, college or post graduate education	27%

Reasons for Leaving Prior Housing

Unemployment was identified as the most prevalent reason for homeless respondents leaving their last housing (39%). Eviction (16%) and an increase in rent (10%) were also identified as causes for losing housing. Two individuals reported that they lost housing due to Hurricane Katrina.

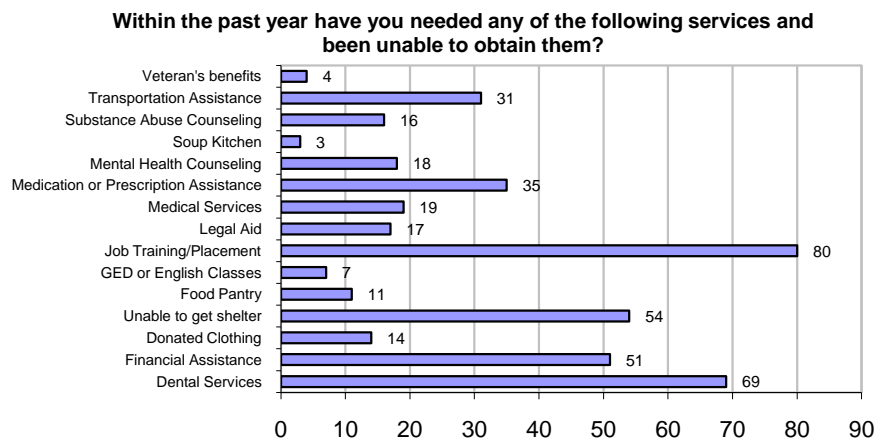


Origins

85% of survey respondents reported being in the area for more than six months and 48% identified Charlottesville as their hometown. 69% of survey respondents reported being from the Thomas Jefferson Planning District region with 7% from Albemarle County, 6% from Louisa County, 3% from Greene County, 3% from Fluvanna County and 2% from Nelson County. The homeless individuals and families seeking services in this community are our neighbors with nearly 70% reporting a local hometown.

Unmet Needs

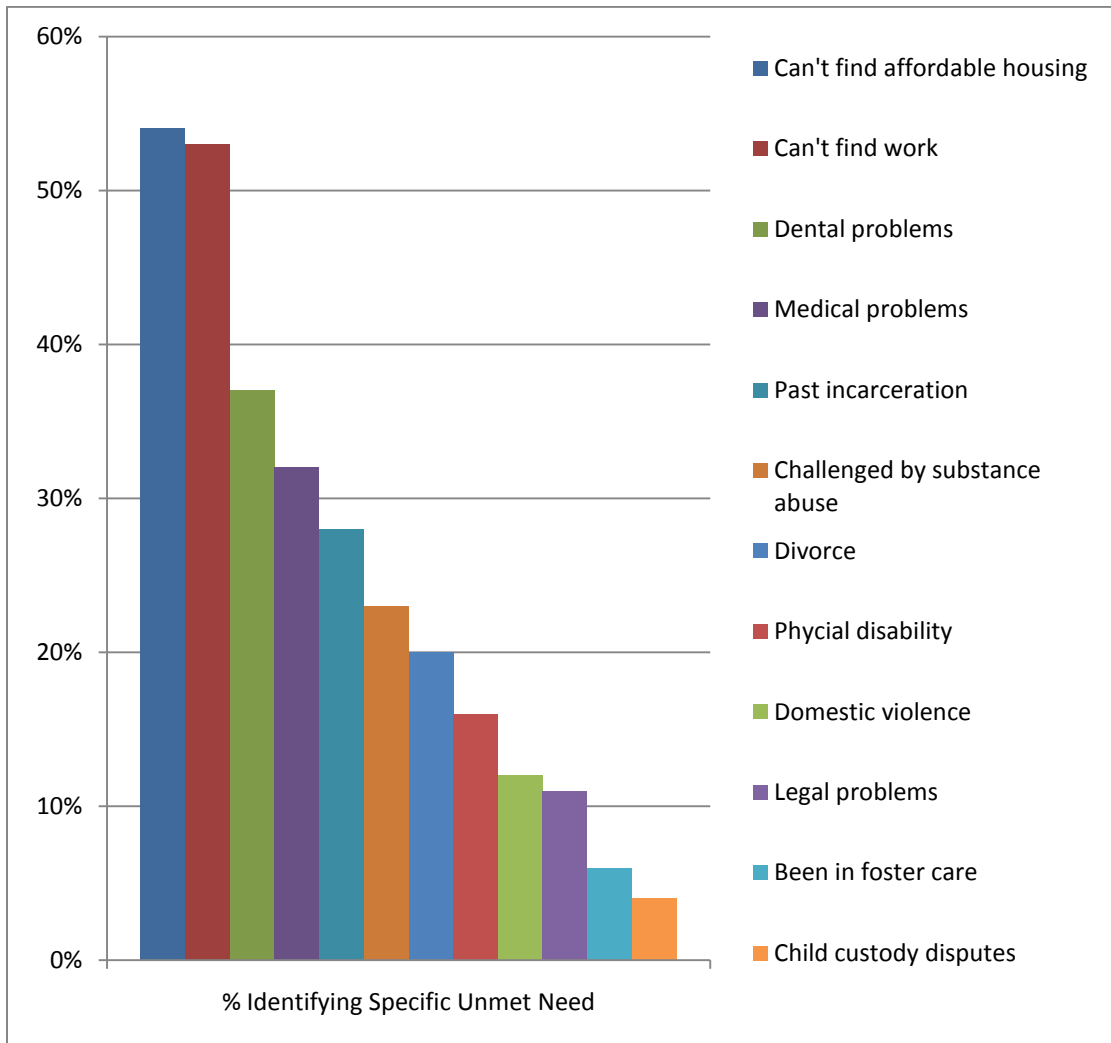
Job training and placement was the most frequently identified unmet need on the survey with 42% of the responses. Dental services (38%), eyeglasses (39%), emergency shelter and transitional housing (28%) and emergency financial assistance (26%) were also identified by many participants. Indeed, service providers report that 246 people are currently waiting for access to transitional housing beds.



Challenges reported by survey respondents

Survey results reveal that homeless individuals face multiple challenges. Many report having exacerbating circumstances in addition to experiencing difficulty accessing community services. In addition to difficulty finding work and housing, 28% of

respondents report having a current substance abuse problem and over 59% report that they do not have a primary care doctor. It is not surprising, then, that 60% of respondents reported using the Emergency Room in the last year for an average of 2.7 visits, and 30% reported having a hospital stay with an average length of stay of 5.2 nights.



The Thomas Jefferson Area Coalition for the Homeless is a coalition of area service providers dedicated to improving coordination and collaboration in an effort to end homelessness. Many thanks to all the service providers that provided data for this year's count and, especially to those agencies that provided critical outreach support so that we could administer a dramatic increase in the number of surveys.

For more information on the Thomas Jefferson Area Coalition for the Homeless or this report, contact Kaki Dimock, TJACH Executive Director executivedirector@tjach.org or find us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/TheHavenatFirstandMarket