



New Jersey

Tuesday, January 29, 2008

Frequently Asked Questions:

What is Project Homeless Connect?

Project Homeless Connect is a one day, one stop event in which the community comes together to serve those most in need. Project Homeless Connect is designed to improve access to services, increase knowledge and understanding of homeless issues and foster collaboration between non-profit, government, private and individual volunteers in the effort to end homelessness. Individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness are able to receive a variety of services such as information on housing, benefits, legal services, substance abuse, mental health, medical services, food, clothing and employment services.

Where did Project Homeless Connect Originate?

Project Homeless Connect is a service model which originated in San Francisco in 2004 and has since spread to over 130 cities across America. From its origins in San Francisco, Project Homeless Connect has been identified by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) as an innovation that mobilizes civic will to end homelessness. With the success of Project Homeless Connect so evident, San Francisco continues to host Project Homeless Connect events bi-monthly. Every other month over 1000 community volunteers partner with city government, non-profits and the private sector to provide a one-stop shop of health and human services for homeless San Franciscans. Services include medical, mental health, substance abuse, housing, dental, benefits, legal, free eyeglasses, California ID, food, clothing, wheelchair repair and more. The goal of PHC is to provide easy access to services that support the transition the of City's homeless off the streets and into housing. As of February 2007, 18,486 volunteers have provided services to 18,217 homeless San Franciscans.

What is the history of Project Homeless Connect in New Jersey?

The winter of 2006/2007 was the first season Project Homeless Connect events were held in all 21 counties in the state of New Jersey. Project Homeless Connect events were held in 20 counties at 43 different sites on January 25, 2007. (Morris County held their Project Homeless Connect event in December of 2006.) The events were hosted on January 25, 2007 to coincide with the HUD mandated Point-In-Time Count. New Jersey is the first state in the country to host a statewide coordinated Project Homeless Connect event at 44 different sites. Due to the tremendous success of this event, some counties have chosen to host Project Homeless Connect events twice a year. Project Homeless Connect events will be hosted yearly the last week in January in all counties throughout the state.

What is the Point In Time Count?

All counties or entitlement communities receiving HUD funding for homeless programs through the McKinney Vento program are required to conduct a one day count of homeless individuals in their community. Homeless persons living in emergency shelters, transitional housing programs and on the street are counted. This information is transmitted to HUD in the yearly Continuum of Care applications and aid in the determination of funding amounts for communities.

Why is Project Homeless Connect combined with the Point in Time Count?

In many counties throughout New Jersey, conducting a street count of homeless individuals can be quite difficult. Communities in New Jersey often have difficulty locating all the pockets where homeless individuals congregate within their borders and volunteers may not feel comfortable entering some areas where homeless individuals are known to congregate in order to conduct the survey. As such, many counties have found Project Homeless Connect event sites are a perfect way to get individuals in off the street thus reducing the need to go out and conduct a street count of homeless individuals. The Project Homeless Connect event sites offer individuals a chance to come in out of the cold and receive much needed items and services. It also provides a comfortable environment in which surveys can be administered.

What do we hope to accomplish by hosting Project Homeless Connect and the Point in Time Count?

One of the first goals of PHC/PIT is to get an accurate picture of the number of people who experience homelessness in a community. We are also interested in learning about those at risk of becoming homeless. With the survey that is administered on this day both at PHC sites, in agencies and on the streets, we will learn about the needs of those who are homeless or at risk, including the circumstances under which they found themselves without adequate housing and what their service needs are. In addition to learning about the needs of the homeless, government agencies, service providers and all interested parties are able to collaborate and coordinate services to aid those in need. By having events all over the state on the same day, we hope to highlight the extent of the homeless issue in New Jersey and the local communities.

To learn more about Project Homeless Connect New Jersey 2008 Preparations please visit the site below:

<http://www.monarchhousing.org/EHT/PHC/>

To learn more about the results of Project Homeless Connect New Jersey 2007 please visit the site below:

<http://www.monarchhousing.org/EHT/PHC/PHC2007.pdf>