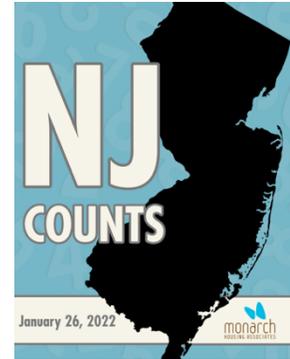


#NJCounts 2022 Critical during Coronavirus Pandemic

January 24, 2022 - On Wednesday, January 26th, 2022, #NJCounts 2022, the statewide Point-in-Time count of the homeless, will take place across the state counting individuals and households who experience homelessness, a critical task made even more important amidst the Omicron COVID-19 variant surge and the end of New Jersey's eviction moratorium on January 1st, 2022. Exact times of the count may vary by county. Local press contacts are available [here](#).



Local government, non-profit agencies, community advocates, volunteers, and others that plan community efforts to end homelessness, will conduct the counts across the state. For the ninth year, Monarch Housing Associates is coordinating the annual statewide NJCounts.

Homeless service providers and volunteers will interview people experiencing homelessness on the night of January 25, 2022, who stayed in shelters, transitional housing programs, hotels paid for by agencies, in the woods, under bridges, in vacant buildings, and at other locations where they are forced to live because there is insufficient affordable or supportive housing. On January 26, 2022, many local communities will canvas the streets to survey persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness, inquiring about where they slept the night before. Data will also be captured to understand how COVID-19 is impacting New Jersey residents experiencing homelessness.

The 2021 statewide Point-in-Time count found 8,097 homeless men, women and children, in 6,210 households, across the state of New Jersey. The statewide NJCounts 2021 report is available [here](#). For 2022, communities are especially interested in understanding how the end of New Jersey's eviction moratorium and the surge in the Omicron COVID-19 variant has impacted households throughout New Jersey. Monarch Housing expects to make the final report available in spring 2022.

“On January 1st, 2022 New Jersey's Eviction Moratorium ended. Homeless service systems across the state have been strategically working to ensure that resources made available through the CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan have targeted households currently experiencing homelessness and households that are at risk of homelessness once the moratorium came to an end,” said Kasey Vienckowski, Senior Associate with Monarch Housing Associates which directs NJCounts 2022. “This year's count will be critical to help communities respond to the wave of households that will be in need as the courts continue to work through the backlog of eviction cases that have been pending since as early as March, 2020.”

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) mandates the statewide Point-in-Time count of the homeless. Due to the pandemic, communities have had to alter the way in which they approach the count; however, communities throughout the State understand the importance of gathering data on the unsheltered population, especially during a pandemic. Communities are relying more heavily on homeless service providers and community partners to conduct surveys and outreach to people experiencing homelessness in sheltered and unsheltered locations. Due to safety concerns the traditional Project Homeless Connect Events have been significantly reduced to prevent the spread of the virus and communities will focus on more strategic outreach efforts to reach all persons experiencing homelessness.

According to Monarch Housing Associates, NJCounts 2022 is critical in the context of current state and federal conversations:

- When the CARES Act was signed into legislation in March 2020, the State received an influx of federal funding to prevent, prepare for, and mitigate the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, with funding set aside specifically for people experiencing homelessness. As additional federal funding is distributed to New Jersey communities, it is important to understand the current state of homelessness, and how effectively we have been using the funding for homelessness prevention and housing persons currently experiencing homelessness.
- The Eviction Moratorium ended in New Jersey on January 1st, 2022. There are concerns that as courts are beginning to see eviction cases and as lockouts are being issued there will be a large number of persons entering the homeless service system. It is critical to have the data from NJ Counts 2022 to assess the system's current capacity and prepare for the influx of households that will enter the system.
- NJCounts 2022 will build on four years of analysis on racial disparities around homelessness in New Jersey. Data from 2018 to 2021 identified significant disparities along racial lines, in who experiences homelessness. NJCounts 2022 will add to the body of research on racial disparities and disproportionate experiences of homelessness, adding to the current COVID-19 data that reflects the impact on marginalized communities.
- New Jersey Code Blue legislation requires all counties to provide emergency warming centers to persons experiencing unsheltered homelessness when temperatures are below 32 degrees. NJCounts 2022 will provide information about the scope of unsheltered homelessness in each community, along with the impact of COVID-19, in preparation for Code Blue warming center activities.

The solutions to ending homelessness include increasing the supply of affordable and supportive housing, improving access to that housing, and ensuring persons experiencing homelessness have a voice in the process. The State is in a special position to do so with the influx of federal funding being provided in response to the pandemic. Communities across the state have been working to implement these solutions through best practices such as housing first and rapid re-housing programs. These housing programs expand the supply of affordable and supportive housing through the provision of long-term and short-term rental assistance vouchers, coupled with support services tailored to individual participant needs. They work to address access to housing by eliminating barriers to program entry, such as requiring completion of treatment programs or attaining a specific level of income. These program models have helped communities across the country reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness.

The coronavirus pandemic has shed a light on the importance of housing and the desperate need to house New Jersey's population experiencing homelessness. Being without housing is a predicament that no one should have to experience, especially during a pandemic when the need for a place to call home becomes even more pressing.

For more information about Monarch Housing's work to ensure that every person has quality affordable, permanent supportive housing that fosters freedom, independence and community integration, visit <http://www.monarchhousing.org>