



Coalition on Homelessness
and Housing in Ohio
COHHIO

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CONTACT:
Suzanne G. Acker, 614-280-1984, x11

COHHIO Shares Concern with NAEH about Trend Data *Homelessness on the rise in Ohio despite federal investment in prevention*

COLUMBUS -- The National Alliance to End Homelessness today released a comprehensive report that showed a slight decrease in homelessness across the country in 2011 versus 2009.

But Ohio was among those states reporting an increase in homeless numbers, including families and children, and those in shelters and in transitional housing. The report painted a bleak picture for states like Ohio that have all but used up federal stimulus dollars and find demand for critical services growing.

The report showed that in Ohio, overall homelessness was up 2.6 percent, while family homelessness increased 5.93 percent. "Homeless numbers are up even though HPRP (the federal Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program) funds helped prevent homelessness in this difficult economy," said Bill Faith executive director of the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO). "The numbers in Ohio would have been far worse had the federal government not invested in the HPRP solution.

"We've been hit hard in Ohio over the last few years," he said. "While we saw a reduction in overall homelessness in 2009 and again in 2010, the trend reversed in 2011. 15 years of record foreclosures and stubbornly high unemployment finally took its toll. Homelessness is a lagging indicator. It occurs only after people exhaust all other possible resources to stay housed," he said.

Anecdotal data collected in late 2011 from member agencies around Ohio confirmed the uptick:

- In Columbus, spending on overflow shelter by the Community Shelter Board increased 5000% in 2011 over 2010.
- In Cleveland, demand at the Norma Herr Women's Center is "off the charts." In September of 2009, 214 women were admitted. In September of 2011, that number was 837.
- The Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless reports that family homelessness is so huge that it's creating a bottleneck in the system. They can't cycle families through fast enough to accommodate those on the waiting list.
- The executive director of the Findlay Hope House for the Homeless says, "We are drowning. Housing rental assistance is gone for the year and the waiting list for women and children is the longest we've ever had."

One piece of good news was a reduction in the number of chronic homeless individuals (down 18.3 percent), which coincides with the expansion of permanent supportive housing (PSH) in the state, Faith explained. PSH offers homeless people with disabilities, including mental illness, an assurance of permanent housing and appropriate supportive services. “The PSH model is designed to provide a structure that counteracts the disruptions and expense of both homelessness and disability,” he said.

The Homeless report is a compilation of point-in-time counts collected by local Continuums of Care (CoC) – the HUD- defined jurisdictions that oversee homeless services and are required to count their homeless populations every other year on one night in January.

Faith cautioned against using the report as a fully accurate picture of homelessness. “It captures only a portion of the number of homeless on a given night. This data point can be compared from one year to the next, but is incapable of capturing the large numbers of people who are turned away at shelters, who are doubled up with family and friends, or who are able to avoid the point-in-time count altogether.”

To view the full NAEH report, visit
<http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/4361>