



HUMBOLDT HOUSING AND HOMELESS COALITION

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Homeless Point-in-time Count results released

Semi-annual study shows fewer adults, more children without housing in 2011

Results from the 2011 Point-in-time Count of homeless people in Humboldt County show a decline in the number of adults without housing, although organizers believe actual numbers could be much higher.

The Point-in-time (PIT) Count, conducted semi-annually by the Humboldt Housing and Homeless Coalition (HHHC), showed 1,064 homeless adults this year, down from 1,497 adults in 2009. In 2011, 416 homeless children were counted compared to 412 in 2009.

While coalition members believe local rapid re-housing efforts are reducing homelessness, they acknowledge that it is likely fewer homeless people were counted because fewer agencies participated in the count.

“Despite our efforts to outreach to all homeless people, not everyone was counted,” said Jacqui Brennan, who analyzed data from the count and presented it to the HHHC on Thursday.

PIT Counts are intended to show the number of people without housing on a specific night—this year it was January 25—and to elicit basic demographic information from those counted. The information enables Continuums of Care such as the HHHC to identify community-specific needs and service gaps, access additional funding and resources, and increase public awareness.

Of the homeless individuals who identified where they slept on January 25, 33 percent reported being unsheltered, which includes camping and sleeping in a car. The remainder were considered sheltered—in a homeless shelter, motel or transitional housing, or were “couch-surfing.”

The majority were male—63 percent. The average age was 40 for adults and 8 for children.

Of particular interest to HHC members were the addiction and mental health statistics. Thirty percent of respondents said they had problems with alcohol, while 28 percent reported issues with drugs. Fully half said they had mental health challenges.

Karen “Fox” Olsen, HHC co-chair and director of Arcata House, said those numbers may be even higher.

“It’s important to keep in mind that the numbers are self-reported,” Olsen said, “and the stigma attached to addiction and mental health issues can impact these kinds of disclosures.”

Olsen added that while the numbers may not always be exact, she appreciated the willingness of the homeless people who participated in the study. “We really have to give it up for those 1,600 people who agreed to be interviewed. The questions we ask aren’t easy, but the answers help us make good decisions about our use of resources.”

Barbara LaHaie, HHC co-chair and assistant director of the Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services, said results from the study will help local organizations reach out in new ways.

“This information is invaluable to the HHC as it continues to coordinate the county’s overall response to homelessness,” LaHaie said.

The 2011 PIT Count was coordinated by Rachel Fuentes and funded by the Humboldt Safety Net Funding Partnership, which includes the Humboldt Area Foundation, the Smullin Foundation and the McLean Foundation.

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Other Statistics

Percentage

Became homeless in Humboldt County	66
Survivor of domestic violence	37
Homeless due to domestic violence	22
Homeless for three years or more	
Adults	25
Families	14
Ever served in the military	20
Ever in foster care	25
Education	
High school or GED	36
Did not complete high school	28
Some college or trade school	26
Physical disability	45
Permanent disability	43
Mental health issues	50
Serious mental health issues	24
Alcohol issues	30
Drug use issues	28
Chronic substance abuse	20
HIV/AIDS	2
Tested for HIV/AIDS	76