

MIDDLESEX COUNTY'S

10 YEAR PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS



Middlesex County’s Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness

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Executive Summary

Middlesex County, located at the center of New Jersey, faces unique challenges in addressing the issues of homelessness among individuals and families. With 25 municipalities ranging from urban centers to farmland communities, Middlesex County is home to a diverse population in socio-economic status, racial/ethnic background, and community type. Home to Rutgers, the State University and several fortune 500 companies, Middlesex is the second most populous county in the state of New Jersey. Despite a thriving economy, first rate education, an exceptional healthcare system, reliable transportation, and a diverse community, Middlesex County is acutely aware of those who struggle to make ends meet and those who fall through the cracks of the social service system finding themselves homeless with little or no resources. This Ten Year Plan to End Chronic and Family Homelessness has been developed with the intention of making Middlesex County the greatest County in the land for all residents.

Ten Year Planning Process

In recent years the Department of Housing and Urban Development has strongly encouraged Continuums of Care nationwide to develop Ten Year Plans to End Homelessness. The development of these plans demonstrates not only the community's commitment to ending homelessness, but also provides focus and direction to homeless programming so as to make them more efficient and effective. Throughout New Jersey, counties have begun to examine the ways in which homelessness is addressed and have created plans that will move from managing homelessness to ending it.

Middlesex County, recognizing the need to move toward a coordinated strategy to end homelessness, embarked on the Ten Year Planning process in early 2007. A diverse set of community interests including the public, private, and non-profit sectors in Middlesex County have come together to develop a Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness. The steering committee of this planning process is made up of six co-chairs, and shows the diversity of support within the community. The co-chairs include:

- Gloria Aftanski, CPO, United Way of Central Jersey
- Bishop Paul Bootkoski, Diocese of Metuchen
- Jim Cahill, Mayor of New Brunswick
- Elizabeth Hance, President & CEO, Magyar Bank
- Robert Mulcahy, Athletic Director, Rutgers University
- Blanquita Valenti, Middlesex County Freeholder and New Brunswick City Councilwoman

Appreciating the need for wide community support in both the planning and implementation stages of the Middlesex County Ten Year Plan, the steering committee organized a Kick-Off Event to inform the community of the task ahead and garner additional support for the effort to end homelessness in Middlesex County. Held in July of 2007, the Kick-Off Event brought together various members of the community to begin the process of exploring ways to end homelessness in Middlesex County.

Building from the community support firmly behind the Middlesex County Ten Year Planning Efforts, three sub-committees were created to explore the barriers faced by homeless families and individuals, and identify ways to improve the current homeless service system so as to increase effectiveness in ending homelessness. The sub-committees met monthly for about 1 year as they worked to develop strategies to end homelessness in Middlesex County. The three committees included:

- Single Point of Entry
- Permanent Housing
- Data Collection/Point In Time

The Plan

Taking into account the homeless population of Middlesex County, this plan focuses on ending both Chronic Homelessness as well as Family Homelessness. For far too long homeless services in Middlesex County, similar to services across the state of New Jersey, have focused efforts on managing homelessness. This Ten Year Plan will seek to end Homelessness by building permanent housing and providing the necessary support services that will ensure the most needy segment of the population remain stable and realize their potential as independent, self-sufficient individuals and families.

Permanent Housing

The Permanent Housing Sub-committee has recognized the clear cost benefit to addressing homelessness by using the Housing First method. With this perspective in mind, the committee has outlined action-steps that will enable the creation of 520 units of permanent, supportive affordable housing for the homeless.

- Make housing in Middlesex County more affordable through the creation of new rental assistance vouchers and a Housing First project
- Utilize proven models as a means of creating more housing opportunities. These models include the Middlesex County Camp Kilmer Collaborative and Access Housing Pilot Program
- Identify current and new funding sources to support the development of affordable, supportive housing including of a \$1,000,000 line item in the County capital budget
- Create the Middlesex County Homeless Trust Fund as a new source of funding for homeless programs seated at the County level of government
- Identify suitable sites for the development of affordable housing through new construction and rehabilitation of existing buildings
- Work with local zoning and planning departments to streamline the development process at the local level
- Work with developers to build capacity that will support the development of 520 units in ten years
- Launch an education and advocacy campaign to raise awareness about homeless issues

Single Point of Entry

Ending Homelessness in Middlesex County requires not only an adequate supply of affordable housing options, but also the services connected to housing. Within Middlesex County a variety of services are available through multiple providers. In

order to effectively address the needs of homeless individuals and families in Middlesex County, strong coordination between service providers and other intersecting agencies is necessary.

- Develop a Single Point of Entry based in the Middlesex County Homeless Hotline
- Develop coordinated case management system that strengthens collaborations between service providing agencies, increases efficiency and avoids duplication
- Strengthen outreach and engagement efforts through more comprehensive outreach teams and Project Homeless Connect Events
- Utilize HMIS to increase coordination between service providers and evaluate program effectiveness
- Work with Discharging Institutions to create comprehensive discharge plan that will increase collaboration and links to service prior to discharge

Prevention

In order for Middlesex County to truly end homelessness, it is necessary to move those currently experiencing homelessness into stable housing situations while preventing others from entering homelessness. Effective prevention, coupled with adequate housing opportunities and a coordinated single point of entry will bring an end to homelessness within sight.

- Develop method to identify those at risk of homelessness before they enter the system
- Expand services supporting housing stability, including rental and utility assistance
- Create Landlord/Tenant helpline to mediate and prevent evictions
- Evaluate service providers on a consistent basis to ensure high quality, effective services are provided
- Utilize a comprehensive intake assessment tool to determine employment and education needs
- Establish financial management and representative payee programs
- Develop basic skills and employment training
- Make employment training services more accessible through the use of satellite offices
- Work with business partners to increase employment opportunities for the homeless and the under employed.

Implementation

A new non-profit organization will be established with the sole purpose of implementing the Middlesex County Ten Year Plan to End Chronic and Family Homelessness. Coming Home of Middlesex County will serve as a catalyst to ensure the action steps outlined in this plan are realized. In addition to overseeing the implementation of the ten year plan, Coming Home of Middlesex County will provide yearly updates on progress towards ending homelessness and update the plan as necessary to accommodate changes in homeless services and needs.

Introduction

Middlesex County – A brief overview

Middlesex County, New Jersey is located midway between Boston and Washington D.C. (also midway between New York City and Philadelphia). It is in the center of the State of New Jersey, stretching from the Rahway River south to the Mercer and Monmouth County lines, and from the Raritan Bay west to the Somerset County line.

The predominant geographic feature of the County is the Raritan River, which flows the entire width of the County from west to east, and is navigable from its mouth at the Raritan Bay to New Brunswick. The central location of the County and the presence of the Raritan River, within its boundaries, have been key factors in the original settlement and subsequent growth of Middlesex County.

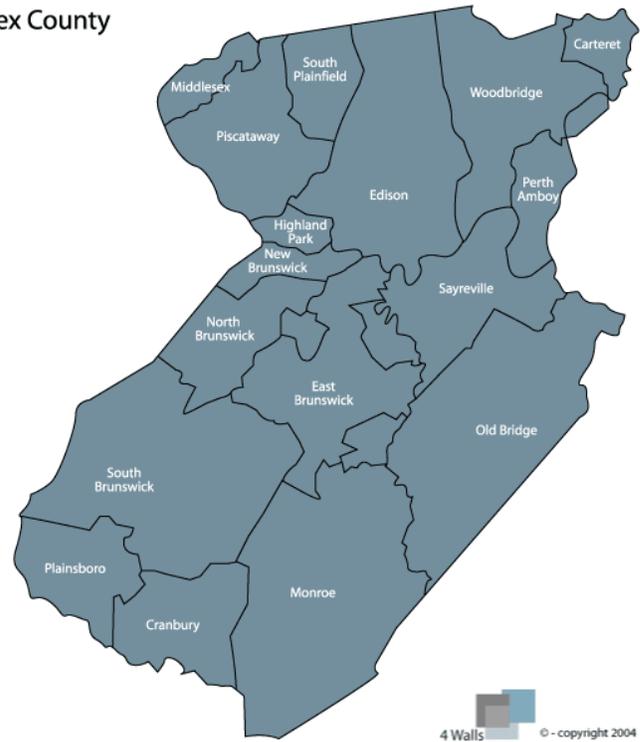
Today, Middlesex County encompasses 318 square miles; is divided into 25 municipalities; and, at the beginning of the 21st century, has a population of over 785,000 residents, making it the second most populous County in the State of New Jersey. The City of New Brunswick is the county seat.

The County is governed by a seven-member Board of Chosen Freeholders. The Board of Chosen Freeholders acts as the Governing Body of the County, and is vested with the sole power to manage the affairs, property and contractual or financial interest of the County.

Since the 1950s, Middlesex has been one of New Jersey's fastest growing counties in population, property valuation and ratable construction. Middlesex County also boasts a world-class health-care system, the campuses of three universities, an exceptional County College and a very successful County Vocational and Technical High School System (which has the second largest enrollment in the State of New Jersey).

Nearly every major north/south rail and roadway on the East Coast passes through Middlesex County. Two major airports are located within 30 minutes of the Middlesex

Middlesex County



County line, and a number of Fortune 500 companies have chosen to establish corporate headquarters and/or other corporate facilities within the County.

U.S. census figures, released in July 2006, indicated that the population of Middlesex County had grown to approximately 787,000. Middlesex County has become, for the first time, the second most populous of New Jersey's 21 counties. The resilience and desirability of this County and the energy and industry of its people have sustained its unbroken, centuries-long record of growth and prosperity.

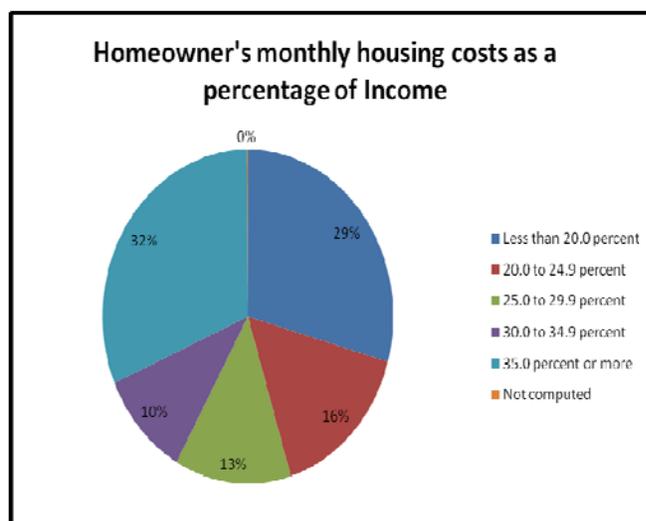
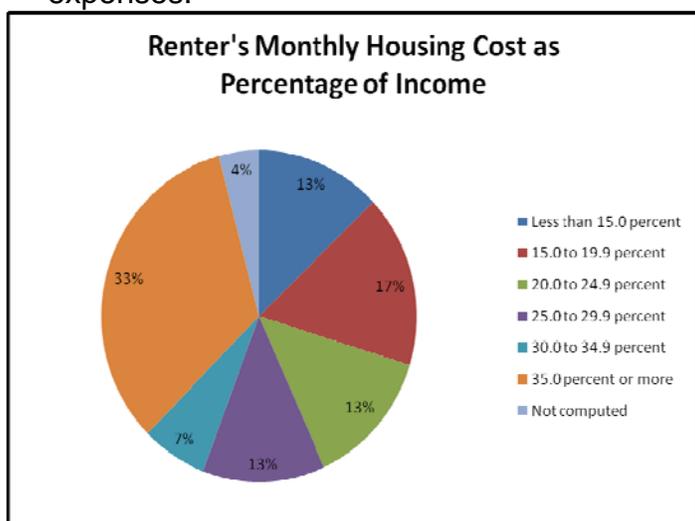
With all that Middlesex County has to offer its residents, there is an unfortunate fact that fails to make headlines in the county. 7.1% of individuals residing in Middlesex County and 5.1% of families in the county currently live on incomes below the federal poverty level. The experience of poverty is compounded by the fact that homelessness is a reality for far too many Middlesex County residents. The Middlesex County Ten Year Plan to End Chronic and Family Homelessness hopes to address these issues in Middlesex County and truly put an end to homelessness in ten years.

Cost of Living in Middlesex County

Middlesex County is home to one of the highest fair market rents in the state. Joined by only Somerset County and Hunterdon County, fair market rents in Middlesex require an income of at least \$42,800 for an individual to comfortably afford a one bedroom apartment. For those living below the poverty level or working in minimum wage jobs, there simply is not enough affordable housing available within the County.

2007 Fair Market Rent (FMR) ⁴		Income needed to afford rent
Zero-Bedroom	\$1,031	\$41,240.00
One-Bedroom	\$1,068	\$42,720.00
Two-Bedroom	\$1,257	\$50,280.00
Three-Bedroom	\$1,578	\$63,120.00
Four-Bedroom	\$1,860	\$74,400.00

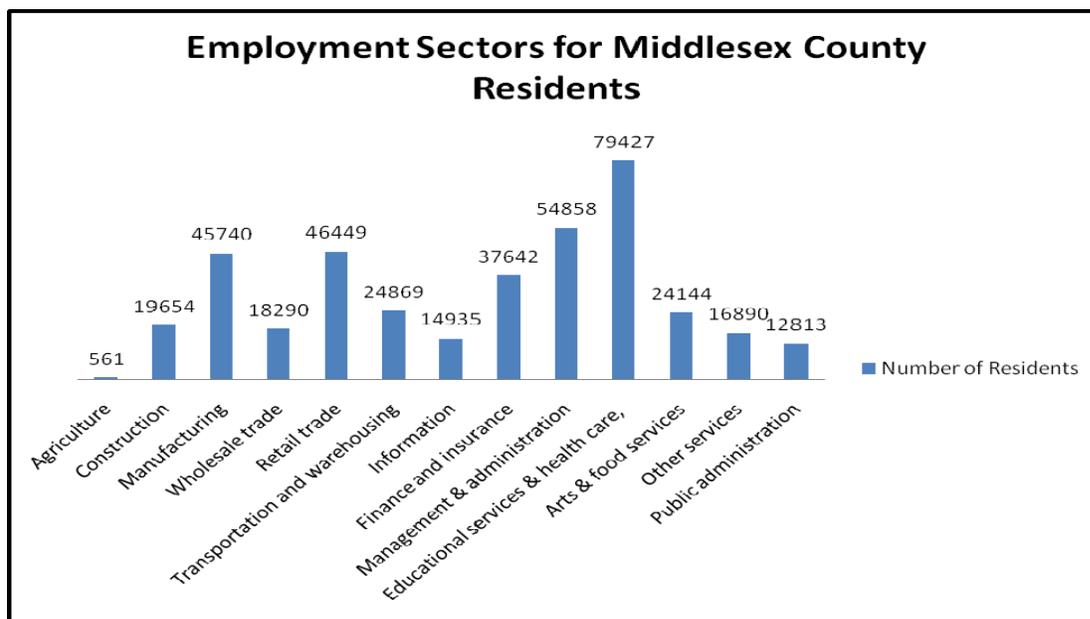
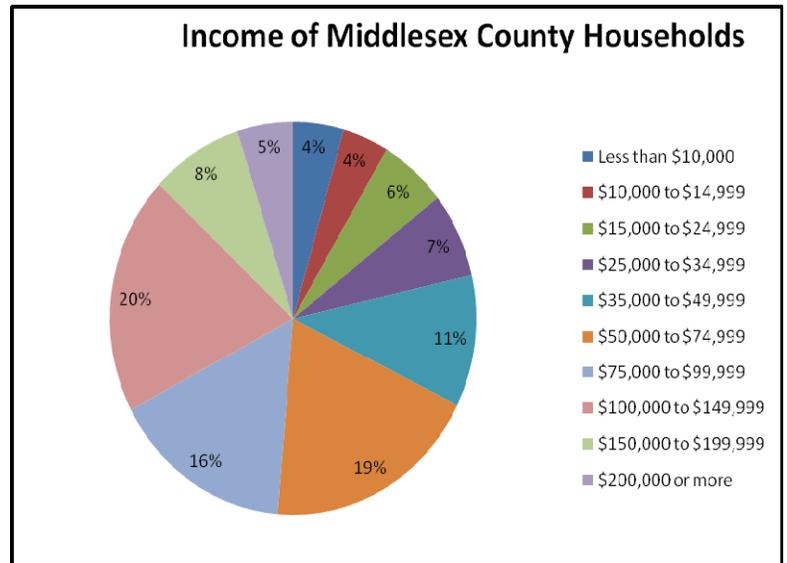
Where affordable housing is defined as costing no more than 30% of annual income, many individuals and families are priced out of housing in Middlesex County. With only 33% of units in the County designated as rental units and 67% as owner-occupied units, there are few opportunities for those with lower income to access housing in Middlesex County. According to the 2006 American Communities Survey, released by the Census Bureau, 43% of homeowners and 40% of renters pay more than 30% of their income on housing expenses. Even for those with incomes above the poverty level, there is a severe strain due to housing expenses.



With so many Middlesex County residents paying housing costs in excess of 30% of their income, residents are at an increased risk for losing their housing. Often times, those paying excessive housing costs are one or two paychecks away from homelessness. An unforeseen event, such as illness, could easily start an otherwise stable household down the path to housing instability and ultimately, homelessness.

Demographics of County Residents

Middlesex County has a highly skilled and productive resident labor force, which has resulted in a relatively high median area income of about \$72,669. Despite the economic achievements of many residents, there still remains about 23% of the population unable to find affordable housing within the county. Residents making less than \$35,000.00 would find it difficult, if not impossible, to locate an affordable apartment within the county, while families making \$45,000 or less are virtually priced out of the market.



While the housing situation may look bleak for those with low wage jobs, it is even bleaker for those who must depend on SSI/SSD or Public Assistance. Individuals unable to work and living on fixed income have severely limited options in housing choice and are often the first to fall into the homeless system. Inadequate wages coupled with the lack of affordable housing create a very large population at risk of becoming homeless.

Individuals with Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	6,255
Average amount of Supplemental Security Income (dollars)	\$7,486

Individuals with cash public assistance income	3,968
Average amount of public assistance income (dollars)	\$3,342

Who are the Homeless

According to the McKinney-Vento Act, a homeless person is defined as:

an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence;

and an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is

(a) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill);

(b) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or

(c) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

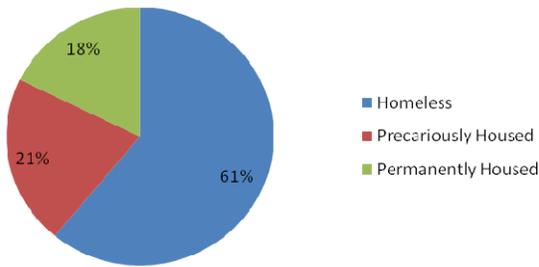
People enter into homelessness for various reasons. There is no one typical homeless person as people enter and exit homelessness at varying rates. According to research conducted by Randall Kuhn and Dennis Culhane, three homeless sub-populations have been identified. Their usage of services varies greatly as their needs are quite different and reflect the varied faces of homelessness.

The transitional homeless represent about 80% of the homeless population and experience a brief episode of homelessness due to a crisis such as the loss of a job or housing. This population typically does not have significant mental health or substance abuse problems and are able to regain stability through accessing affordable housing.

The episodic homeless represent 10% of the homeless population and have sporadic episodes of homelessness. Individuals falling in the episodic homeless category usually have a substance abuse problem or mental illness which disrupts employment and their ability to maintain stable housing. This group has seen greatest success in obtaining stability through use of transitional housing and treatment programs.

The chronically homeless represent 10% of the homeless population. This group tends to be older and have higher levels of substance abuse disorders and mental illness. While the chronically homeless account for only 10% of the homeless population, they consume 50% of the resources available. The chronically homeless tend to have longer periods of homelessness or more frequent episodes of homelessness and are resistant to traditional approaches in homeless service provision. It has been found that this group responds most effectively to supportive long-term/permanent housing programs.

2008 PIT Respondents



On January 29, 2008, Middlesex County conducted a Point-In-Time (PIT) survey of homeless individuals. This PIT count is part of a statewide, annual survey of homeless individuals living on the streets, in emergency shelters and transitional housing. The count is held the last week of January to coincide with the HUD mandated, bi-annual homeless census.

On January 29, Middlesex County surveyed 890 individuals and found that of those surveyed, 17% resided in permanent housing, 19% were precariously housed, and 59% were homeless. While HUD does not recognize those precariously housed, doubled-up in over-crowded conditions or couch surfing, as homeless, this population is essentially without a permanent residence and at a higher risk of ending up on the streets or in an emergency shelter.

Within the population identified as homeless on the PIT survey, 68% were individuals, 5% were couples and 24% were families. Results from the 2008 survey reveal a shift in the homeless population. Whereas in 2007 only 5% of those surveyed were families, in 2008, 24% indicated that they were families.

% of Homeless Respondents by Household Status



38% of survey respondents indicated that they have been without a permanent address for more than 1 year. Some of the factors contributing to homelessness for those surveyed include: loss of job, family break-up/death, high housing costs, low wages, mental illness, substance abuse, eviction and medical problems. While it is not the policy of any discharging institution to release an individual into homelessness, a large percentage of those exiting the jails, hospitals, and mental health/addiction treatment institutions have been discharged into homelessness.

In addition to the annual Point-In-Time survey conducted in the last week of January, Middlesex County tracks its homeless population through a HMIS system. All homeless service providers receiving funding from federal or state sources maintain records of services provided to clients on this system. Middlesex County has been actively using HMIS since May of 2005 and continually works to improve the data quality of the system and the range of service providers utilizing the system.

An examination of information entered into HMIS between January 2007 and December 2007 reveals 996 individuals accessed homeless services. Of that group, 38.5% were at risk for becoming homeless, 41.7% were homeless according to the HUD definition, and 5.1% were precariously housed.

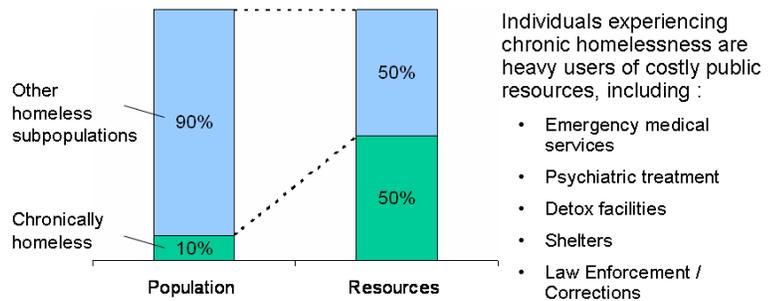
Similar to the finding of the 2008 PIT survey, 58% of those utilizing services in HMIS were individuals, 3% were couples and 39% were families. The majority of those

entered on HMIS (68%) have been homeless for 0-30 days while only 4.8% have been homeless for 1 year or more. Some of the main causes of homelessness for those utilizing services within the county include eviction (22.2%), kicked out of shared residence (14.2%) and job loss (6.5%)

The Chronically Homeless

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development defines the chronically homeless as a single individual with a disabling condition who has been homeless for one year or more or has had 4 separate episodes of homelessness within the last 3 years. The chronically homeless often pose a large problem to the homeless service system as they typically consume 50% of the resources while only accounting for 10% of the population. Individuals who fit the chronic homeless definition often have mental health issues, substance abuse issues or physical disabilities that may occur in any combination. This population has been the most resistant to traditional approaches of care and cycle in and out of emergency shelters, county jails, hospitals and detox programs back to the streets.

10% of the homeless population consumes over 50% of the resources



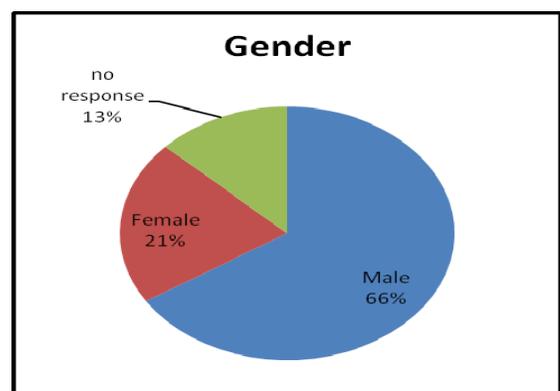
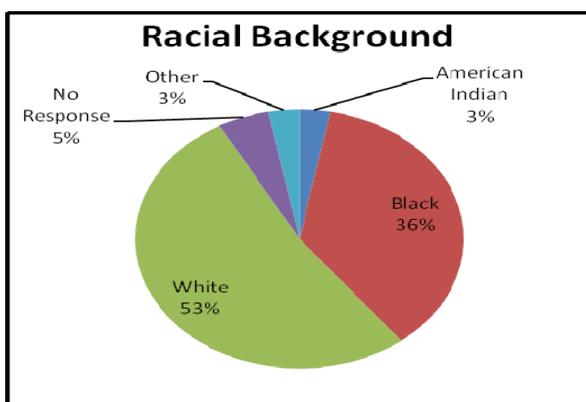
Individuals experiencing chronic homelessness are heavy users of costly public resources, including :

- Emergency medical services
- Psychiatric treatment
- Detox facilities
- Shelters
- Law Enforcement / Corrections

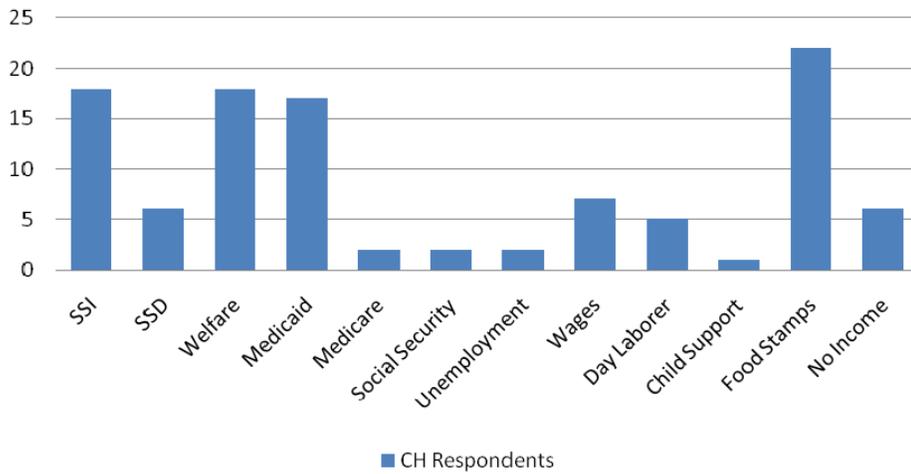
Burt, Martha R., Laudan Y. Aron and Edgar Lee. 2001. Helping America's Homeless: Emergency Shelter or Affordable Housing? Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press. Kuhn, R. & Culhane, D.P. (1998). Applying cluster analysis to test a typology of homelessness: Results from the analysis of administrative data. *The American Journal of Community Psychology*, 17 (1), 23-43. Community shelter Board. *Rebuilding Lives: A New Strategy to House Homeless Men*. Columbus, OH; Emergency Food and Shelter Board.

In 2001 the Bush Administration set a national goal of ending chronic homelessness in ten years. This shift in policy was further reinforced by the Interagency Council on Homelessness and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Since that time, increasing emphasis has been placed on programs that strive to end chronic homelessness through HUD's homeless assistance programs. The Interagency Council on Homelessness has encouraged communities across the country to adopt ten year plans to end chronic homelessness; further pushing the administrations focus on decreasing the number of chronically homeless individuals utilizing services.

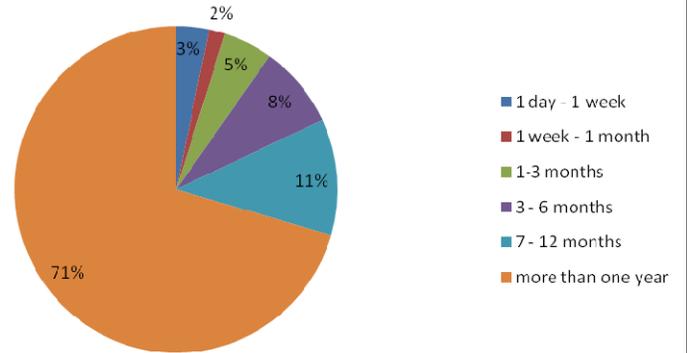
In Middlesex County, the chronically homeless comprise about 12% of the homeless population. According to Middlesex County's 2008 Point-In-Time Survey, the majority of the chronically homeless population in the county is from New Brunswick, the county seat. The following charts show some of the characteristics of Middlesex County's chronically homeless population.



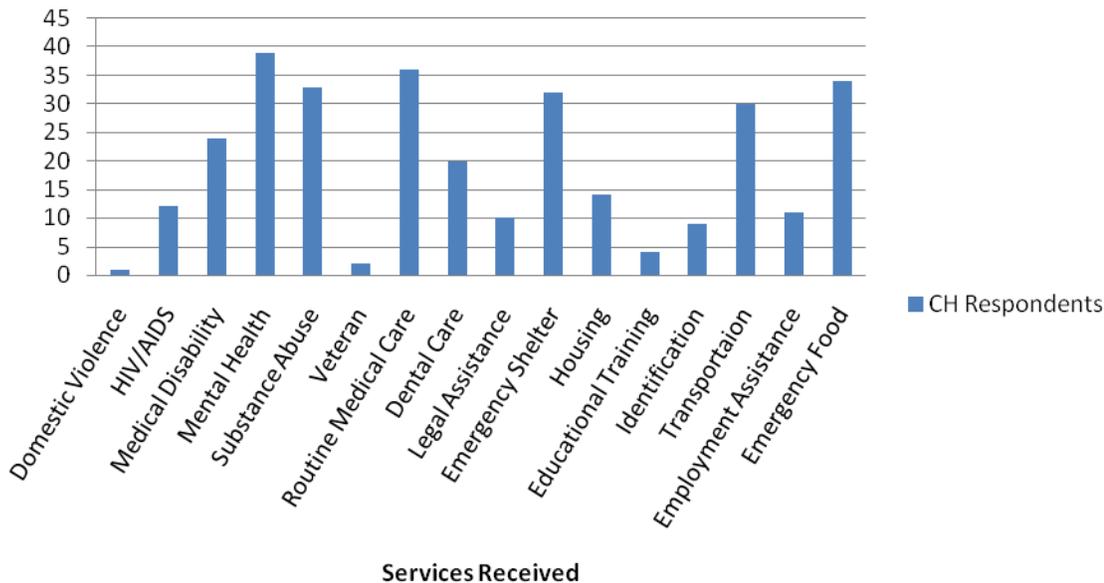
Sources of Income



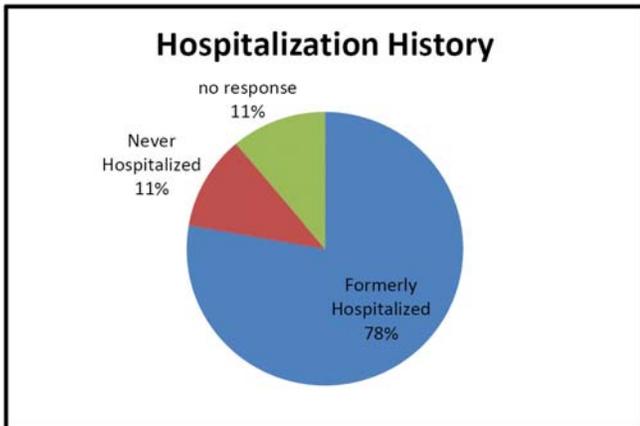
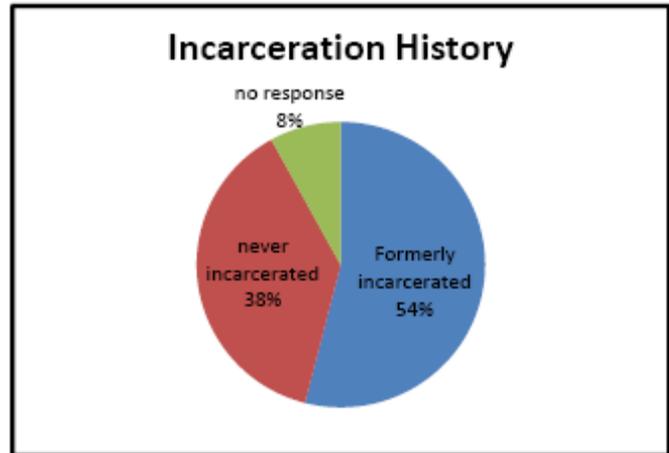
Length of Current Homeless Episode



Service Needs of Chronically Homeless



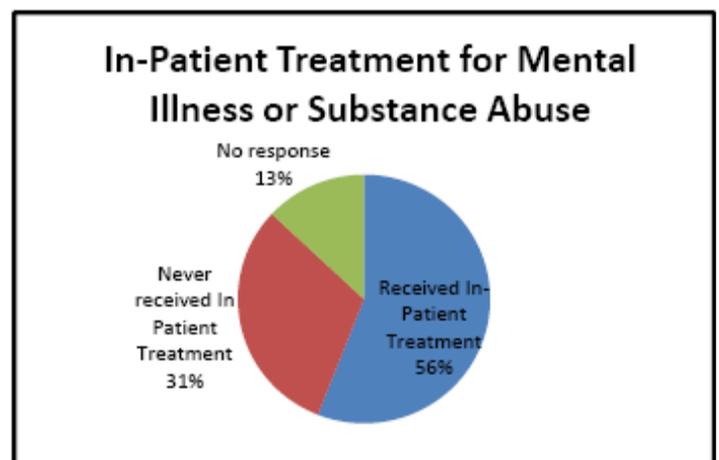
The chronically homeless in Middlesex County, similar to chronically homeless populations elsewhere, are disproportionately frequent users of the County jail system and local hospitals. Quite often these institutions do not have the resources required to provide the support necessary to identify appropriate housing options for homeless individuals as they are released from the facility. A recent study conducted in Camden County NJ looked at emergency room utilization over a 5 year period from 2002 – 2007. The Camden study found about 1% of emergency room users accounted for 10% of total admissions utilizing over \$46 million dollars in emergency room care. A great majority of those classified as “Super Users” are homeless individuals living on the streets, in emergency shelters or couch surfers without a permanent residence.



In addition to cycling in and out of county jails and hospital emergency rooms, chronically homeless individuals frequently utilize services such as emergency shelter, mental health treatment and substance abuse services. Due to the lack of housing stability among the chronically homeless, it is difficult for this population to effectively engage in treatment and move into a more stable situation. Engaging in these resources without secure housing sets the stage for wasted resources and locks ready

and willing participants out of these services.

Studies have shown that a Housing First approach is the most effective in dealing with the chronically homeless population. Providing safe, affordable housing sets the foundation of stability for the chronically homeless, allowing them to engage in services effectively and successfully. Middlesex County will work from a Housing First approach in its efforts to end homelessness in the community.

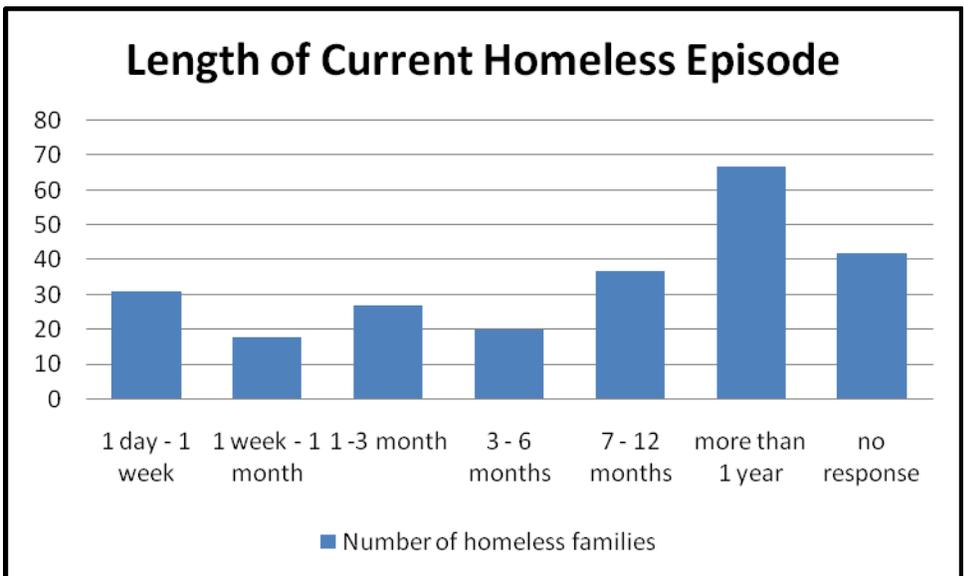


Family Homelessness

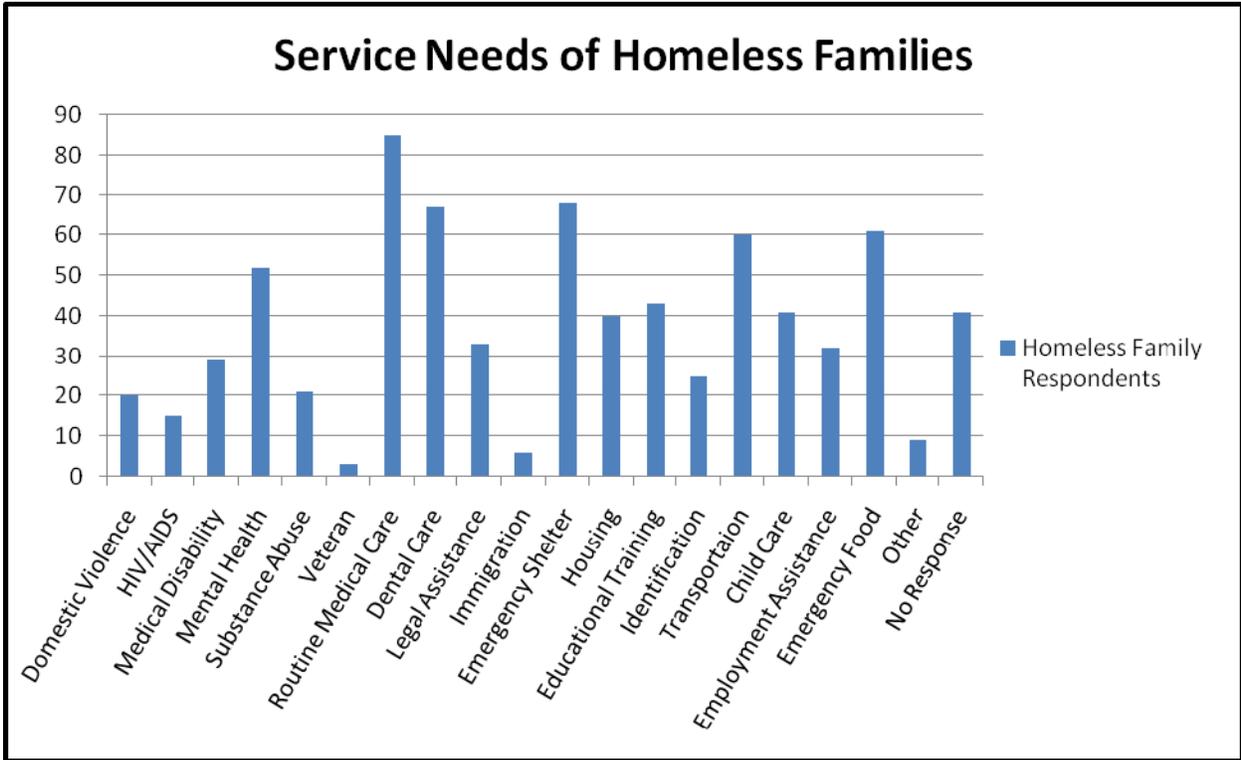
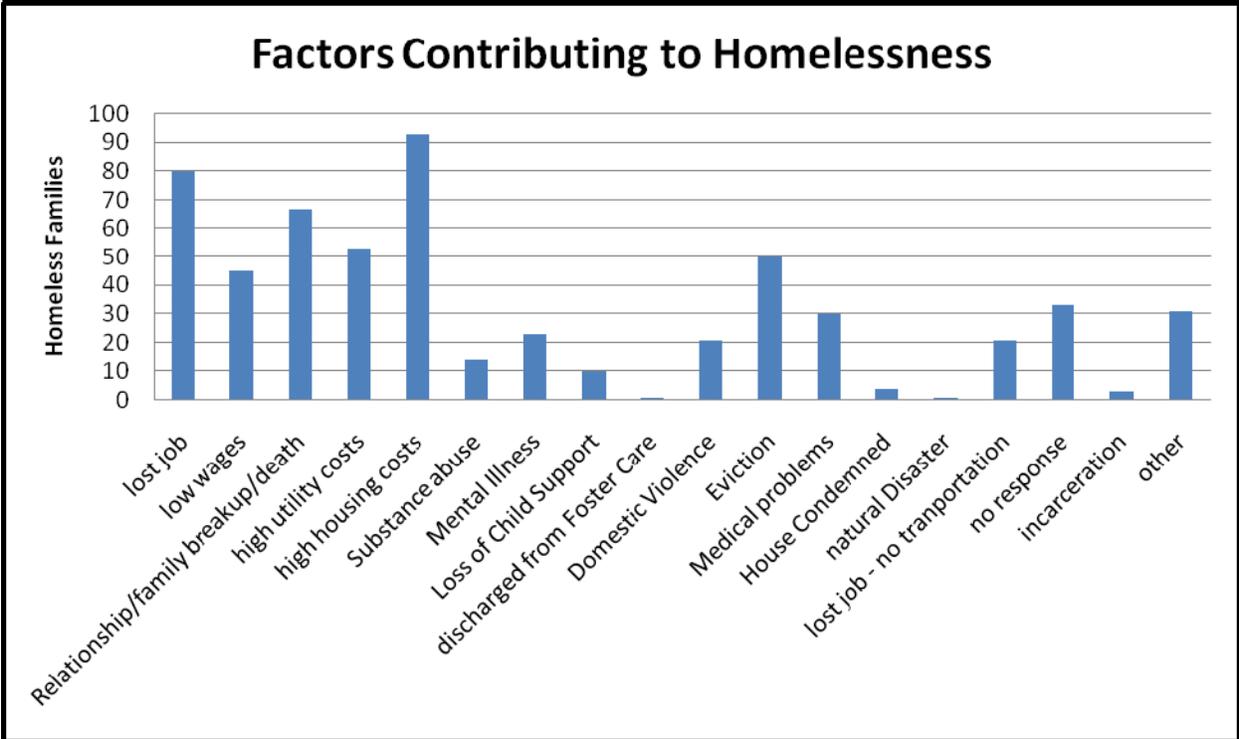
Homeless families account for 40% of the homeless population in the United States. Families represent the fastest growing segment of the homeless population. Similar to national trends, Middlesex County has experienced a large increase in the number of families experiencing homelessness in the community. According to the 2008 PIT survey, 24% of the homeless population consists of families. Similarly, HMIS data shows 39% of the homeless population accessing services are families.

Unlike typical homeless or chronic homeless individuals, families experiencing homelessness are not quite as visible. Often, homeless families will find a means of maintaining shelter for their children by living in doubled up situations, staying with relatives and friends as to avoid shelters and the street. Once families have exhausted their resources of friends and families, they find their way into the local shelter systems and become counted among the street homeless.

While homeless families may experience problems with substance abuse or mental illness, typically the degree to which these conditions affect their housing stability is minimal in comparison to other homeless populations. Homeless families in Middlesex County lack two very basic needs: access to affordable housing and effective case management connecting them to mainstream resources.



While HUD does not recognize homeless families as a priority population, homeless families are in fact a significant segment of Middlesex County's homeless population and deserve special attention. The jump in homeless families reported on the PIT survey from 2007 to 2008 indicate the urgent need to address family homelessness and the futility of a plan to end homelessness in Middlesex County that does not include this sub-group. The following charts reveal a bit about homeless families in Middlesex County.



Permanent Housing Development

Permanent Housing

One of the major keys to ending homelessness in Middlesex County lies in the creation of permanent affordable and/or supportive housing. The mixed population of homeless individuals and families in Middlesex County lends itself to a multifaceted approach to creating housing. Only through diversified housing, can Middlesex County begin to address the issues of moving people off the streets and out of shelters into more stable conditions. For the chronically homeless, supportive housing provides the most suitable environment to ensure long term success and stability. Families often need housing with less supports, subsidized or simply affordable housing. Through the development of strategies to address the housing needs of Middlesex County residents, an end to homelessness is in sight.

The Middlesex County Permanent Affordable and/or Supportive Housing Taskforce on homelessness has recognized that permanent affordable and/or supportive housing is the number one need in Middlesex County. After careful analysis of data sources in the county, the Permanent Affordable and/or Supportive Housing Taskforce has determined that 520 units of permanent affordable and/or supportive housing need to be created throughout the county not only in the urban areas, but spread out on a fair share basis in order to end both chronic and family homelessness. The Permanent Affordable and/or Supportive Housing Taskforce has identified 8 major areas that must be addressed in order to enable the development of 520 units of permanent affordable and/or supportive housing.

Housing Affordability	In order to end homelessness in Middlesex County, work must be done to secure subsidies for housing throughout the county
Model Project	Middlesex County has begun the planning process to develop 520 units of affordable and/or supportive housing for low-income and homeless individuals. This endeavor can only be accomplished through modeling effective strategies currently working in Middlesex County. The Camp Kilmer Collaborative and Access Housing Project are two prime examples
Funding Sources	In order for housing to be viable in Middlesex County, developers must have adequate funding that enables the creation of new housing or rental of existing units
Homeless Trust Fund	New sources of money are necessary to ensure the success of any strategy to end homelessness. A local homeless trust fund would allow the county flexibility in funding homeless programs and provide a base from which agencies can leverage other funding
Development Sites	Within Middlesex County, there are limited sites for the development or redevelopment of new affordable and/or supportive housing units. The County will assist developers in locating sites for the development of permanent affordable and/or supportive housing.

Zoning, Planning and Permits	Often developers have difficulty navigating the local zoning and permitting process delaying their ability to create units quickly and cost effectively. Assistance in understanding and streamlining the local approvals will enable developers to create much needed units in an acceptable timeframe
Education and Advocacy	Homelessness in Middlesex County is still a very misunderstood and unknown issue within the community. To maximize the efforts on all sides of the plan to end homelessness, community support and awareness is critical
Capacity Building	Housing developers working in Middlesex County must take on an extraordinary task of creating 520 units of affordable housing. One of the major roadblock developers face is despite the will, they lack to capacity to truly create the number of units necessary to end homelessness. Assistance will be provided to developers in expanding their capacity to allow for the creation and maintenance of 520 units of permanent, affordable and/or supportive housing.

Housing Affordability

Middlesex County has one of the highest fair market rents in the state of New Jersey. This reality makes it impossible for low-wage workers, the disabled, and the homeless to afford to live in Middlesex County. Without an adequate number of subsidized units, many Middlesex County residents are forced to live in sub-standard housing, overcrowded situations, or on the streets. Increasing the number of vouchers available to Middlesex County residents will allow for safe and stable housing conditions.

Strategies:

1. Through the annual Continuum of Care submission, the Middlesex Continuum of Care will dedicate between ten (10) and fifteen (15) vouchers every year for the chronically homeless
2. Assist in establishing a continuum wide Housing First Collaborative to develop a Housing First initiative in Middlesex County. Conduct cost benefits analysis through short-term and long-term studies
3. Coordinate with County, local and agency public housing authorities to secure priority for chronic and family homelessness and encourage collaboration in homeless planning efforts
4. Obtain waivers from the Board of Social Services to allow Emergency Assistance funds to be used as permanent housing vouchers
5. Advocate with the state government to prioritize SRAP and DCA vouchers for the homeless
6. Partner with the public and private sector to create municipal vouchers

Strategy	Action Steps	Partners	Implementation Timeline	Outcomes	Budget
Create Vouchers for the Chronically Homeless through the Continuum of Care Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yearly request for 10~15 permanent supportive housing vouchers for the chronically homeless 	Continuum of Care Committee Public Housing Authorities	Continue prioritizing projects housing Chronically homeless in each application. Fall 2008	Each year 10~15 new vouchers will be available for the chronically homeless	N/A
Establish Housing First Initiative and Rapid Re-Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create Continuum wide Housing First Collaborative; Identify key funding sources for the Housing First Initiative; Implement housing first initiative; Residents move into housing 	County Government; community hospitals; community university; state government; Newly created Single Point of Entry implementation vehicle	Spring 2009 Fall 2009 - 2010 2011	Housing First Initiative developed providing housing for 25-75 Chronically Homeless Individuals	To be determined
Establish Priority for chronic and family homelessness with Public Housing Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with all housing Authorities operating in Middlesex County; Create standards for prioritizing homeless populations; Work to have PHA representatives attend monthly CEAS meetings 	Ten Year Plan Implementation body; Continuum of Care Committee, Public Housing Authorities	March 2009 Fall 2009 March 2009	Housing Authorities prioritize the chronic homeless and homeless families when vouchers become available. An average of XX vouchers per year will become available	
Obtain waivers to allow Emergency Assistance funds to be used for Permanent Housing Rental Subsidies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for the use of EA funds for rental subsidies at the state level; Identify current use of EA funds in Middlesex County Work with Middlesex County Board of Social Services to establish guidelines for providing rental subsidies with EA funds; 	New Jersey Department of Community Affairs; Middlesex County Board of Social Services; Ten Year Plan Implementation body	October 2009 January 2009 Summer 2009	Emergency Assistance funds will become available for use as temporary rental assistance to be used to maintain permanent housing	
Advocate for prioritization of homeless populations with State rental vouchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	New Jersey Department of Community Affairs; Ten Year Plan Implementation Body			
Create new Municipal vouchers funded through public and private sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify municipalities in Middlesex county willing to establish and administer local rental voucher program; Identify potential funding sources for local voucher program; 	Middlesex County Municipalities, private businesses, private foundations,	January 2010 Summer 2010 Fall 2010	Resolutions will be passed in municipalities setting aside a portion of developer's fee funds for vouchers;	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish guidelines for the implementation of local voucher program;			implementation guidelines created and adopted by local governments	
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Model Project

In order to create the housing units necessary to end homelessness in Middlesex County, creative housing development projects that encompass the coordination of local government, state government, federal government and private non-profits is necessary. Through creative housing projects, excitement about the development of affordable housing is generated at all levels. With widespread support for the creation of permanent affordable and/or supportive housing, developing 520 new units becomes feasible and manageable.

Under the Base Realignment and Closure Act, during the closure of any military base, the federal government must give priority to projects providing housing for the homeless when considering proposals for the sale of surplus land. Middlesex County, home to a recently closed base at Camp Kilmer, has taken the opportunity to develop affordable and supportive housing under the BRAC regulations. Middlesex County's Camp Kilmer project is one example of ways in which collaboration between each level of government and private non-profit groups can successfully produce large numbers of affordable units.

The Camp Kilmer Project will produce 120 units of affordable housing with 25% of those units set aside as supportive housing for the chronically homeless.

In addition to the Camp Kilmer Project, Middlesex County is seeking to increase the number of homeless families and individuals accessing permanent housing. The Access Housing Pilot project, coordinated through the County Homeless Hotline, provides up to one and one-half month rent to homeless individuals and families enabling them to access housing quickly. The Access Housing pilot has successfully housed 7 households in Phase 1 and 9 households in Phase 2 of the program. To date, all but 2 households remain stably housed. The stability of the 16 households participating in this pilot program point to the tremendous impact a small amount of flexible funds can have on homeless households. Middlesex County will work to expand the success of this program through increasing funding and opening the program up to a larger pool of households.

Strategies:

- Submit redevelopment plan to the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Defense
- Secure pre-development funding
- Secure service funding
- Prepare and submit site plans for local review
- Begin Construction
- Residents move into newly created units
- Identify funding sources to expand the Access Housing Program
- Develop a collaborative of service providers to ensure supports available to those placed in housing
- Identify rental units to support an expanded program

Strategy	Action Steps	Partners	Implementation Timeline	Outcomes	Budget
Camp Kilmer Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit redevelopment plan to HUD & DoD; • Secure pre-development funding; • secure service funding; • prepare and submit site plans for local review; • begin construction; • Project completion 	Triple C Housing; Public Housing Authority; Township of Edison redevelopment committee; HUD; DoD		120 units of affordable housing will be constructed with a 25% set aside for supportive housing for the chronically homeless	
Access Housing Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify funding sources to expand program • Develop collaborative of service providers • Identify rental units in Middlesex County 	InfoLine of Middlesex County Middlesex County Dept. of Human Services Local non-profit agencies	Winter 2008 January 2009 Beginning Summer 2009		

Funding

One of the major hindrances in the creation of permanent affordable and/or supportive housing is the lack of adequate funding to cover development, rehabilitation and/or operating subsidies. In order for any housing development project to be successful, developers must learn how to effectively combine a variety of funding sources in a manner that will enable the success of the project. Unfortunately, in these hard economic times, both state and federal funding for affordable housing development has diminished, forcing developers to become more creative in identifying funding sources. To ensure the success of Middlesex County's ten year plan to end chronic and family homelessness, funding sources must prioritize permanent housing for the homeless while new sources of funding are identified.

Strategies:

- Secure priority for funding of permanent, affordable and/or supportive housing for chronic and family homelessness through the Middlesex County HOME program as well as CDBG funding and municipally administered HOME funding
- Work with all municipalities within Middlesex County to ensure the use of their COAH mandated Affordable Housing Trust Funds for the creation of permanent affordable and/or supportive housing through capital development, rental subsidies or other creative housing options
- Secure a funding commitment of at least one million dollars (\$1,000,000) a year from the Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders to underwrite the cost of developing permanent affordable and/or supportive housing
- Develop collaborative partnerships with private for-profit and not-for-profit developers
- Work closely with the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs and the Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency to maximize leveraging of funds for the development of permanent affordable and/or supportive housing
- Raise funds for housing development through working with private funding, foundations and grants

Strategy	Action Steps	Partners	Implementation Timeline	Outcomes	Budget
Prioritize HOME & CDBG funding for chronic & family homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with officials administering HOME & CDBG funding; • Collaboratively create strategy for prioritizing funding for homeless programs 	Middlesex County Community Development Office;	Spring 2009 Fall 2009		
Use of Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Funds for permanent housing for homeless	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop plan for prioritizing local trust funds for use in housing for the homeless; • meet with each municipality to discuss local trust funds; 		Winter 2009 Spring 2010		
Secure Funding from County budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with Board of Chosen Freeholders to discuss the creation of new line item in County Budget; • Work with Board of Chosen Freeholders to establish guidelines for distribution of county funds 		Summer 2008 Summer 2009		
Create Partnerships with Housing Developers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify housing developers interested in working in Middlesex County; • provide education about the needs of the chronic and family homeless population; • provide linkages to service providers in Middlesex County; • work to secure commitments of set asides for affordable and supportive housing in new developments 		Beginning Winter 2009 Spring 2010 Spring 2010 Fall 2011		
Work closely with State funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify projects or agencies willing to develop housing projects in Middlesex County; • connect projects/agencies to state funding sources; 	Housing developers; New Jersey Department of Community Affairs; New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency; New Jersey Department of Mental Health; New Jersey Department of Developmental Disabilities	Ongoing Ongoing		

Homeless Trust Fund

With federal and state budgets subject to the health of the economy, it is difficult to ensure adequate funding in these budgets for the development of permanent affordable and/or supportive housing. The only way to ensure success of housing development projects is to effectively leverage existing resources while working to create new streams of funding. Currently in the state of New Jersey, there is a movement to establish County level Homeless Trust Funds. These local trust funds will provide funding for the development of housing, rental subsidies and supportive services. The enacting legislation for homeless trust funds would allow counties to impose a small fee or other appropriate method of generating revenues to support the local trust funds. With a new funding source dedicated to the support of programs addressing homelessness within the county, the goals and strategies of the ten year plan can become a reality.

Strategies:

- Secure the endorsement of the Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders for the Homeless Trust Fund
- Secure the support of the state legislature to pass legislation enabling counties to establish a fee based Homeless Trust Fund
- Work with Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders to establish the Middlesex County Homeless Trust fund once the enabling legislation has passed at the state level
- Establish guidelines and regulations to allocate funding to end homelessness

Strategy	Action Steps	Partners	Implementation Timeline	Outcomes	Budget
Secure endorsement from Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present information about Homeless Trust Fund to Freeholders; • Work with Freeholders to pass resolution in support of creating a Homeless Trust Fund 	Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders; Ten Year Plan Implementation Body	Spring 2009 Spring 2009		
Advocate with state legislators for the passage of enabling legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key legislative figures in Middlesex County; • Organize group of key agencies to meet with state officials and advocate for Homeless Trust Fund; • Encourage Middlesex County agencies to write letters of support for the Homeless Trust Fund to state representatives 	State legislators; homeless housing and service provider agencies; Ten Year Plan Implementation Body	Fall 2008 Fall/Winter 2008 Fall/Winter 2008		
Work with Middlesex County Freeholders to establish Homeless Trust Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with Board of Freeholders to discuss implementing Homeless Trust Fund in Middlesex County; • Enlist agency support for advocacy to Board of Freeholders; • Work with Freeholders to pass resolution creating the Middlesex County Homeless Trust Fund 	Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders, Ten Year Plan Implementation Body, homeless housing and service provider agencies	Fall 2009 Ongoing Winter 2009		
Establish guidelines and regulations for allocating funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with Board of Freeholders to create guidelines for administering Middlesex County Homeless Trust Fund 	Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders, Ten Year Plan Implementation Body	Spring 2010		

Development Sites

Within Middlesex County, there are limited sites available for the development of affordable housing. In many cases, vacant lots or homes suitable for rehabilitation are priced too high to make it advantageous for the development of affordable housing. In order to make it possible for builders to work effectively in Middlesex County, assistance in the identification of buildable land or redevelopment sites is necessary.

Strategies:

- Coordinate with the Middlesex County Improvement Authority, the New Jersey Redevelopment Authority and all public and private agencies to ensure identified properties are made available for the development of permanent affordable and/or supportive housing
- Work with municipalities to utilize the abandoned property legislation to acquire properties to develop permanent affordable and/or supportive housing

Strategy	Action Steps	Partners	Implementation Timeline	Outcomes	Budget
Identify available land and sites for development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Middlesex County Improvement Authority to create list of buildable sites; • Identify sources of funding for clean-up of sites where necessary 	Middlesex County Improvement Authority; New Jersey Redevelopment Authority; Ten Year Plan Implementation body	January 2011 Ongoing		
Work with municipalities to acquire abandoned property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with local municipalities to determine abandoned property stock in their communities; • develop list of all abandoned properties; • work with municipalities to ease the acquisition of abandoned properties 	Municipal planners and administrators; ten year plan implementation body	Fall 2010 Summer 2011 Fall/Winter 2011		

Zoning, Planning and Permits

One of the obstacles housing developers in the state of New Jersey must navigate is the local zoning and permitting process. Whereas in New Jersey, each municipality has control over the zoning, planning and permitting process, it becomes difficult for developers to learn the full details of the approval process for each town as they may vary greatly from municipality to municipality. Developers often run into issues of project delays and increases in project costs when dealing with local approval processes. To make affordable housing development in Middlesex County more appealing, partnerships with municipalities is necessary in order to streamline the process for developers.

Strategies:

- Establish partnerships with local planning and zoning officials to encourage the adoption of inclusionary zoning standards
- Develop, in collaboration with planning officials, standards for inclusionary zoning that would permit or allow the development of permanent affordable and/or supportive housing
- Provide support and education to developers to ensure zoning regulations do not impede the development process
- Encourage municipalities to use expedited processes for the development of permanent affordable and/or supportive housing

Strategy	Action Steps	Partners	Implementation Timeline	Outcomes	Budget
Encourage adoption of inclusionary zoning standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with local zoning and planning officials; 	Municipal Zoning and Planning Officials Ten Year Plan Implementation Body	January 2011		
Develop inclusionary zoning standards to be used in Middlesex County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create collaborative of municipal zoning and planning officials; review zoning regulations of each municipality in Middlesex County; develop set of feasible inclusionary zoning standards 	Municipal Zoning and Planning Officials Ten Year Plan Implementation Body	Fall 2011 Winter 2011 Fall 2012		
provide support and education to developers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with developers to identify needs in education and support; create curriculum of training for developers; advocate for the completion of housing development projects 	Housing Developers, Ten Year Plan Implementation Body	Begin 2009 Winter 2009 On-going		
work with municipalities to expedite development approval process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with each municipality to evaluate the approval process; work with municipalities to determine ways to expedite process where necessary 	Municipal Zoning and Planning Officials Ten Year Plan Implementation Body	January 2011 Fall 2012		

Education and Advocacy

To accomplish the task of ending homelessness, there must be widespread support throughout the community. Homelessness in Middlesex County is a largely hidden problem making it easy for communities to ignore its presence or conceive of it as an urban issue. Reactions to homelessness in Middlesex County range from a complete lack of knowledge about the issues to NIMBYism (Not In My Back Yard). The only way to combat these issues is to provide education to all sectors of the community about the nature of chronic and family homelessness. Only with complete understanding of the issues surrounding chronic and family homelessness can we begin to build support for the goal of ending homelessness.

Strategies:

- Educate the community about the benefits of permanent affordable and supportive housing emphasizing the need to create housing throughout the county on a fair share basis
- Host housing summits to educate the public about the positive benefits and need to develop permanent affordable and supportive housing
- Advocate with the Council on Affordable Housing to establish incentives for the development of housing for the homeless
- Educate landlords about the benefits and process of accepting housing vouchers

Strategy	Action Steps	Partners	Implementation Timeline	Outcomes	Budget
educate community about benefits of permanent affordable & supportive housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify audiences to provide education to; create affordable housing presentations to be used for various audiences; foster relationship with local media; Identify agencies and projects to highlight when discussing affordable & supportive housing in Middlesex County 	<p>Ten Year Plan Implementation Body</p> <p>Homeless housing and service providers</p>	<p>Winter 2009</p> <p>Summer 2010</p> <p>On-going</p>		
Host housing summits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop Housing Summit committee; identify types of housing and populations served to highlight in Housing Summit Series; identify guests to attend summits 	<p>Ten Year Plan Implementation Body</p> <p>Homeless housing and service providers</p>	<p>January 2009</p> <p>Spring 2009</p> <p>Spring 2009</p>		
Advocate with COAH to establish incentives for homeless housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop plan of feasible incentives to provide affordable housing to the homeless; Submit recommendations to COAH; enlist local agencies to advocate for implementation of Middlesex County recommendations 	<p>Ten Year Plan Implementation Body</p> <p>Homeless housing and service providers</p> <p>COAH</p>	<p>Fall 2009</p> <p>Spring 2010</p> <p>On-going</p>		
Educate landlords about benefits of accepting vouchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop material about the benefits and process of accepting housing vouchers; identify agency to conduct trainings; identify landlords in Middlesex County; meet with landlords and present information about housing vouchers 	<p>Ten Year Plan Implementation Body</p> <p>Homeless housing and service providers</p> <p>Landlords</p>	<p>Beginning Spring 2010</p> <p>Fall 2010</p> <p>January 2011</p> <p>Spring 2011</p>		

Capacity Building

Within Middlesex County, there are a limited number of developers working to create affordable and/or supportive housing units. With their extensive knowledge about the development process in the county, they will play a major role in the development of the units necessary to end chronic and family homelessness. While the developers in the county are willing to produce the necessary units, in some cases, they may not be capable of producing at the pace and level necessary to end homelessness in ten (10) years. Developers working in Middlesex County must be provided with appropriate support in order to ensure their success in creating affordable housing within the county.

Strategies:

- Identify funding for capacity building grants for housing developers
- Provide on-going training and support to developers with regards to funding sources and best practices

Strategy	Action Steps	Partners	Implementation Timeline	Outcomes	Budget
Identify Capacity Building Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research funding sources providing capacity building grants; • Create list of capacity building grants available for all housing developers working in Middlesex County; 		January 2011 Spring 2011		
Provide training and support to developers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop collaborative of housing developers working in Middlesex County; • Identify needs of developers; • Create curriculum to address the needs of housing developers; 		Fall 2010 Winter 2010 Spring 2011		

Single Point of Entry

Increase Coordination and Effectiveness of Services

Homelessness is an extremely complex problem. While there are no simple solutions, the nature of homelessness underscores the need for different agencies and sectors of the community to work together in seeking solutions. The existing service delivery system has been criticized as being ineffective, fragmented, and too frequently duplicating services. The Single Point of Entry Committee reviewed the current system through meetings with providers, agency executives, and homeless persons. This examination resulted in a conclusion that service effectiveness can be increased. Specific areas of attention include:

1. Establishing a single point of entry
2. Coordinated case management
3. Outreach and engagement
4. Centralized data collection
5. Reduce discharging people to streets

Single Point of Entry

Too frequently homeless persons face a matrix of services without a clear, consistent point of entry. A sound strategy for coordinating services to the homeless includes a single point of entry into a unified system of service provision.

It is crucial that once a homeless individual has requested services from a provider within Middlesex County, he or she will receive consistent help, coordinated to quickly move that individual toward the goal of appropriate permanent housing. Under the current system an individual frequently finds assistance at one shelter or service provider, leaves, and then seeks assistance again at another shelter or service provider while making little progress toward finding permanent housing. A single point of entry into the system would assure progress towards the goal of housing and stabilization.

Setting up a single service entry point does not demand that a client request services at a single physical location. The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) allows cooperating agencies to work together to seamlessly initiate and maintain an individualized service plan for a homeless individual or family group. In the past, some criticisms have been expressed in regard to service plans, treatment plans, and care plans, saying that they are duplicative, overlapping, and lead to inefficiency. In fact, some homeless individuals have developed survival strategies that push them to travel from agency to agency to maximize personal benefits. Often the added benefits do nothing to resolve the episode of homelessness. In fact, the benefits sometimes actually do promote chronic forms of homelessness. This inefficiency in the delivery of services can be reduced or eliminated by full implementation of the HMIS and the service coordination system.

Implementation of the HMIS information sharing database will serve to keep every service provider informed of what services are being utilized by homeless individuals. Implementation of the service coordinator concept will help to reduce inefficiencies and wasted resources while using available case management personnel more effectively.

Strategies:

- The Homeless Hotline, centered at Info Line, will become the Single Point of Entry call and intake center
- Standardize intake, assessment and referral through HMIS
- Develop training and technical assistance plan to insure participation and ongoing support of providers utilizing HMIS

Strategy	Action Steps	Partners	Implementation Timeline	Outcomes	Budget
Establish central intake unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ID staffing necessary for call center and develop budget for call center • ID funding for call center • Develop procedure plan for call center • Develop Implementation Timeline 		Begin Fall 2008 January 2009 Spring 2009 Fall 2009		
Standardize intake, assessment and referral through HMIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify who is utilizing HMIS • Identify who should be using HMIS • Develop system enrollment and training timeline 		Begin Winter 2008 Spring 2009 Winter 2009		
Develop training and TA plan to insure participation and ongoing support of providers using HMIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop training and implementation timeline • Establish central entity responsible for HMIS training, TA & monitoring compliance • Identify entity to provide TA/support, training and monitoring • Identify funding participation compliance 		Winter 2009 Winter 2008 Winter 2009 January 2010		

Coordinated Case Management

A critical component for ending chronic homelessness is a system that provides coordinated, consistent, and ongoing case management. Currently, the case management system for the homeless population is fragmented. A homeless person may be assigned a number of case managers by different agencies that, while doing good work, labor independently of other service providers. This fragmented service system is burdened by large caseloads, as well as high turnover rates among case managers.

The ten-year plan emphasizes redesigning the case management system to identify a service coordinator whose central function would be to coordinate the efforts of various service providers (case managers). This provider will serve as a central intake unit that will screen clients, assess their needs and refer them into the care of a case manager, at an appropriate agency, who will work with that client to develop a treatment/care plan that follows that client through to a permanent housing placement.

Strategies:

- Develop coordinated case management system which includes agencies that will provide supportive case management from client's entry into the system until exit to permanent housing
- Develop Case Manager Collaborative
- Strengthen linkages and partnership with the Board of Social Services
- Develop homeless case management liaison at the Middlesex County Board of Social Services

Strategy	Action Steps	Partners	Implementation Timeline	Outcomes	Budget
Develop coordinated case management system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ID agencies that will participate in collaborative • ID staffing needs and budget • ID funding sources • Develop bid/funding specs 		<p>Spring 2009</p> <p>Winter 2009</p> <p>January 2010</p> <p>Spring 2010</p>		
Develop case manager collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ID training needs/standards inc. standardized intake, assessments, referrals, service plans, follow ups that are in alignment with achieving CoC Program standards. • Develop annual performance review standards and quality assurance plan • Annual training conducted by county Board of Social Services to insure case managers understand all programs and services of the Board 		<p>Fall 2010</p> <p>Fall 2010</p> <p>Winter 2010</p>		
Strengthen linkages and partnership with Board of Social Services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish quarterly meetings between Board of Social Services and case managers • Identify barriers in connecting clients with resources through the Board of Social Services • Create recommendations for improving coordination 		<p>January 2009</p> <p>Spring 2009</p> <p>Summer 2009</p>		
Develop Liaison(s) on staff at MCBOS for homeless case managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop job description for homeless liaison position • Identify staff to fill position • Work with Homeless Case Management liaison to build relationship with community service providers 		<p>Winter 2009</p> <p>January 2010</p> <p>Spring 2010</p>		

Outreach and Engagement

In addition to increased coordination, one of the most challenging aspects of reducing chronic homelessness is outreach and engagement. The chronically homeless tend to be heavy consumers of services, but this is often on a “piecemeal” or crisis basis. While heavy consumers of services, many of these persons are socially isolated and alienated from the community. Thus, an early task encountered by outreach workers and case managers is to effectively engage the homeless in a manner that allows them to share ownership in securing appropriate services and housing.

The ten-year plan acknowledges the importance of outreach and engagement by recommending the development of a comprehensive outreach team. This team could serve as the first point of social service contact for the homeless who reside on the street, or in a place not meant for habitation.

Outreach and engagement are often necessary for people who suffer from serious and persistent mental health problems as well as those with high levels of poor social functioning. Individuals facing these problems frequently have difficulties in engaging with services. Chronically homeless individuals are often in need of such intervention to gain trust and connect them successfully with services.

The goal of the outreach team would be to provide an integrated, comprehensive, client-centered resource focused on placing homeless individuals into housing first and then into appropriate treatment programs. In a coordinated system, homeless individuals would be protected from the experience of being passed on to multiple case managers and of having to undergo multiple or repetitive assessments. The outreach team, working in conjunction with the single point of entry case coordinator, would facilitate the linkage of client and assigned case manager in order to effectively move the client to multi-disciplinary services.

The outreach team would be composed of people from a variety of service backgrounds such as social work, law enforcement, and psychiatric nursing. The team(s) could establish flexible or nonstandard service locations and hours in order to assure service availability to this particular population.

The establishment of avenues for rapport and trust allow for the accomplishment of the primary goal of outreach and engagement, which is to initiate a process whereby the chronically homeless person is given the opportunity to take advantage of placement in appropriate housing.

The outreach workers will work closely with the service coordinator to assure that the best housing placement options are made available to each homeless client. Effective case management and outreach is enhanced by appropriately trained, well prepared staff. Staff must be trained to effectively engage a wide range of persons and situations—juveniles and adults, mentally ill, substance abusers, and former offenders.

Strategies

- Identify staffing in the county to conduct outreach at local soup kitchens, the streets and other areas where the homeless may be found
- Coordinate annual Project Homeless Connect events and Point-in-Time surveys

Strategy	Action Steps	Partners	Implementation Timeline	Outcomes	Budget
<p>ID staffing in county to conduct outreach at area soup kitchens, streets and areas where homeless may be found.</p>	<p>Determine scope of all existing outreach efforts</p> <p>Create plan to coordinate and expand outreach efforts</p>	<p>UBHC PATH program</p> <p>Catholic Charities Path Program</p>	<p>Spring 2009</p> <p>Fall 2010</p>		
<p>Coordinate annual Project Homeless Connect and Point in Time to insure we are reaching those who are homeless and at risk.</p>	<p>Identify Funding for annual project homeless connect event</p> <p>Develop RFP for one agency to coordinate annual PHC and PIT events</p>		<p>Spring 2009</p> <p>Fall 2009</p>		

Centralized Data Collection - HMIS

The HMIS is a centralized Web-based system that provides a database of homeless information. Shelters, housing providers, service agencies, and others who work with the homeless can share client information within the strictest bounds of privacy and confidentiality (HIPPA compliant). The system is designed to maximize service coordination. HMIS also provides aggregate data that is crucial in assessing needs, service effectiveness, and accountability.

The HMIS offers a number of benefits for addressing chronic homelessness. It is an enabling collection of accurate and timely data on numbers of homeless persons in the community, patterns of homelessness, and demographic characteristics. The system will provide a resource for better coordination of case management. Additionally, HMIS will provide information on effective interventions and service delivery as well as providing data to guide agency and community planning for improved and targeted services delivery.

The HMIS strategy includes the following steps:

1. Use HMIS to provide a single point of entry for homeless services.
2. Use HMIS to evaluate outcome data on services delivery.
3. Use HMIS to increase case management and the coordination of care between homeless services providers.
4. Use HMIS to link housing resources and availability.
5. Expand HMIS to include Middlesex County Board of Social Services, hospitals, mental health and substance abuse treatment providers, and correctional facilities.

Strategy	Action Steps	Partners	Implementation Timeline	Outcomes
Utilize HMIS as virtual Single Point of Entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable assessment tool usage on HMIS system • Train provider agencies on use of HMIS as an assessment tool 	NJHMFA HMIS department Middlesex County CoC Service providers on HMIS	January 2009 Fall 2009	
Use HMIS to evaluate data on Service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop monthly reports to run on HMIS • Provide updates of data from HMIS reports at monthly CEAS meetings • Utilize HMIS data to inform funding decisions 	Middlesex County CoC	Fall 2008 Beginning Fall 2008 Spring 2009	
Use HMIS to increase case management coordination and links to housing resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Middlesex HMIS advisory committee • Explore ways to expand HMIS system to provide increased linkage in services and housing • Develop implementation timeline for expanded HMIS system 		January 2009 Fall 2009 January 2010	
Expand HMIS to include wider range of service providers in Middlesex County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key agencies that should utilize HMIS • Meet with agencies to discuss possible HMIS usage • Develop implementation & training timeline 		Spring 2010 Fall 2010 January 2011	

Reduce Rate of Discharging People into Homelessness

Institutions such as mental health hospitals and jails usually lack referral services with access to permanent supportive housing. The result is that far too many individuals are discharged directly to emergency shelters or the streets. The 2008 Point in Time survey found that 61% of homeless individuals surveyed had been previously discharged into homelessness.

A good strategy for discharging at risk populations from institutions to permanent housing is both humane and sound fiscal policy. These institutions are overburdened and bounded by limited resources. Mental hospitals do not have sufficient funds to provide long-term treatment for indigent patients. Requirements placed on these institutions demand a focus on rapid stabilization of indigent clients followed by discharge as soon as possible. The unintended consequence of this is a rapid release of mentally ill individuals who are poorly equipped to secure housing or cope with life on the streets. While this practice reduces the financial burden on mental institutions, the costs are shifted to shelters, jails, and hospital emergency rooms. This practice is neither humane to the patient nor cost-effective to society and, ultimately, the taxpayer assumes the cost of an insufficient system.

Similarly, correctional facilities currently release prisoners to the street. Criminal recidivism is a likely result. In addition, drug and alcohol addictions can quickly recur or occur. Those consequences of homelessness shift costs to systems that are not designed to efficiently address the needs of former offenders.

Finally, limitations of the foster care system currently result in matriculation of youth directly to the streets. Unprepared for independent living and incredibly susceptible to destructive, costly behaviors and lifestyles, young people find themselves homeless and vulnerable. To stem the tide of individuals most likely to become chronically homeless, these systems must cease the discharge of people directly to the streets.

The ten-year plan task force recommends that the community establish an institutional discharging strategy that includes the following steps:

1. Seek agreement from institutions to stop discharging individuals to emergency shelters or the street.
2. Develop a systematic discharge procedure whereby individuals to be discharged from a hospital, jail, and foster care are linked to appropriate community services before discharge.
3. Connect individuals who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless to permanent housing and a case manager prior to discharge via the single point of entry.
4. Advocate for a state plan concerning institutional discharge.

Strategy	Action Steps	Partners	Implementation Timeline	Outcomes	Budget
Establish agreements to prevent discharge into emergency shelters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ID personnel/departments at area hospitals, mental health facilities, corrections and substance abuse facilities • Develop contact database for sharing information and updates • Conduct regular orientations with area institution discharge and social services personnel around Single Point of Entry system 		<p>January 2011</p> <p>Spring 2011</p> <p>Beginning January 2012</p>		
Develop systematic discharge procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop contact list, and plan for outreach to institutions • ID committees/bodies for CEAS to collaborate more closely with and ID people to attend those meetings and/or bring onto CEAS. • Develop closer connection to Mental Health planning and providers, inc. MCC planning entity, SRC (Systems Review Committee) under auspices of NJDMHS 		<p>January 2011</p> <p>January 2011</p> <p>Spring 2011</p>		
Connect homeless and at-risk individuals and families to permanent housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for more state resources to flow into transition from short term care to community for mental health constituents, inc. consolidate/centralize PATH program in MCC to assist with this transition. 		On-going		
Advocate for state institutional discharge plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up meeting with State DMHS staff (Karen Wapner) to discuss ways to strengthen PATH and transitional mental health services 		Winter 2010		

Prevention

Prevent Homelessness

The Interagency Council speaks of prevention as “closing the front door” to homelessness. Homeless prevention is any action that prevents an individual or family from losing their housing. Providing services and assistance that contributes to housing stability, such as assistance with rent or security deposits, utility bills, medical treatment, and transportation can be preventive. Likewise, early intervention when crisis occurs can prevent homelessness. It is especially important to identify those at risk and provide services that support these persons in maintaining housing stability.

Early intervention can prevent homelessness through education and advice, negotiations with landlords to avoid evictions, and discharge planning protocols that prevent homelessness. Another level of prevention is stopping recurring homelessness through case management and supportive housing.

Regardless of the level of prevention— identifying persons at risk, early intervention or breaking the cycle of chronic homelessness—it is critical to utilize strategies that have been demonstrated to be effective. There is an increasing understanding of evidence based practices (i.e., determining what works with them). As new strategies are selected, it is also imperative that existing programs measure their outcomes in addressing homelessness.

The actions identified in the plan—particularly housing first, stopping discharges to the street, and coordinated case management—will have a strong preventive effect on chronic homelessness. Other prevention strategy includes the following steps:

1. Identify persons at risk for homelessness and link with social services;
2. Develop services that support housing stability, such as rent and utility assistance.
3. Create a landlord/tenant helpline to provide education and support to prevent evictions.
4. Break the cycle of recurrent homelessness through intensive case management and supportive housing;
6. Recognize youth transitioning out of state custody as eligible for special needs housing
7. Consistently evaluate and measure which programs and strategies are effective in preventing and reducing homelessness.

Strategy	Action Steps	Partners	Implementation Timeline	Outcomes
Identify those at risk of homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work closely with the Board of Social Services to identify those most at risk for homelessness • Utilize the Single Point of Entry through the homeless hotline to link services to those at risk 	Board of Social Services Homeless Hotline Service Providers	Fall 2010 On-going	
Expand services that support housing stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify funding sources for rent & utility assistance • Identify key agencies to house assistance programs • Develop efficient method of administering assistance funds 		Fall 2010 Winter 2010 January 2011	
Create Landlord Tenant helpline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify agency to house helpline • Identify key resources and information for helpline • Raise public awareness of services provided through helpline • Encourage early use of the helpline 		January 2012 Spring 2012 January 2013 January 2013 & on-going	
Develop intensive case management and Supportive Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research best practice models of intensive case management, service and housing provision • Develop pilot programs of enhanced services • Identify funding for expansion of successful pilot projects 		January 2013 January 2014 Spring 2015	
Enable youth transitioning out of foster care to become eligible for special needs housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with housing & service providers to encourage development of special housing for transitioning youth • Advocate for the inclusion of transitioning youth in projects funded through special needs programs 		January 2013 On-going	

Increase Economic Opportunities to Prevent Homelessness and Rapidly Re-House

Lack of employment, income, and economic opportunity are often identified as major causes of homelessness. Although many homeless individuals report being employed or having occasional work, many of the jobs they hold are of such a nature and skill level that they do not provide adequate wages and benefits for self-sufficiency. As part of the effort to solve chronic homelessness, it is crucial to maximize income and achieve economic stability.

The effort to achieve maximum income begins at the time of client intake into the system of homeless services. The intake process must include a comprehensive assessment of eligibility for available benefit programs, and an assessment of education and current employability in order to determine needs for further training. In addition to determining the individual's income potential, the ability to manage funds must also be addressed. With case management and basic financial literacy services, some clients will be able to manage their financial resources. For others, a "responsible or representative payee" service may be required. The Representative payee program would serve the client by assuring that benefits and income received are appropriately managed to meet individual expenses. For clients with significant mental illness, addictions, or other issues, a financial guardianship program may be the most effective method to assure that the client's limited fiscal resources are not squandered or stolen.

Repeated episodes and extended periods of homelessness serve to decrease the prospects of employment as the consequences of prolonged idleness may include greater loss in work habits, responsibility, and commitment to employment. The ten-year plan recognizes that people who are chronically homeless will need greater access to resources that provide employment training and placement.

For many, the root causes of their homelessness may indicate a skill level—for both work and life skills—that is below the minimum expectations of most employers. While it appears there are many employers who are willing to assume some risk by offering employment to the homeless, that risk is, nonetheless, limited by the employer's bottom line. An employee whose attendance is unreliable or whose work skills remain consistently below job requirements will quickly run out of "second chances" with even the most understanding employer. Employers who assume the risk of hiring a homeless individual need assurance that the person has basic work skills and personal reliability.

To help mitigate an employer's risk, the committee recommends the establishment of a basic skills training and certificate program. Examples of such programs include the now idle STRIVE program, programs operated by the New Brunswick Adult Learning Center and Middlesex County Department of Workforce Development. Upon completion of the basic skills training programs, clients would be issued a certificate.

This certificate documents basic standards of work skills and personal reliability that have been learned and met by recipients of the certificate. By building adequate levels of expectations into the participating training programs, employers would see certificate program graduates as less of a risk, despite their past history or status as homeless.

New programs targeting individuals who require basic life and work skills training combined with marketable vocational training are also needed to help the chronically homeless bridge the gap. Programs such as the Promise Jobs Culinary School and Hire Attire serve as examples of such employment training courses. Expansion of these program and others targeted toward practicable vocations is an important step in efforts to create economic opportunities. Training combined with supportive case management is essential for helping homeless people maintain stable employment or work training. Additionally, for homeless families, childcare and affordable transportation are critical for gaining and maintaining employment.

To address benefits, education, and employment needs of the homeless, as many resources as possible should be brought directly to the homeless. Satellite offices for these programs should be located in or near shelters and primary homeless service locations. Technologies such as teleconferencing, computers, and Internet access should also be utilized to bring training and educational opportunities to the homeless. Use of these resources will maximize client exposure to opportunities while minimizing transportation costs and logistical complications that often serve as barriers to the homeless who are seeking employment.

The recommended strategies to increase economic opportunities that assist homeless persons to achieve their maximum economic self sufficiency include the following steps:

1. Include comprehensive intake assessment for employability, education, and eligibility for benefits in all intervention planning.
2. Establish income management and representative payee programs.
3. Support and expand existing employment and educational training programs to target the chronically homeless population.
4. Establish a pre-employment basic skills certificate program.
5. Bring benefit, employment, and educational programs to the clients through satellite offices and use of telecommunications technology.
6. Encourage the business community to provide employment opportunities and mentoring programs by providing supportive services to employers and tax incentives.

Strategy	Action Steps	Partners	Implementation Timeline	Outcomes
Utilize comprehensive employability and education assessment in intervention planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop comprehensive tool that measures employability, education level and eligibility for benefits • Include new assessment tool in standard intake procedure through HMIS • Utilize tool to develop individual economic self-sufficiency plans with clients 		Summer 2010 Fall 2011 Summer 2010 & on-going	
Establish income management & representative payee programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify agencies willing to serve as representative payees • Develop procedures for identifying and enrolling individuals in representative payee program 		Fall 2010 Spring 2011	
Support & expand employment and educational training programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify resources to expand existing training programs • Research successful models of additional employment programs • Identify agencies able to develop pilot training programs 		Fall 2009 Spring 2010 Winter 2010	
Establish Pre-employment, basic skills program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify agencies to pilot basic skills program • Identify funding for program • Develop comprehensive program curriculum and guidelines • Implement Basic Skills program 		January 2011 Spring 2011 Winter 2011 Winter 2012	
Enhance accessibility of training programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key locations for satellite programs • Identify funding sources for the creation/expansion of training programs • Work to secure support from the private sector for accessible training 		January 2013 Fall 2013 January 2014	
Partner with business community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify employers in Middlesex County • Meet with employers to identify mutual needs • Develop pilot mentoring project with local employer • Reach out to business community for continued support 		January 2013 Fall 2013 January 2014 On-going	

Plan Implementation

Coming Home of Middlesex County, Inc. – Dedicated to Ending Homelessness in Our Community

The strength of any plan to end homelessness in a community is contingent not only upon the support from the community and elected officials, but also on the strength of the body implementing the plan. A plan can easily become a forgotten document relegated to the shelves and filing cabinets of community members without continual reminders of the goals set forth. In order to prevent this document from becoming an afterthought, the Ten Year Plan Steering Committee has created a new 501(c)3 known as Coming Home of Middlesex County, Inc. – Dedicated to Ending Homelessness in Our Community. This new non-profit organization is charged with the task of ensuring this plan remains a living document that is fully implemented.

With the full support of the Ten Year Plan Steering committee, Coming Home of Middlesex County, Inc. will work to implement the goals and action steps set out in this plan, working closely with local non-profits, the business community and local government. Coming Home of Middlesex County will identify the budget needs of the plan and up-date the implementation schedule yearly. In addition, this new organization will work to secure private and public funding for key elements of the plan. Through the oversight provided by Coming Home of Middlesex County, Inc., an end to chronic and family homelessness in ten years is in sight.