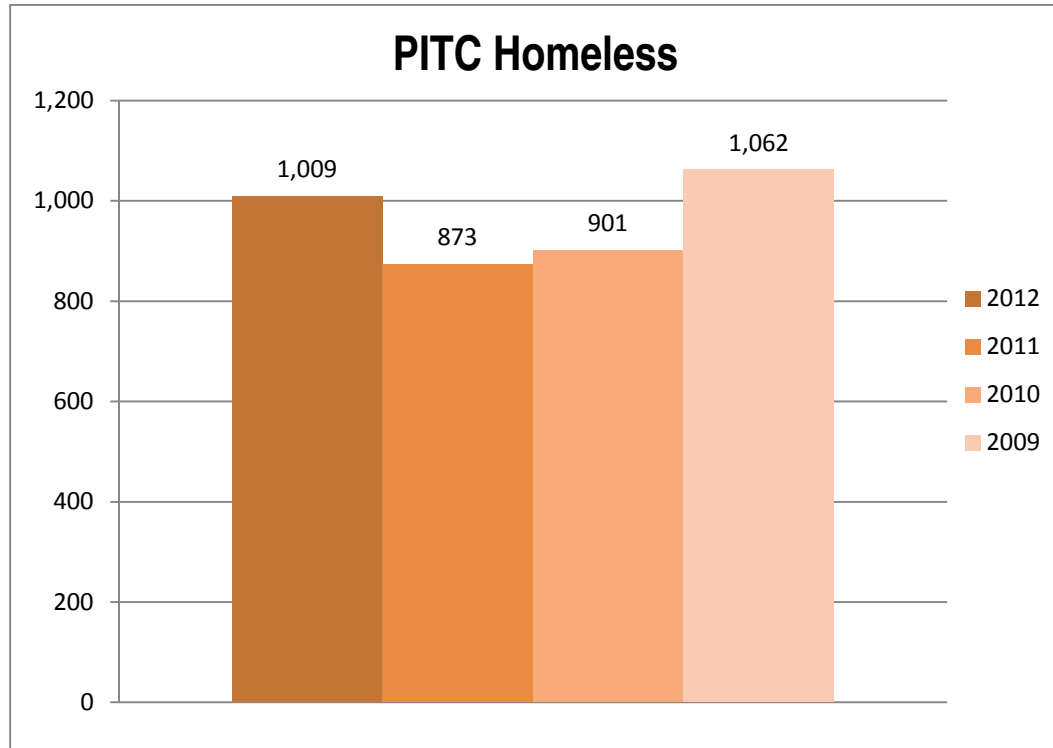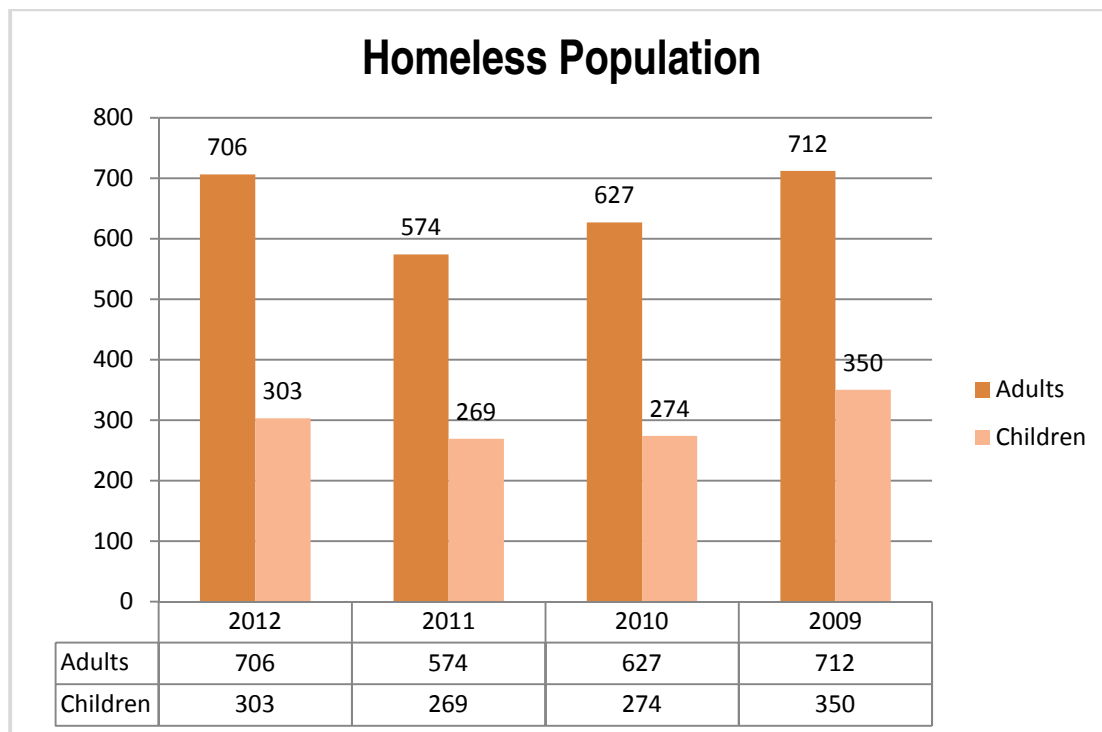# MERCER COUNTY

On January 25, 2012 there were 1,009 homeless men, women and children counted in Mercer County according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) regulations.

PITC Homeless

The actual number of people who are homeless over the course of the year may be between two to four times larger than the number counted at one point in time. Using the statistical formula developed in the publication "Estimating the Need," it is projected that *over the course of a year, **2,469** adults and children are homeless in Mercer County.*
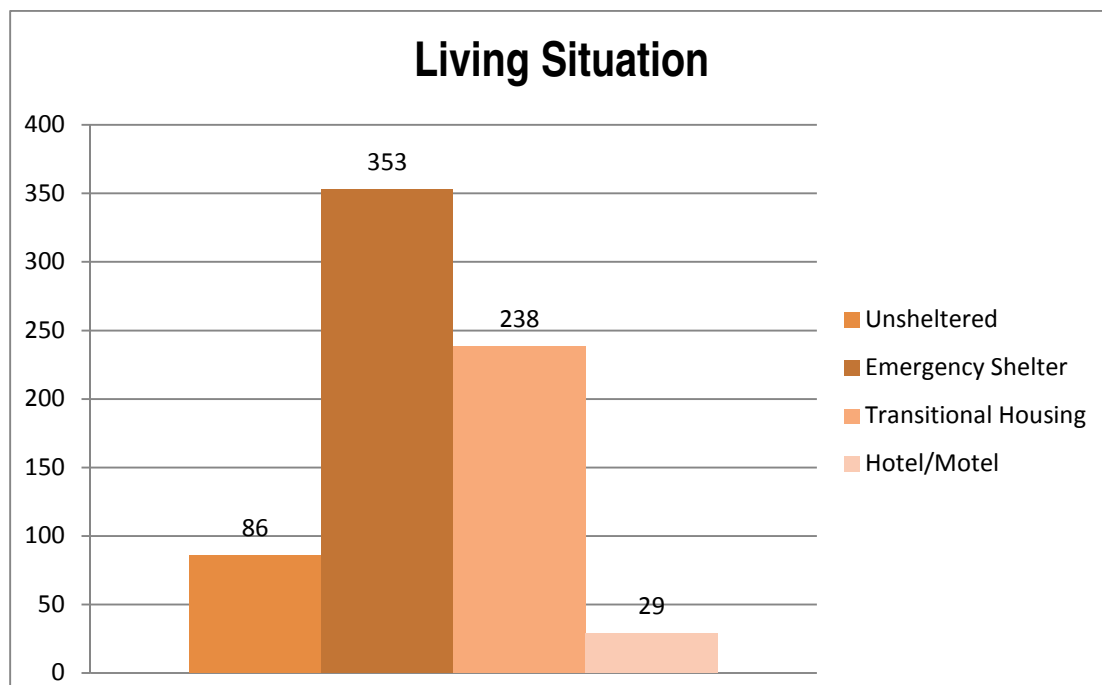
Homelessness in Mercer County was on the decline from 2009 to 2011 but then saw an increase of 13.4% to the current count year. Of the 1,009 people who were homeless on the night of the count 303 of them were children. As the Homeless Population chart shows, the number of adults and children mirrored the overall population increases and decreases.

2012 Homeless Breakdown	
Respondents (Adults)	706
Family Members (Children)	303
Total Homeless	**1,009**

Homeless Population

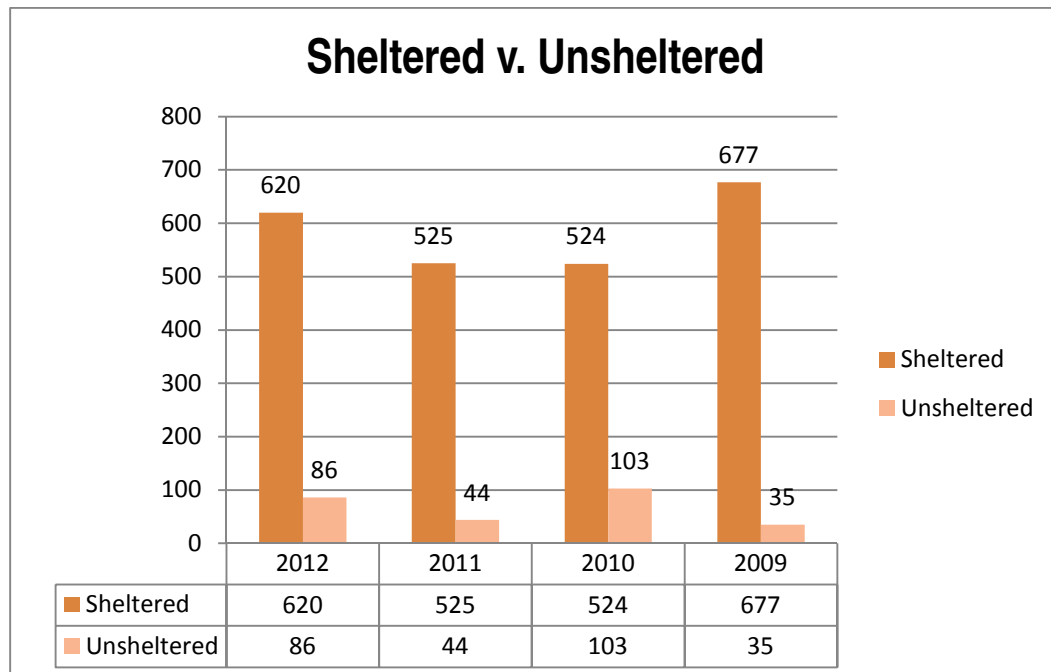|	2012	2011	2010	2009
Adults	706	574	627	712
Children	303	269	274	350

Living Situation

As reflected in the Living Situation chart below, 86 or 7.8% of the homeless respondents were unsheltered the night of the count. The remainder of the homeless were in living in sheltered situations with the largest population of the homeless residing in emergency shelter (n=353, 48.9%).

Living Situation

Legend:
- Unsheltered
- Emergency Shelter
- Transitional Housing
- Hotel/Motel

Values: Unsheltered 86, Emergency Shelter 353, Transitional Housing 238, Hotel/Motel 29

Emergency Shelter includes those in ES, Domestic Violence Shelters, Youth Shelters and Safe Havens where applicable

The number of unsheltered homeless in Mercer County has fluctuated over the past four count years with the highest numbers being seen in 2010. The number of sheltered homeless followed the same pattern as the overall population numbers.

Sheltered v. Unsheltered

	2012	2011	2010	2009
Sheltered	620	525	524	677
Unsheltered	86	44	103	35

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

As HUD continually encourages CoCs to utilize HMIS to complete the sheltered count for a community, for the first time, as part of this 2012 report, there is a comparison of what was reported in HMIS for emergency shelters and Transitional Housing for the night of the count to what was reported in the same categories for the Point In Time Count. The numbers from HMIS are based on those over 17 in emergency shelter or transitional housing on the night of the Point In Time Count.
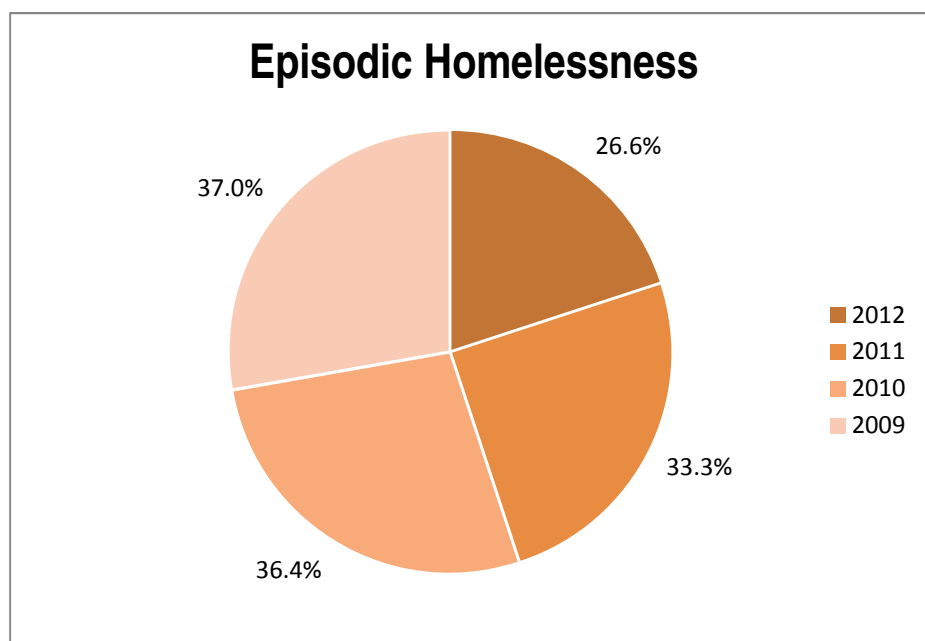
In Mercer County, there were a total of 269 adults in emergency shelter in HMIS on the night of the count and there were 216 in transitional housing in HMIS on the night of the count. These numbers are lower that was recorded as part of the count. On the night of the count 344 respondents stated that they would be in emergency shelter and 238 reported residing in transitional housing.

Length and Episodes of Homelessness

Of the homeless population surveyed in Mercer County, 279 or 39.5% responded that they have been homeless for more than one year. Of those who were homeless less than one year, 20.5% reported that they had been homeless at least one other time within the past 12 months.

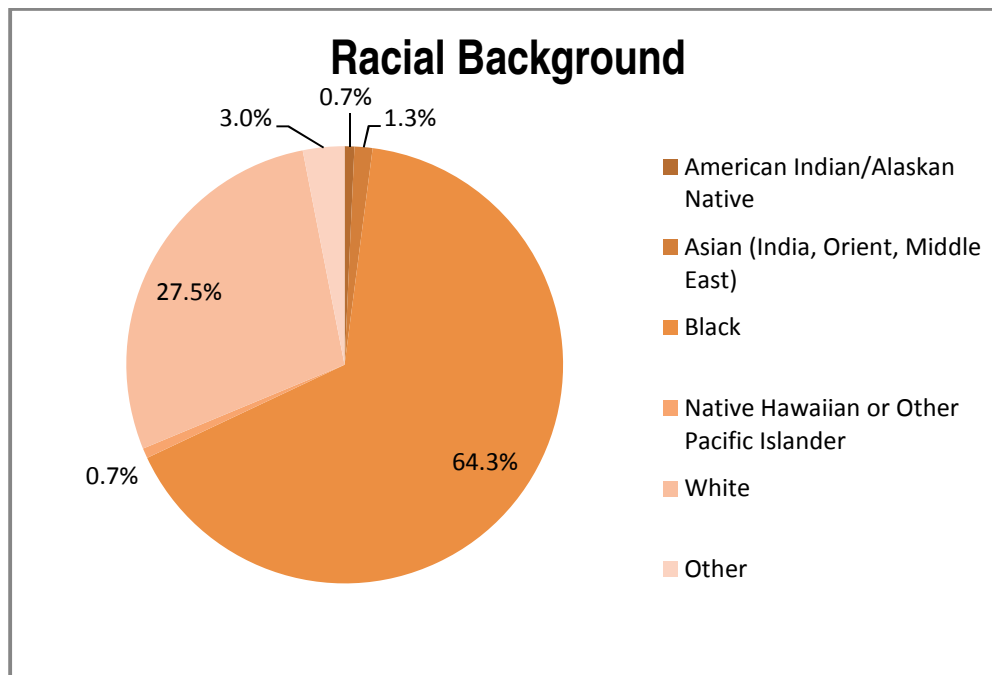| 2012 Length of Homelessness	#	%
1 day - 1 week	36	5.1%
8 days - 1 month	78	11.0%
1 month & 1 day - 3 months	91	12.9%
3 months & 1 day to 6 months	107	15.2%
6 months & 1 day to 12 months	106	15.0%
More than 1 year	**279**	**39.5%**
No response	9	1.3%

As reflected in the chart below, a total of 188 or 26.6% of the total homeless population reported having at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. This number has been on the decline over the past four count years reaching its lowest percentage in the current count year.

Episodic Homelessness

26.6% 2012
33.3% 2011
36.4% 2010
37.0% 2009

Demographics

In 2012, of the total homeless population in Mercer County, 455 people or 64.4% were male, 244 or 34.6% were female.

The Racial Background chart below outlines the racial breakdown of homeless persons in the 2012 count. The largest majority were Black (64.3%). The next largest percentage was White (27.5%). The total percentage of the homeless population that defined their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino equaled 9.3%.

Racial Background

Legend:
- American Indian/Alaskan Native
- Asian (India, Orient, Middle East)
- Black
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Other

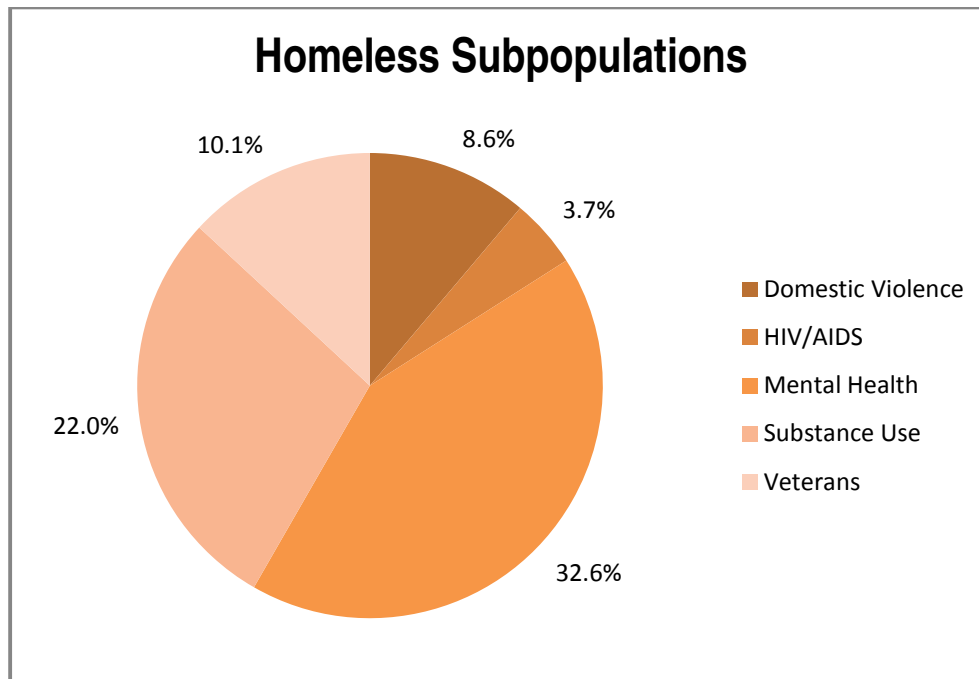Pie values: 0.7%, 1.3%, 3.0%, 27.5%, 0.7%, 64.3%

The largest percentage of homeless in Mercer County fell within the 40 to 49 year old age range, totaling 27.1%, followed by those within the 50 to 59 year old age range (23.2%).

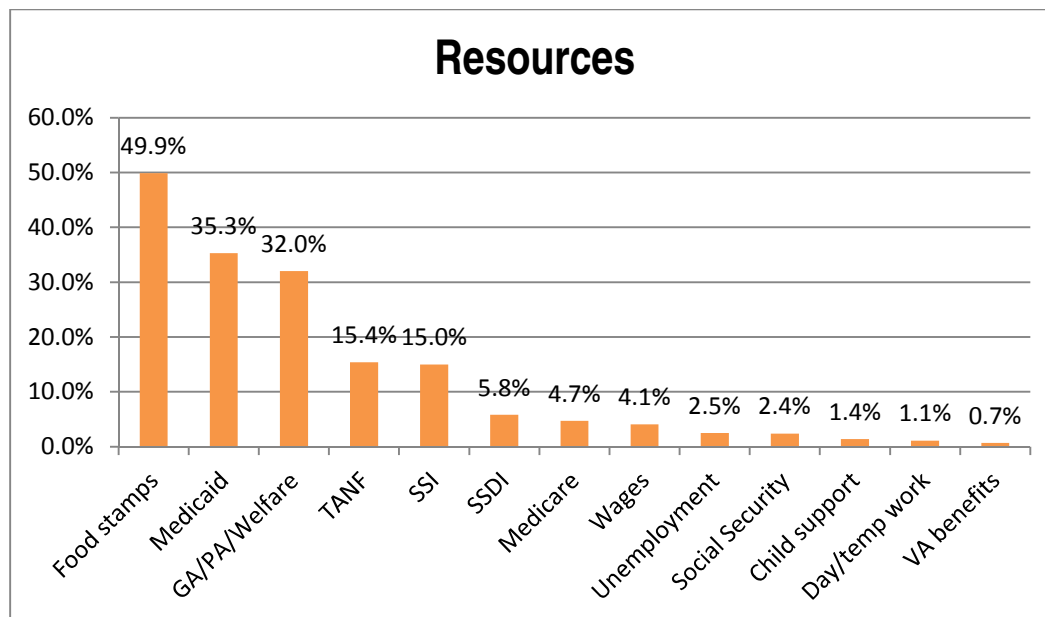| 2012 Age	#	%
18-20	36	5.1%
21-24	60	8.5%
25-29	47	6.7%
30-39	125	17.7%
40-49	**191**	**27.1%**
50-59	164	23.2%
60-64	33	4.7%
65+	13	1.8%
No response	37	5.2%

Homeless Subpopulations

The Homeless Subpopulation chart outlines the breakdown of the homeless HUD subpopulations in Mercer County for the 2012 count. The largest subpopulation was the homeless who had mental health issues (32.6%). The number of homeless who reported serving in the US military equaled 10.1% (n=71).

Homeless Subpopulations

10.1%   8.6%

3.7%

22.0%

32.6%

- Domestic Violence
- HIV/AIDS
- Mental Health
- Substance Use
- Veterans

Financial Resources and Income

The three main sources of income reported by people who were homeless in Mercer County on the night of the 2012 count were Food Stamps (49.9%), Medicaid (35.3%) and Welfare (2%). 8.8% of the homeless population reported receiving no type of government benefit on the night of the count.

Resources

As part of the 2012 count, homeless respondents were asked to provide a current income that provided a potential estimated yearly income. In Mercer County, the largest percent of respondents stated had an estimated income of less than $5,000.

2012 Yearly Income	#	%
No Income	157	22.2%
$1.00-$4,999	**308**	**43.6%**
$5,000- $9,999	98	13.9%
$10,000-$14,999	23	3.3%
$15,000- $19,999	7	1.0%
$20,000-$24,999	4	0.6%
$25,000- $29,999	5	0.7%
$30,000- $34,999	1	0.1%
$35,000- $39,000	2	0.3%
$50,000+	4	0.6%
No Response	97	13.7%

Service Needs and Contributing Factors to Homelessness

The highest ranking factor that respondents stated contributed to their homelessness in Mercer County was loss of a job and inability to find work. Other top ranking factors included alcohol or drug abuse problems and relationship breakdown.

Contributing Factors to Homelessness	%
Lost job/cannot find work	27.1%
Alcohol or drug abuse problems	21.7%
Relationship/family breakup/death	20.3%
Housing costs too high	13.7%
Medical problems/physical or developmental disability	10.3%
Domestic violence	9.1%
Mental illness/emotional problems	8.9%
Incarceration	6.9%
Have work but wages are too low	6.2%
Lost job due to lack of transportation	3.7%
Utility costs too high	3.0%
House condemned	1.8%
Eviction or at risk of Eviction	1.6%
Foreclosure or at risk of Foreclosure	1.6%
Loss of child support	1.1%
Natural disaster	0.6%

The types of services that respondents stated that they have received in the past three years or are currently needed are reflected in the chart below.   In Mercer County, the top service received was emergency shelter and the top service that was reported as needed was housing.

2012 Service Needs	#	%
Received		
Emergency shelter	364	51.6%
Emergency food or meal assistance	299	42.4%
Housing	128	18.1%

Need		
Housing	379	53.7%
Employment assistance	226	32.0%
Emergency food or meal assistance	167	23.7%

Discharge from Mainstream Institutions

As part of the 2012 survey, homeless respondents were asked if they had been discharged into homelessness from certain mainstream institutions within the past three years (since January 25, 2009). The discharge information is based on the homeless population that responded to the survey and relies on self report.

As the chart shows, the two institutions that had the highest numbers of respondents reporting they were discharged into homelessness were City/County Jail and Medical Hospitals.
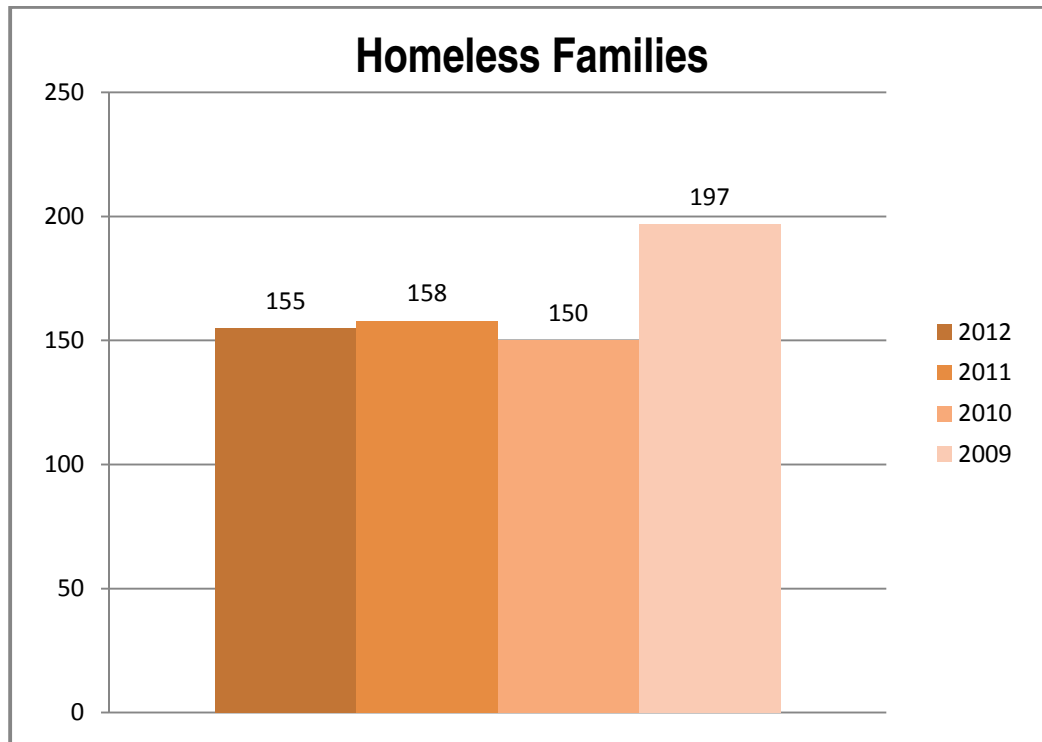
Discharged Into Homelessness (Past Three Years)		
Corrections	**#**	**%**
State Prison	51	7.2%
City/County Jail	122	17.3%
Juvenile Detention Center	1	0.1%
Inpatient Care	#	%
Hospitalized (Medical)	95	13.5%
State Inpatient Mental Health	9	1.3%
City/County Inpatient Mental Health	7	1.0%
Substance Abuse Treatment	11	1.6%

Last Permanent Address

In the 2012 count, 87.1% (n=615) of the homeless respondents lived in New Jersey before becoming homeless. In looking at the surround states, 5.1% (n=36) last lived in Pennsylvania, 0.7% (n=5) last lived in New York, and 0.3% (n=2) last lived in Delaware. The only town that reported significant as the last permanent address numbers was the City of Trenton (n=487, 69%).
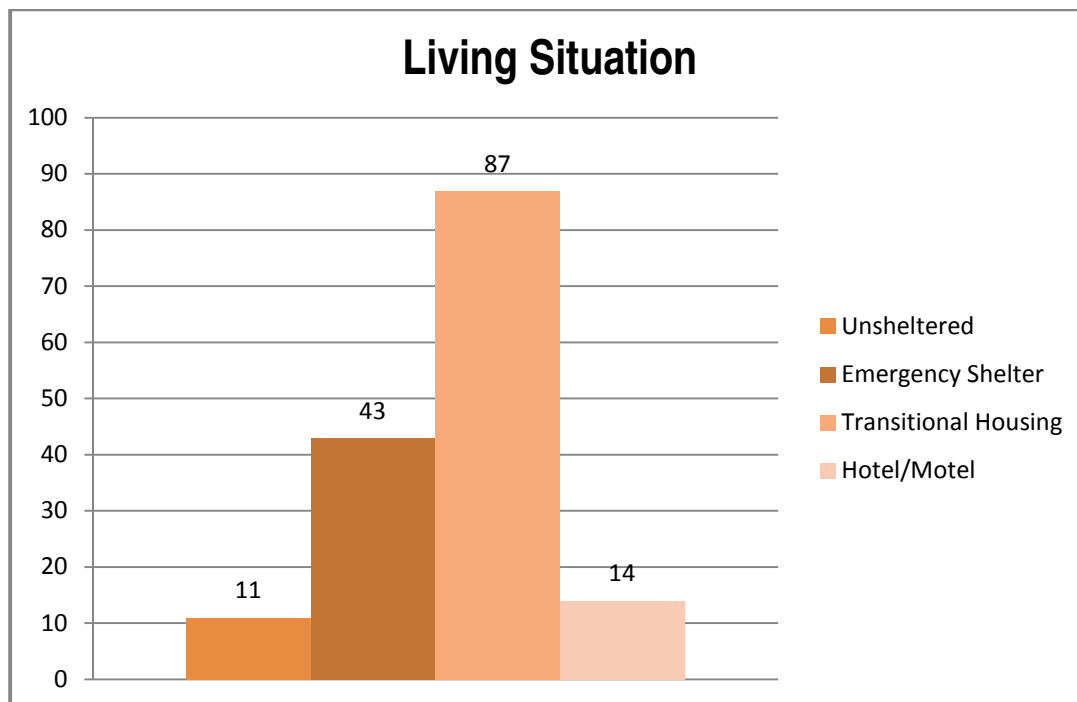
FAMILY HOMELESSNESS

In 2012, of the 706 homeless respondents in Mercer County, 155 or 21.9% had at least one dependent child under 18 with them the night of the count and is considered a homeless family. Of the total of 303 homeless children in these families, 186 were six years or younger and117 were between the ages of 7 and 17.
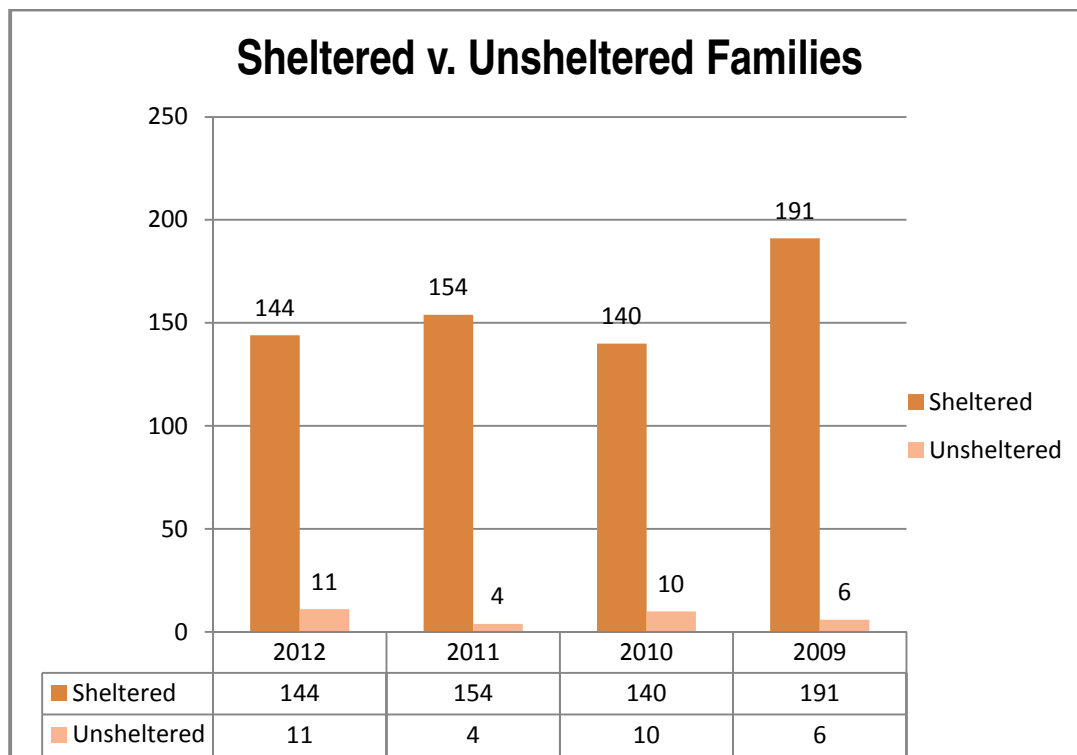
Homeless Families

Year	Count
2012	155
2011	158
2010	150
2009	197

Living Situation

In Mercer County, eleven (11) homeless families were in an unsheltered living situation on the night of the count. The unsheltered homeless families had a total of 20 children with them on the night of the count.

The remaining 144 homeless families were in sheltered living situations that included emergency shelter and transitional housing. The largest percentage (56.1%) of homeless families were residing in transitional housing on the night of the 2012 count.

Living Situation

Legend:
- Unsheltered
- Emergency Shelter
- Transitional Housing
- Hotel/Motel

Category	Value
Unsheltered	11
Emergency Shelter	43
Transitional Housing	87
Hotel/Motel	14

As the chart below shows, homeless families in Mercer County have mainly been in sheltered living situations over the past four counts with the number of unsheltered fluctuating each year with the highest numbers seen in this count year.

Sheltered v. Unsheltered Families

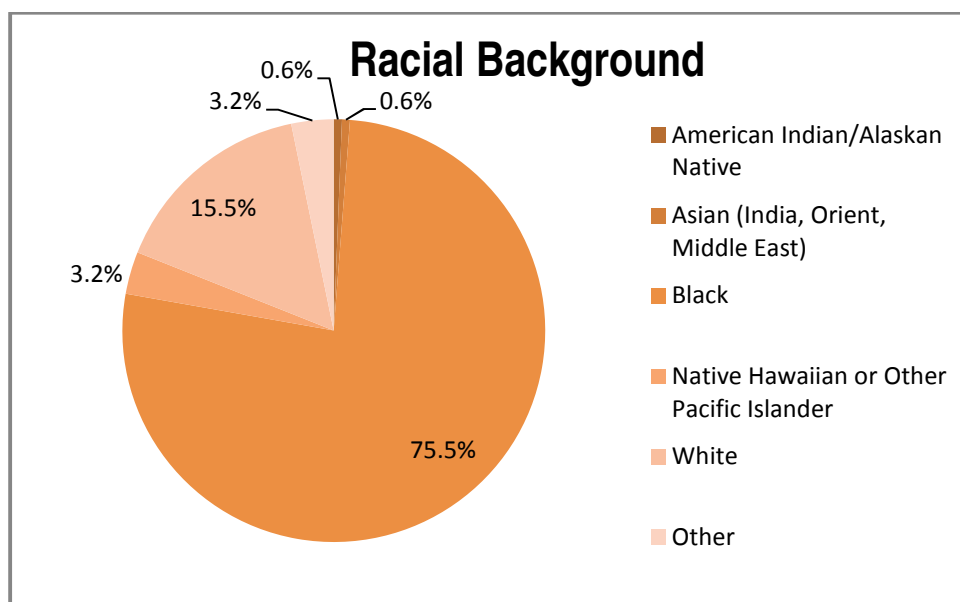|	2012	2011	2010	2009
Sheltered	144	154	140	191
Unsheltered	11	4	10	6

Length of Homelessness

The largest percentage (25.8%) of homeless families had been homeless more than one year. This was closely followed those families homeless for three (3) to six (6) months (23.2%).

2012 Length of Homelessness	#	%
1 day - 1 week	12	7.7%
8 days - 1 month	15	9.7%
1 month & 1 day - 3 months	30	19.4%
3 months & 1 day to 6 months	36	23.2%
6 months & 1 day to 12 months	19	12.3%
More than 1 year	**40**	**25.8%**
No response	3	1.9%

Demographics

Of the total 155 homeless families in Mercer County, 77.4% (n=1 20) were female headed households and 22.6% (n=35) were male headed households.

The Racial Background chart below outlines the racial breakdown of homeless families in the 2012 count. The largest percentage overwhelmingly defined themselves as Black (75.5%). The next largest group were those that defined themselves as White at 15.5%. A total of 14.8% (n=23) defined their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino.
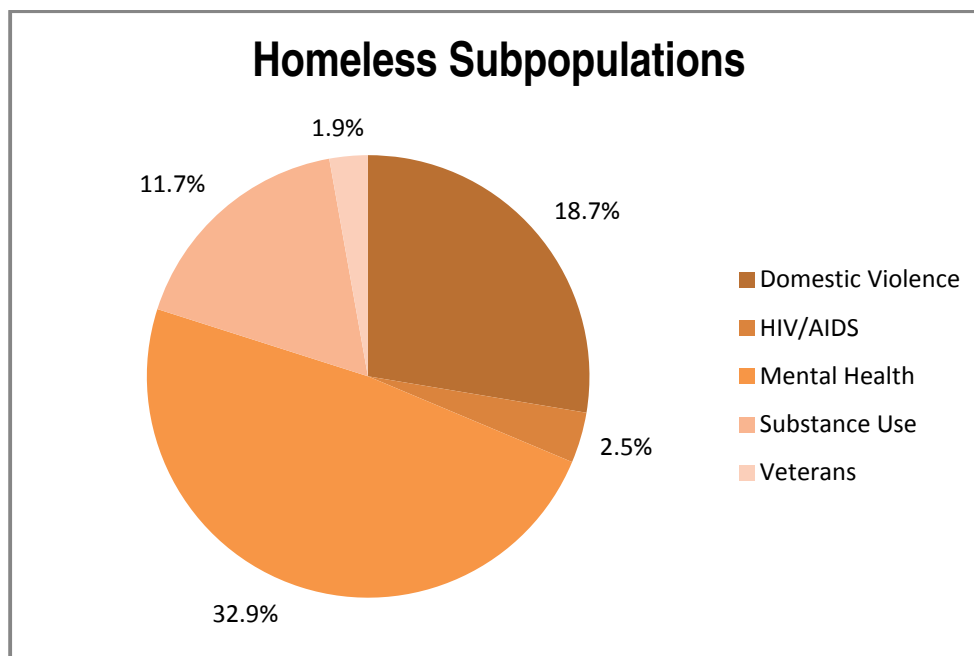
The largest percentage of homeless families in Mercer County had a head of household that fell within the 30 to 39 year old age range. However, much of the homeless family population was evenly dispursed between the ages of 18 and 49.

2012 Age	#	%
18-20	24	15.5%
21-24	33	21.3%
25-29	24	15.5%
30-39	**35**	**22.6%**
40-49	25	16.1%
50-59	10	6.5%
No response	4	2.6%

Homeless Family Subpopulations

Among the HUD homeless subpopulations in the 2012 count, in Mercer County the largest subpopulation among homeless families was those with a head of household with mental health issues. The next largest percentage was households experiencing domestic violence as reflected in the chart below.

Homeless Subpopulations

1.9%
11.7%
18.7%

■ Domestic Violence
■ HIV/AIDS
■ Mental Health
■ Substance Use
■ Veterans

2.5%

32.9%

Financial Resources and Income

The three main sources of income reported by homeless families in Mercer County on the night of the 2012count were:

- Food Stamps (74.8%);
- TANF (66.5%); and
- Medicaid (54.2%)

All of the families reported receiving some type of government benefit on the night of the count. In looking at yearly income, the majority of the homeless families were earning less than $5,000 a year.

2012 Yearly Income	#	%
No Income	11	7.1%
$1.00-$4,999	**73**	**47.1%**
$5,000- $9,999	47	30.3%
$10,000-$14,999	4	2.6%
$15,000- $19,999	4	2.6%
$20,000-$24,999	2	1.3%
$25,000- $29,999	2	1.3%
$30,000- $34,999	1	0.6%
$35,000- $39,000	1	0.6%
$80,000- $89,999	1	0.6%
No Response	9	5.8%

Service Needs and Contributing Factors to Homelessness

The highest ranking factor that respondents stated contributed to their homelessness in Mercer County was relationship breakdown. Other top ranking factors included eviction and loss of a job and inability to find work.
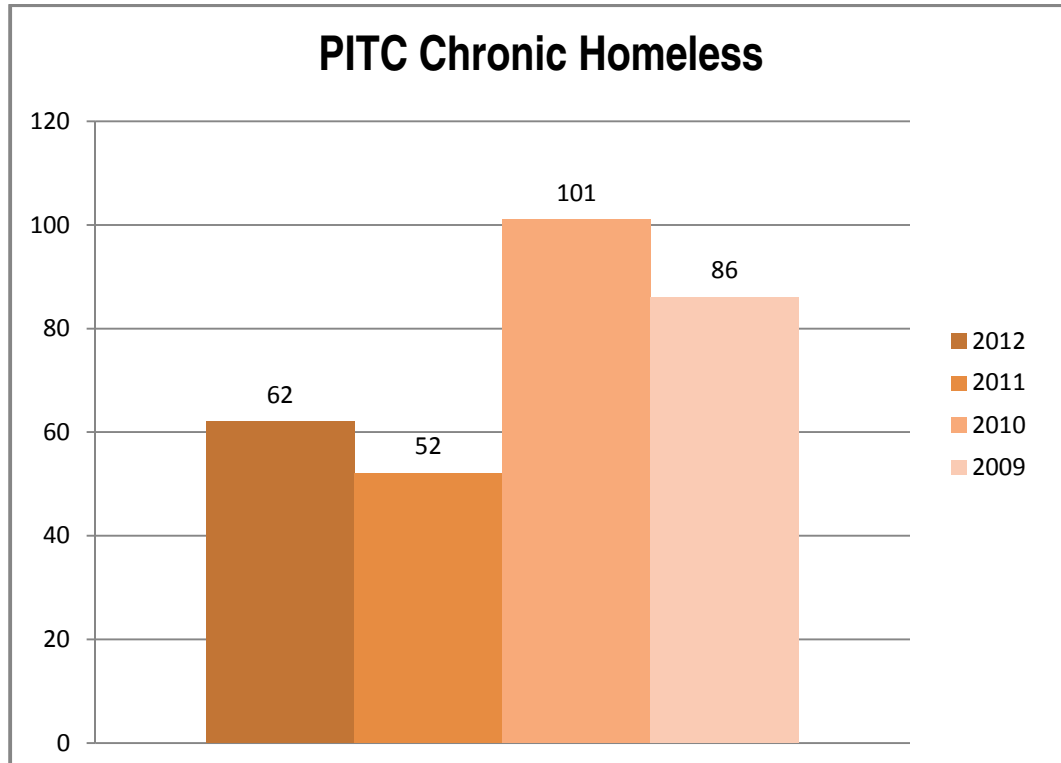
Contributing Factors to Homelessness	%
Relationship/family breakup/death	26.5%
Eviction or at risk of Eviction	24.5%
Lost job/cannot find work	23.9%
Housing costs too high	21.9%
Domestic violence	16.8%

When homeless families were asked what their top needs were on the night of the count the top three needs included:

- Housing (36.1%);
- Employment assistance (27.7%); and
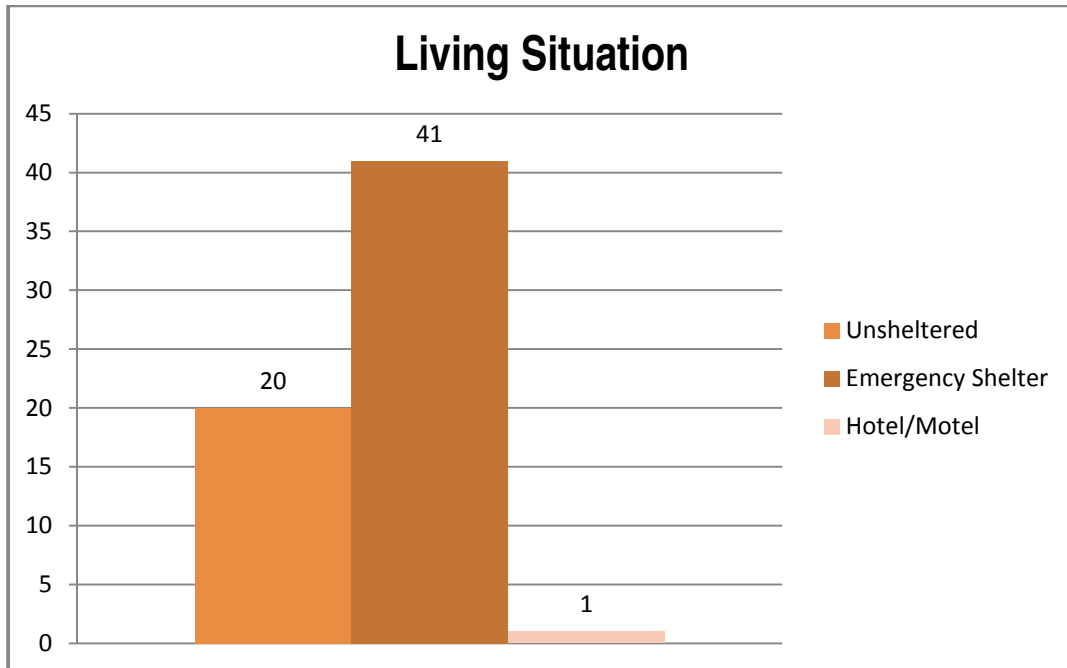- Educational training (23.2%)

CHRONICALLY HOMELESS

On the night of January 25, 2012, there were 62 chronically homeless individuals counted in Mercer County equaling 8.7% of the total homeless population. The chronically homeless population saw its highest numbers in 2010 but then in a large decline to 2011 (48.5%). The numbers only slightly increased in the current count year.
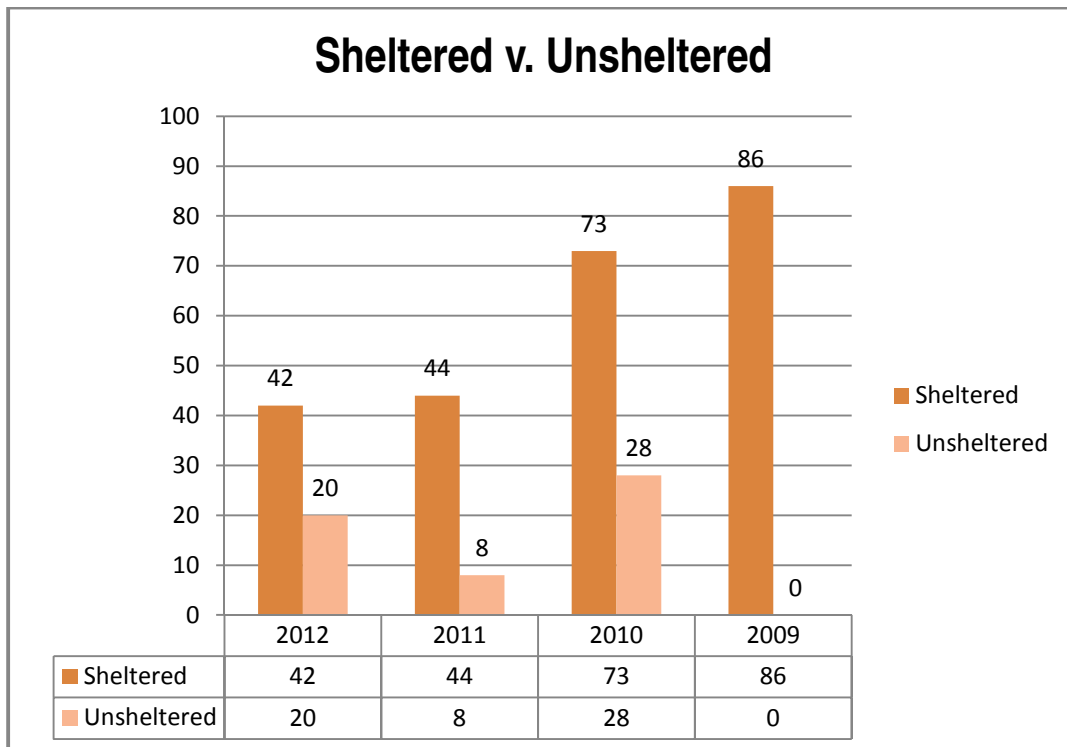
PITC Chronic Homeless

Year	Count
2012	62
2011	52
2010	101
2009	86

Living Situation

As defined, homeless living situations for the chronically homeless can only include those living on the street, in places not meant for human habitation or emergency shelter. The Living Situation chart is a breakdown of where the chronically homeless individual population was residing on the night of the 2012 count. The largest percentage (66.1%) of the chronically homeless population in Mercer County were residing in emergency shelter on the night of the count.

Living Situation

Over the four (4) count years, the number ofthe sheltered chronically homeless individuals in Mercer County has been on the decline. The number of unsheltered chronically homeless has fluctuated over time with the highest numbers being in 2010 and 2012.

Sheltered v. Unsheltered

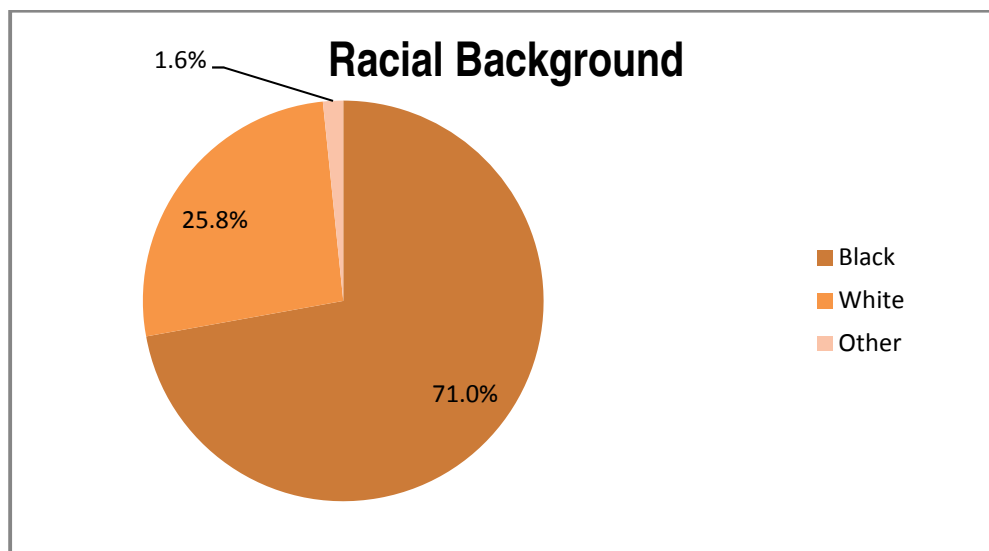|	2012	2011	2010	2009
Sheltered	42	44	73	86
Unsheltered	20	8	28	0

Length of Homelessness

Of the total chronically homeless individuals in Mercer County, 85.5% (n= 53) reported they had been homeless for more than one year. A total of 56.5% (n= 35) reported they had four (4) episodes of homelessness in the past three (3) years.

2012 Length of Homelessness	#	%
1 day - 1 week	1	1.6%
1 month & 1 day - 3 months	1	1.6%
3 months & 1 day to 6 months	1	1.6%
6 months & 1 day to 12 months	6	9.7%
More than 1 year	**53**	**85.5%**

Demographics

In 2012, a total of 48 or 77.4% of the chronically homeless individual population was male and 14 or 22.6% was female.

As the Racial Background chart below outlines, the largest percentage of the chronically homeless individuals identified themselves as Black (71%) with the next largest percentage being those who identified themselves as White (25.8%).   The total percentage that defined their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino equaled 3.2%.

Racial Background

1.6%

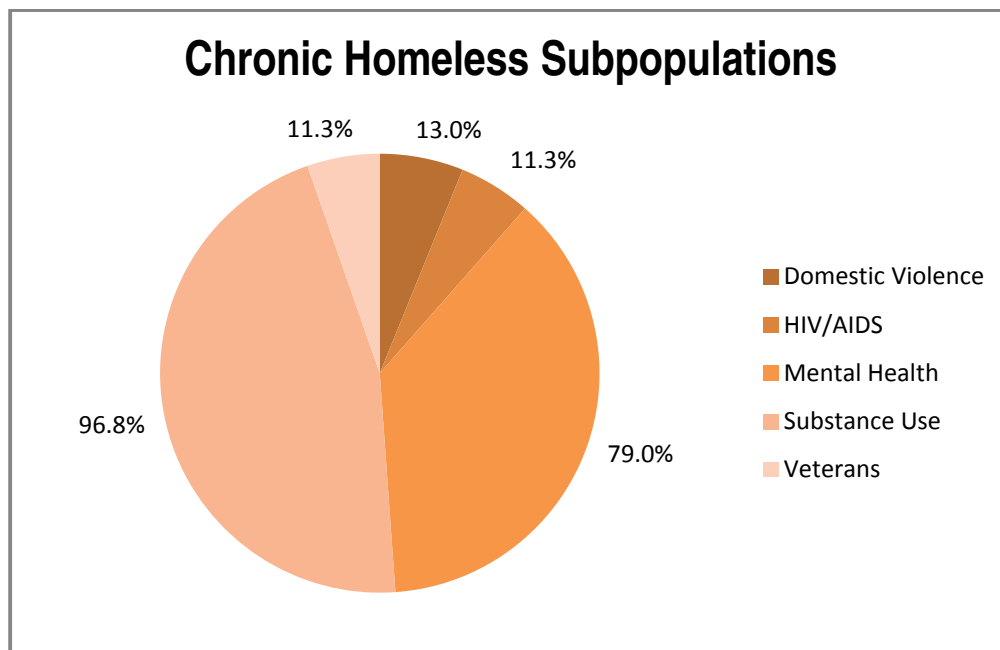25.8%

71.0%

- Black
- White
- Other

As the Age chart shows, on the night of the 2012 count in Mercer County, the largest percentage of chronically homeless individuals fell into the 40 to 49 year old age range (33.9%). This age group was closely followed by those between the ages of 50 and 59 years.

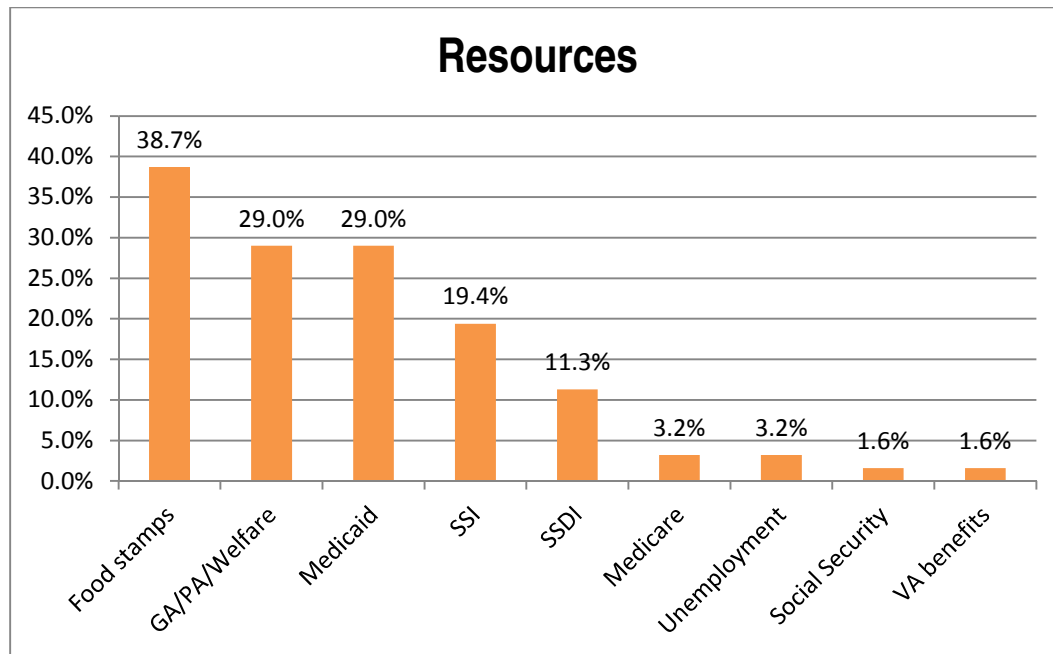| 2012 Age	#	%
21-24	3	4.8%
25-29	3	4.8%
30-39	11	17.7%
40-49	**21**	**33.9%**
50-59	19	30.6%
60-64	4	6.5%
No response	1	1.6%

Chronic Homeless Subpopulations

The Chronic Homeless Subpopulations chart below outlines the breakdown of the chronic homeless individual HUD subpopulations for the 2012 count. As shown in the chart, 96.8% reported having substance use issues and 79% of the chronic homeless individuals reported they had mental health issues.

Chronic Homeless Subpopulations

11.3%   13.0%
11.3%
96.8%
79.0%

Domestic Violence
HIV/AIDS
Mental Health
Substance Use
Veterans

Financial Resources

The three main sources of income reported by people who were homeless in Mercer County on the night of the 2012 count were Food Stamps (38.7%), Welfare (29%) and Medicaid (29%). , 8.1% of the homeless population reported receiving no type of government benefit on the night of the count.

Resources

Resource	%
Food stamps	38.7%
GA/PA/Welfare	29.0%
Medicaid	29.0%
SSI	19.4%
SSDI	11.3%
Medicare	3.2%
Unemployment	3.2%
Social Security	1.6%
VA benefits	1.6%

As reflected in the Income chart below, the largest percentage (37.1%) of chronically individuals were reporting having income less than $5,000. This mirrored the total homeless population.

2012 Yearly Income	#	%
No Income	20	32.3%
$1.00-$4,999	**23**	**37.1%**
$5,000- $9,999	7	11.3%
$10,000-$14,999	2	3.2%
No Response	10	16.1%

Service Needs and Contributing Factors to Homelessness

The highest ranking factor that chronically homeless individual respondents stated contributed to their homelessness in Mercer County was alcohol or drug abuse problem. Other top ranking factors included loss of a job or inability to find work and relationship breakdown.

2012 PITC- Mercer County

2012 Contributing Factors to Homelessness	%
Alcohol or drug abuse problems	56.5%
Lost job/cannot find work	22.6%
Relationship/family breakup/death	22.6%
Mental illness/emotional problems	19.4%
Medical problems/physical or developmental disability	17.7%
Incarceration	12.9%
Housing costs too high	11.3%
Eviction or at risk of Eviction	9.7%
Domestic violence	8.1%
Have work but wages are too low	6.5%
Lost job due to lack of transportation	4.8%
Utility costs too high	3.2%
House condemned	1.6%

The types of services that respondents stated that they have received in the past three years or are currently needed are reflected in the chart below. In Mercer County, the top service received by the chronically homeless individual population was emergency food and emergency shelter and the top service that was reported as needed was housing.

2012 Service Needs	#	%
Received		
Emergency food or meal assistance/Shelter	25	40.3%
Medical services (disability)	9	14.5%
Medical (routine healthcare)	8	12.9%
Need		
Housing	38	61.3%
Emergency shelter	29	46.8%
Dental	28	45.2%

Discharge from Mainstream Institutions

As part of the 2012 survey, the respondents were asked if they hade been discharged into homelessness discharge from certain mainstream institutions within the past three years (since January 25, 2009). The discharge information is based on the chronically homeless individual population that responded to the survey and relies on self report.

As the chart shows the two institutions that had the highest numbers of respondents reporting they were discharged into homelessness were City/County Jail and Medical Hospitals.

Discharged Into Homelessness (Past Three Years)		
Corrections	#	%
State Prison	9	14.5%
City/County Jail	25	40.3%
Juvenile Detention Center	0	0.0%
Inpatient Care	#	%
Hospitalized (Medical)	15	24.2%
State Inpatient Mental Health	3	4.8%
City/County Inpatient Mental Health	3	4.8%
Substance Abuse Treatment	5	8.1%

Last Permanent Address

In the 2012 count, 88.7% (n=55) of the chronically homeless individual respondents lived in New Jersey before becoming homeless. In looking at the surround states, 1.6% (n=1) last lived in Pennsylvania and 1.6% (n=1) last lived in New York.

The cities /towns most frequently cited by respondents as the last place they lived before becoming homeless are below (those with a rate of 5% or higher). The only town with a significant number was the City of Trenton.
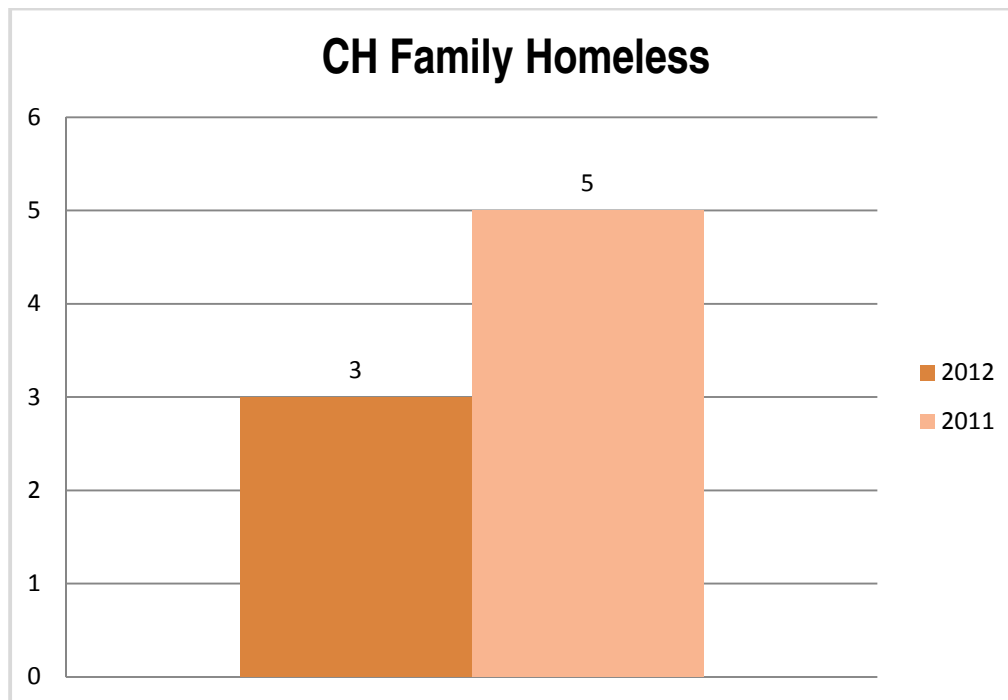
Town	#	%
Trenton	40	64.5%
Hamilton	4	6.5%

CHRONICALLY HOMELESS FAMILIES

The 2011 count was the first year that HUD requested information on chronically homeless families as the definition of chronically homeless was changed with the 2010 NOFA. The information is based on responses by the head of household and there is no real comparable data to previous years.

In Mercer County, a total of three (3) families met the chronic homeless definition and could be considered a chronically homeless family. This is a decrease from five (5) families in 2011.
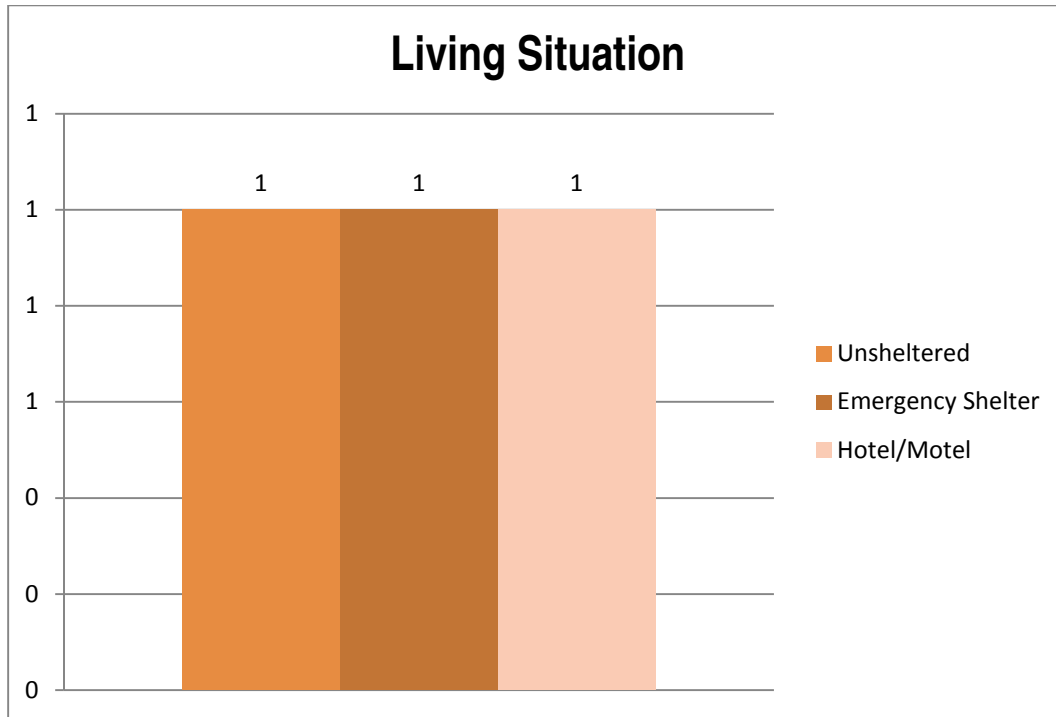
A total of three (3) chronically homeless families is only 0.4% of the total homeless population and 1.9% of the total family homeless population. These families had a total of 6 children with them on the night of the count.
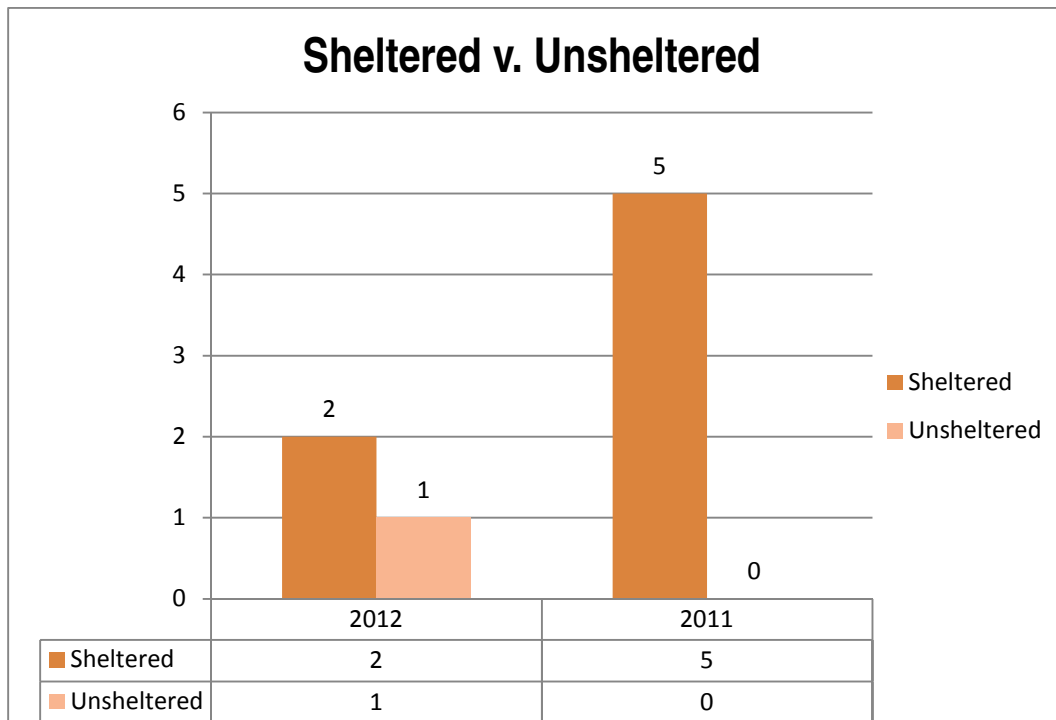

Adding the families to the individuals gives Mercer County a total chronically homeless population of 71 men, women and children on the night of the 2012 count.

Living Situation

As with the chronically homeless individual population, living situations can only include those living on the street, in places not meant for human habitation or emergency shelter. The breakdown of living situation for chronically homeless families is reflected in the Living Situation chart. On the night of the count, 33.3% of the families were in unsheltered situations. Of the other two families, one was residing in emergency shelter and one was in a hotel/motel placement as emergency shelter.

Living Situation

Legend:
- Unsheltered
- Emergency Shelter
- Hotel/Motel

Unsheltered: 1
Emergency Shelter: 1
Hotel/Motel: 1

Even though these are small numbers, over the past two (2) count years, the number of unsheltered has increased and the number of sheltered chroncially homeless families has decreased.
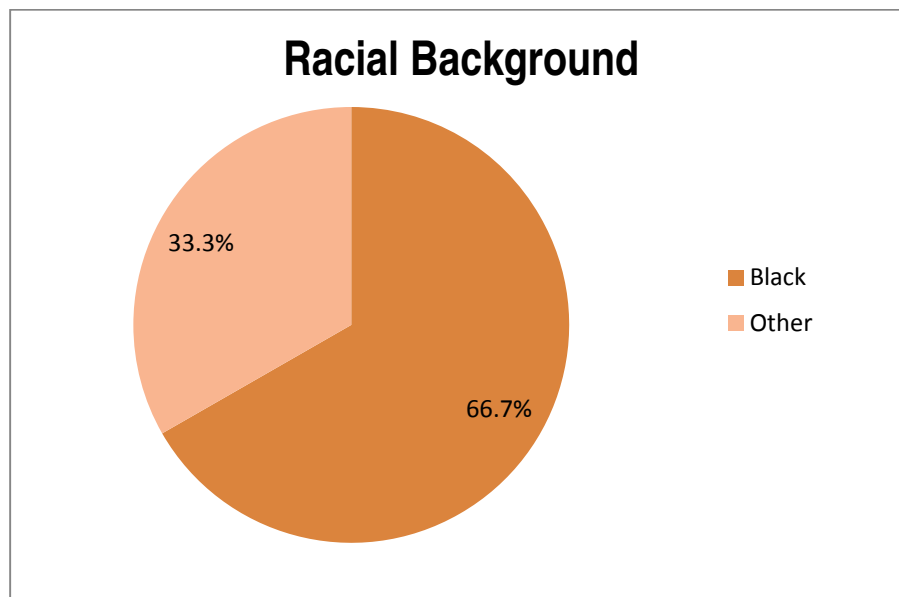
Sheltered v. Unsheltered

	2012	2011
Sheltered	2	5
Unsheltered	1	0

Length of Homelessness

Of the total chronically homeless families, 66.7% reported that they had been homeless for more than one year and 66.7% (n= 2) reported that they had been homeless four (4) times in the past three (3) years.

Demographics

In 2012 all three (3) or 100% of the chronically homeless families were female headed households. The Racial Background chart below outlines the racial breakdown of the chronically homeless families in Mercer County. The largest percentage (66.7%) defined themselves as Black. One (1) family defined their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino (33.3%).
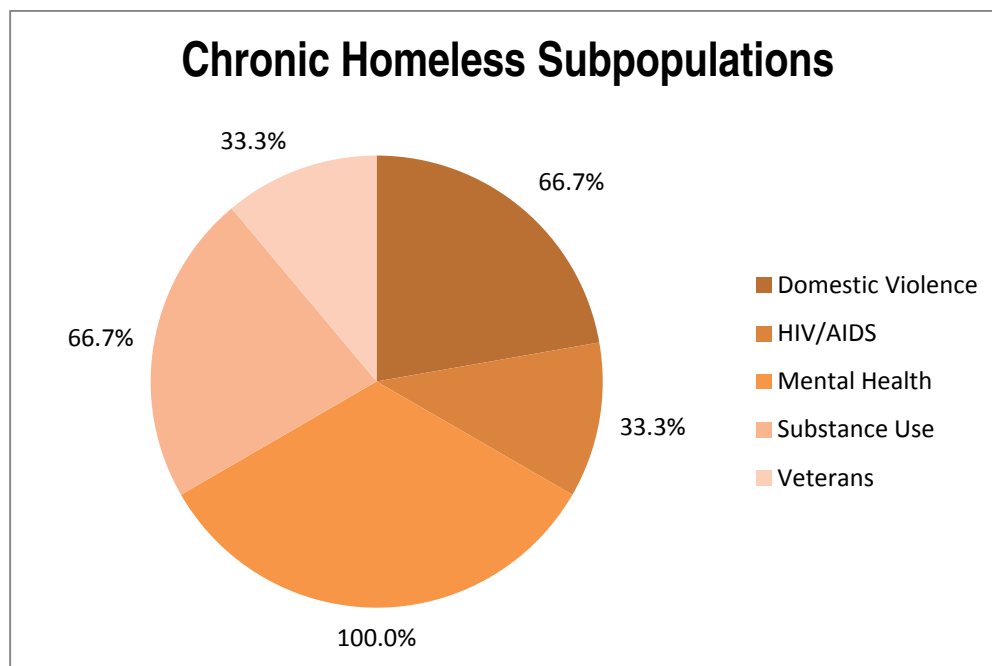

The ages of the heads of households of the chronically homeless families were even disbursed as reflected in the Age chart below.

2012 Age	#	%
21-24	1	33.3%
40-49	1	33.3%
50-59	1	33.3%

Chronic Homeless Family Subpopulations

In Mercer County, for the chronically homeless families all reported having mental health issues as represented in the Chronic Homeless Subpopulations chart. All of the other HUD subpopulations were represented as well.

Chronic Homeless Subpopulations

Legend:
- Domestic Violence
- HIV/AIDS
- Mental Health
- Substance Use
- Veterans

Pie chart values: 66.7%, 33.3%, 100.0%, 66.7%, 33.3%

Financial Resources and Income

The three main sources of income reported by chronically homeless families in Mercer County on the night of the 2012 count were:

- TANF (33.3%);
- SSI (33.3%); and
- Welfare (33.3%)

All of the families reported receiving some type of government benefit on the night of the count   The estimated yearly income for these families is represented in the chart below.

2012 Yearly Income	#	%
No Income	1	33.3%
$1.00-$4,999	1	33.3%
No Response	1	33.3%

Contributing Factors to Homelessness

The chart below includes the top five factors, as reported by respondents in Mercer County, which led their family to become homeless. The contributing factors include a mix of both economic and personal issues including domestic violence and eviction.

Contributing Factors to Homelessness	%
Domestic violence	33.3%
Eviction or at risk of Eviction	33.3%
Lost job/cannot find work	33.3%

When chronically homeless families were asked what their top needs were on the night of the count, all services listed in the survey were reported to be needed by at least one of the chronically homeless families.