

Advocates to End Homelessness

# A Snapshot of Homelessness

Results of the 1999 Survey of the Homeless  
Greater Norwalk, CT  
March 15 - 22, 1999

Advocates to End Homelessness  
c/o The Human Services Council of Mid-Fairfield  
83 East Avenue, Suite 307  
Norwalk, CT 06850



June, 1999

Dear community leader:

Advocates to End Homelessness (ATEH), a consortium of local not-for-profit, city and state agencies concerned with improving services for homeless persons, is pleased to present "A Snapshot of Homelessness: Results of the Greater Norwalk Area 1999 Survey." ATEH, which is convened by the Human Services Council of Mid-Fairfield, has used its nationally recognized approach to identify the needs of homeless persons to compile the enclosed survey results.

**Please share the "Snapshot" with others. The report may be copied for this purpose. We invite you to join Advocates To End Homelessness and develop solutions for the complex problem causing homelessness. For further information about this report or to become a member, please contact:**

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In the past, the survey information has made it possible for this region to receive over \$1.8 million dollars for housing and support services for homeless individuals and families from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Continuum of Care SuperNOFAs. We look forward to bringing additional funding to the area through similar collaborative efforts.

These successes have encouraged us in our work to end homelessness in our area. We hope they encourage you to join us and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Carole Antonetz  
Chair, Advocates to End Homelessness  
Executive Director, Norwalk Emergency Shelter

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The 1999 Homeless Demographic & Service Needs Survey and resulting Snapshot of the Homeless in the Greater Norwalk Area (Mid-Fairfield County) could not have been completed without the tireless efforts of members of the Advocates To End Homelessness, the task force on homelessness convened by the Human Services Council of Mid-Fairfield. This effort has been truly collaborative.

While in a collaboration it is difficult to identify all of the people and agencies that contributed to the effort, the acknowledgments below are an indication of the level of commitment and collaboration necessary to develop this information for community use and action, with no available resources for the process.

Time, materials and other necessary resources were donated by member agencies of Advocates to End Homelessness.

Student interns at Advocates To End Homelessness member agencies provided invaluable assistance in staffing the survey project, especially in utilizing follow-up skills that contributed to the successful rate of return of surveys. They are: Ed Ayers, Sacred Heart University student intern at Homestead; Ashlí Ellis, Norwalk Community Technical College student intern at the Human Services Council of Mid-Fairfield; and Jim Middleton, Norwalk Community Technical College student intern at Family & Children's Agency's Community Connections.

Training of agency staff to give the surveys was provided by Judy Brown, Jim Farrales, Melissa Leigh, Maura McCarthy, Angie Merchant and Stephanie Ross.

Surveys were conducted in several ways. Agency staff of each of the forty-one agencies participating in the survey conducted the survey at each agency. Face to face interviews with clients waiting for services in health and social services agencies were conducted by volunteers Judy Brown and Candy Santiago. Surveys of homeless persons living in the streets were conducted by Bobby Henry and Bryan McFadden and facilitated by the Community Police Division of the Norwalk Police Department.

Data was entered for analysis by Barbara Murphy and Carole Delmonico.

Coordination of the process could not have occurred without: Carole Antonetz, Norwalk Emergency Shelter; Jim Farrales- Hall-Brooke Foundation's Homestead Apartments; Melissa Leigh, Norwalk Redevelopment Agency; Maura McCarthy, Family & Children's Agency's Community Connections and Stephanie Ross, Human Services Council of Mid-Fairfield.

The Snapshot was written by Melissa Leigh.

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## **Executive Summary.**

Mid-Fairfield County is known for its strong economy, its proximity to New York City, and its waterfront. With a median household income of nearly \$95,000 for a family of four, it is also known for its affluence.

Housing costs are also high. Within the towns of Norwalk, Westport, Weston and Wilton, the average price of a single family house ranges from \$205,815 in Norwalk to \$563,091 in Weston. Rental prices are high as well, with the fair market rent for a three bedroom apartment totaling nearly \$1,500 per month.

Not all of Mid-Fairfield's residents reap the benefits of its economy and relative wealth. At a point in time, during any week of the year, nearly 275 households are likely to be homeless and living in emergency shelter, the streets or vacant buildings. Roughly the same number of households are likely to be staying with friends or family, in overcrowded housing units, or in substandard units hoping to find permanent housing that they can afford.

During the week of March 15, 1999, a total of 273 households were homeless and an additional 263 were at serious risk of becoming homeless. Many of these households had employment income and had become victims of the widening gap between housing costs and wages. Others are mentally ill, dually diagnosed or have another disabling condition that interferes with their ability to work or live independently of supportive services.

Single adult households comprise the greatest segment of the homeless population; these households are more than five times more likely to be homeless than family households. Homeless families most often consist of a single parent with two children. Nearly one-fourth of the children in these families is three years old or younger.

Moving these adults and families out of homelessness and into permanent housing will require a broad-based approach in order to address a wide range of critical needs. This "snapshot" of the Greater Norwalk Area's homeless population is a starting point for the planning, implementation and coordination of supportive services and affordable housing options needed help area homeless move along the continuum from homeless to housed.

## **Introduction.**

Advocates to End Homelessness (ATEH), a consortium of local planners, city and state officials, residents, human service organizations, non-profit housing providers, homeless and formerly homeless individuals, conducted its third Point-in-Time Survey of the Homeless during the period March 15 -- March 22, 1999. The purpose of this survey was to obtain a current and complete count of those local residents who are homeless or at serious risk of becoming homeless.

ATEH developed the survey in early 1997 as a planning tool for the anticipated release of a Supportive Housing Program Notice of Funding Availability by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Survey questions were written to mirror the data needed to complete the standard Gaps Analysis Chart contained in most federal applications for homeless assistance funds. Specifically, the survey sought to identify the specific service needs of homeless persons, where homeless persons are most often sheltered, source of income, and history of homelessness.

The survey was conducted by local service providers and volunteers, all of whom attended training sessions sponsored by ATEH in the weeks preceding the survey. Additional volunteers reviewed the survey for completeness and entered data into a spreadsheet for further analysis using geographic information systems technology. Agencies participating in the survey included the Norwalk Emergency Shelter, Family and Children's Agency, the Human Services Council, the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency, Hall-Brooke Foundation, Interfaith Housing Association, City of Norwalk Department of Health, Keystone House, the Norwalk Police Department, Mid-Fairfield AIDS Project and the Domestic Violence Crisis Center. (A complete list of participants can be found in the attachments.)

Three primary strategies were used to identify and locate homeless persons to participate in the survey. The first strategy involved the participation of agencies providing emergency shelter and other accommodations for homeless individuals. Homeless persons receiving services at each participating agency during the week of March 15, 1999, were asked to complete the survey for the purpose of helping community leaders further understand and document the needs of the homeless population. Participation in the survey was voluntary and not a condition of receiving services.

The second strategy involved participation by mainstream service agencies in the Greater Norwalk Area that serve homeless households in addition to other, permanently housed sub-populations. These agencies were asked to review program enrollment records and to consult with staff to identify persons who are actively participating in program services and do not have permanent housing. For each client identified by staff as homeless, a completed survey was obtained from that client.

The final strategy involved a search for the unsheltered homeless. A team consisting of formerly homeless individuals, the Norwalk Police Department's Community Policing

Division, the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency, Keystone House and the Human Services Council identified those vacant housing units, parks and other public places where homeless persons were believed to reside. Working in small groups, team members made scheduled visits to targeted locations at all hours of the day and night to obtain completed surveys from this homeless sub-population.

The tables in this report are based on data collected during the 1999 survey. It is important to note that households completing the survey were advised to check all categories that applied to them at the moment they completed the survey. Therefore, the sum of all categories may not equal the total number of households reporting and the sum of percentages by category may exceed 100%.

## 1.0 Characteristics of Homeless Households.

For the purposes of this summary, homeless households are defined as those households reporting that they lacked a permanent night-time residence during the period March 15 to March 22, 1999, and spent at least one night during this period in emergency shelter, on the street, in a vacant building, in a local jail or in short term (less than 30 days) hospital or treatment facility.

A total of 273 respondents reported themselves to be homeless. Forty-nine (49) of those respondents indicated that they have minor dependent children. Survey results for this population are as follows:

Sample size, n=273 (households; single person and family)

**Table 1-1. Breakdown By Age, Head of Household.**

Age	Persons Reporting	Percentage of Sample
<18	0	0.0
18-20	4	1.5
21-29	54	19.8
30-39	96	35.2
40-49	79	28.9
50-59	26	9.5
60-65	5	1.8
Over 65	6	2.2
Unreported	3	1.0

Significant findings:

- The youngest head of household reported was 18 years of age.
- The oldest head of household reported was 73 years of age.
- The mean age of head of household is 38.1 years of age.
- The median age of head of household is 45.5 years of age.

**Table 1-2. Breakdown by Ethnicity, Head of Household.**

Ethnicity	Persons Reporting	Percentage of Sample	Mean Age
White, non-hispanic	87	31.9	39.2 years
Black, non-hispanic	134	49.1	38.3 years
Hispanic	43	15.8	36.3 years
Asian/Pacific Islander	4	1.5	32.5 years

Native American	0	0.0	n/a
Other	2	<1.0	36.5 years
Unreported	3	1.0	33 years

Significant findings:

- Although black, non-Hispanic persons comprise only 16% of the Greater Norwalk Area's total population, these persons constitute nearly half of the area's homeless population. (Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, population projections for 1997.)
- Although white, non-Hispanic persons comprise just over 78% of the area's total population, they comprise only 31.9% of the homeless population.
- Comparing the ethnic breakdown of homeless persons with the ethnic breakdown of the area's population as a whole, the following emerges: although minority populations comprise less than one-fifth of the area's total populations, these populations are three and a half times more likely to be homeless.

**Table 1-3. Breakdown by Gender, Head of Household**

Gender	Persons Reporting	Percentage of Sample
Male	183	67.0
Female	90	33.0

Significant findings:

- Men are more than twice as likely to be homeless than women, despite the fact that women comprise a larger share of the area's population.

**Table 1-4. Households Served, by Town of Origin**

Town of Origin	Persons Reporting	Percentage of Sample
Norwalk	248	90.8
Westport	6	2.2
Wilton	2	<1
Weston	0	0.0
Stamford	3	1.0
Bridgeport	5	1.8
Fairfield	4	1.5
Unreported	5	1.8

Significant findings:

- Although four towns participated in this survey, an overwhelming percentage of homeless individuals in the Greater Norwalk Area cite Norwalk as their town of origin.
- Despite the relatively low percentage of homeless households citing Westport as their town of origin, Westport-based agencies play a significant role in providing shelter and services to the homeless. In addition to persons reporting Westport as their town of origin, an additional twenty-four (24) of those persons reporting a town of origin other than Westport receive emergency shelter services in that town.

**Table 1-5. Veterans**

A total of 21 persons, or 7.7% of the sample, are veterans of the United States Armed Forces.

**Table 1-6. Service Needs**

<b>Service Need/Condition</b>	<b>Persons Reporting</b>	<b>Percentage of Sample**</b>
Mental Health	110	40.3
Alcohol/Substance Abuse	157	57.5
Mental Retardation	5	1.8
Physical Disability	23	8.4
AIDS/HIV	30	11.0
Emotional/Physical Abuse	26	9.5
Domestic Violence	28	10.2
Vocational Rehabilitation	112	41.0
Dually Diagnosed	76	27.8

\*\*Households can report more than one service need. Percentages may not equal 100.

Significant findings:

- A high percentage of homeless persons indicate a need for mental health services (40.3%), dual diagnosis services (27.8%) and/or vocational rehabilitation. These reports indicate that a significant percentage of the area's areas homeless population is likely to need a fairly high level of supportive services over time in order to secure and maintain housing. For these sub-populations, homelessness is not simply the result of being unable to afford housing.

**Table 1-7. Current Form of Housing**

<b>Form of Housing</b>	<b>Persons Reporting</b>	<b>Percentage of Sample**</b>
Emergency Shelter	217	79.4
Street	30	11.0
Vacant Buildings	9	3.2
Hospital/Treatment Facility	22	8.1
Local jails	7	2.6
Transitional Housing	0	0.0
Permanent Supportive	0	0.0

\*\*Households can report more than one form of housing. Percentages may not equal 100.

Significant findings:

- Nearly 80% of the area’s homeless persons seek temporary housing and services at one of two emergency shelters. This trend likely indicates a community-wide awareness of the services available to the homeless and a high level of confidence in staff at these agencies.
- The number of homeless persons living on the streets, in vacant buildings or in other areas not meant for human habitation was higher than anticipated. In general, the area’s unsheltered homeless are transient and frequently change the location of the “housing” they have created for themselves in an attempt to be innocuous; are adult males with no dependent children; reported themselves to be in need of either alcohol or substance abuse treatment services; and have been homeless for more than three months.

**Table 1-8. Source of Income, By Head of Household**

<b>Source of Income</b>	<b>Persons Reporting</b>	<b>Percentage of Sample**</b>
Employment	80	29.3
TFA	8	2.9
SAGA	43	15.7
Social Security	39	14.3
Disability/SSI	40	14.6
Unemployment Comp.	2	<1.0
No income	67	24.5
Other income	14	5.1

\*\*Households can report more than one source of income. Percentages may not equal 100.

Significant findings:

- Nearly 30% of the area’s homeless are employed. This fact is indicative of the growing gap between the cost of housing and wages, particularly for entry level and lower skilled workers. Although the local economy is booming and numerous jobs have been created in the last few years, much of this growth is in lower paying retail and service sector employment.
- The number of homeless persons with no source of income is nearly as high as the percentage of employed homeless persons. This figure may indicate a relatively large pool of homeless persons who have some condition rendering them permanently or temporarily unable to work, but that does not qualify them for Social Security or disability benefits; persons with no work experience; or persons possessing skills for which there is no longer a need in the marketplace.

**Table 1-9. Reason for Loss of Housing**

Reason for Loss	Persons Reporting	Percentage of Sample**
Eviction	91	33.3
Release from Correctional Facility	34	13.5
Released from Program	25	9.2
Financial Difficulties/Cost of Housing	69	25.3
Other	73	26.7

\*\*Households can report more than one reason for loss of housing. Percentages may not equal 100.

Significant findings:

- Over half of the survey respondents indicated that they had lost permanent housing as a result of eviction (33.3%) or financial difficulties (25.3%). This figure again underscores the growing gap between cost of housing and wages. Homelessness is an affordable housing problem.
- Nearly one-fourth of the homeless persons responding to the survey indicated that they became homeless upon release from a program or institutional setting or a correctional facility. This figure is particularly troubling given many of these institutions are required to help persons locate housing prior to their release.

**Table 1-10. History of Homelessness**

<b>History</b>	<b>Persons Reporting</b>	<b>Percentage of Sample</b>
Homeless less than 3 months	76	27.8
Homeless more than three months	190	69.6
Did not report length of time homeless	7	2.6
Household has previously been homeless	99	36.3

Significant findings:

- In the Greater Norwalk Area, homelessness is often a long-term proposition as opposed to a fleeting situation. Nearly 70% of the homeless persons responding to the survey indicated that they had been homeless for more than three months.
- Persons who become homeless in the Greater Norwalk Area have a slightly greater than one in three chance of becoming homeless again upon placement in transitional or permanent housing.

**Table 1-11. Structure of Family Households**

Forty-nine (49) of the homeless households are family households with minor dependent children.

<b>Structure of Household</b>	<b>Persons Reporting</b>	<b>Percentage of Sample</b>
Children present	23	46.9
Children in other non-shelter housing	26	53.1
Do not report where children are presently	0	0.0

Significant findings:

- Over half of the family households who are homeless have placed their dependent children in other non-shelter accommodations. Some of these children may be in foster care placements while others may be staying with friends or family.

**Table 1-12. Family Size**

n=49 (family households)

<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Persons Reporting</b>	<b>Percentage of Sample</b>
1 child	20	40.8
2 children	19	38.8
3 children	7	14.3
4 children	2	4.1
5 children	1	2.0

Significant findings:

- Contrary to stereotype, homeless families are small. Nearly 80% of the homeless families reported that they had one or two children.

**Table 1-13. Age of Children**

A total of 107 children live in homeless families.

<b>Age, in Years</b>	<b>Persons Reporting</b>	<b>Percentage of</b>
>1	1	1.0
1	11	11.3
2	3	3.1
3	7	7.2
4	7	7.2
5	9	9.3
6	5	5.1
7	7	7.2
8	6	6.2
9	7	7.2
10	5	5.1
11	4	4.1
12	5	5.1
13	0	0.0
14	5	5.1
15	6	6.2
16	4	4.1
17	5	5.1
18	1	1.0

## 2.0 Households at Risk of Homelessness

Households at risk of homelessness are those households which do not currently have permanent housing and are not living in emergency shelter, on the streets, in vacant buildings, in local jails or in short-term hospital or treatment facilities. For the purposes of this report, households at risk of becoming homeless are those that live doubled up with family or friends, in overcrowded quarters, in substandard housing, in transitional housing developments, in permanent supportive housing programs subsidized by state or federal agencies, or in situations where domestic violence is present.

These sub-populations are one step away from emergency shelter. At a moment's notice, any household living in one of the above-mentioned situations may find themselves displaced from their current form of housing. Households living in overcrowded or substandard dwellings may find their units cited by the health department and may find themselves forced out. Persons faced with domestic violence may have to flee their housing in order to protect themselves from serious harm. Government funding for transitional or permanent supportive housing programs may be eliminated, forcing an end to the subsidies and program supports on which residents of these forms of housing depend. Given the temporal and tenuous nature of these housing environments, planning for the development of affordable housing and services for the homeless must also include an evaluation of those persons at risk of becoming homeless.

It is important to note that the at-risk population was not specifically targeted during the survey. Thus, it is likely that the at-risk population is larger than the following summary indicates.

Survey results for this population are as follows:

Sample size, n=263 (households; single person and family)

**Table 2.1. Breakdown By Age, Head of Household.**

Age	Persons Reporting	Percentage of Sample
<18	3	1.1
18-20	17	6.5
21-29	39	14.8
30-39	87	33.1
40-49	77	29.3
50-59	25	9.5
60-65	8	3.0
Over 65	2	<1.0
Unreported	5	1.9

Significant findings:

- Youngest head of household reported was 17 years of age.
- Oldest head of household reported was 88.
- Median age of head of household is 37.19 years.

**Table 2-2. Breakdown by Ethnicity, Head of Household.**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Persons Reporting</b>	<b>Percentage of Sample</b>	<b>Mean Age</b>
White, non-hispanic	113	42.9	37.5 years
Black, non-hispanic	93	35.3	36.9 years
Hispanic	46	17.5	33.8 years
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	<1.0	28.0 years
Native American	1	<1.0	18.0 years
Other	4	1.5	33.5 years
Unreported	5	1.9	30.2 years

Significant findings:

- Persons at risk of homelessness are, on average, eight years younger than persons who are homeless. This figure may indicate that persons at risk of becoming homeless are successfully able to seek temporary housing support from friends, family or other sources for only so long before they are forced into homelessness. This figure also appears to indicate that households do not simply become homeless on a moment's notice, but struggle over a period of time to maintain some form of non-shelter housing.
- Although more closely aligned with actual population statistics than the homeless count, minority populations are disproportionately represented in the pool of persons who are at risk of becoming homeless.

**Table 2-3. Breakdown by Gender, Head of Household**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Persons Reporting</b>	<b>Percentage of Sample</b>
Male	122	46.4
Female	140	53.2
Unreported	1	<1.0

Significant findings:

- Whereas men are more than twice as likely to be homeless as women, the number of female headed households who are at risk of becoming homeless is relatively equal to the number of male headed households in the same or similar situation.

**Table 2-4. Households Served, by Town of Origin**

<b>Town of Origin</b>	<b>Persons Reporting</b>	<b>Percentage of Sample</b>
Norwalk	254	96.6
Westport	4	1.5
Wilton	2	<1.0
Weston	0	0.0
Stamford	0	0.0
Bridgeport	2	<1.0
Fairfield	1	<1.0
Unreported	0	0.0

Significant findings:

- Although most of the households identified as at risk of becoming homeless are from Norwalk, it is important to note that most of the existing transitional and permanent supportive housing units in the four town area are located in Westport and operated by Westport-based not-for-profit agencies.
- The high percentage of renters living in Norwalk may contribute to the high percentage of persons at risk of becoming homeless. Approximately 36% of Norwalk's population rent their house or apartment, as compared with 20% of the population in the three surrounding towns.

**Table 2-5. Veterans**

A total of 12 persons, or 4.5% of the sample, are veterans of the United States Armed Forces.

**Table 2-6. Service Needs**

<b>Service Need/Condition</b>	<b>Persons Reporting</b>	<b>Percentage of Sample**</b>
Mental Health	127	48.3
Alcohol/Substance Abuse	105	39.9
Mental Retardation	2	<1.0
Physical Disability	35	13.3
AIDS/HIV	43	16.3
Emotional/Physical Abuse	29	11.0
Domestic Violence	46	17.5
Vocational Rehabilitation	78	29.6
Dually Diagnosed	59	22.4

\*\*Households can report more than one service need. Percentages may not equal 100.

Significant findings:

- Nearly half of the households at risk of becoming homeless are headed by an adult with mental illness. This number likely represents the investment in permanent supportive housing programs made by not-for-profit agencies over the past few years and the movement of mentally ill homeless households out of emergency shelter and into these housing programs. A similar trend may also be seen in the statistics for households headed by an adult with AIDS or HIV-related illness.
- The percentage of at-risk households that are victims of domestic violence is higher than similar figures for the homeless population and the entire four town area. This population represents a housing crisis waiting to happen since household members may need to flee their current permanent housing situation at any time in order to ensure their personal safety.

**Table 2-7. Current Form of Housing**

<b>Form of Housing</b>	<b>Persons Reporting</b>	<b>Percentage of Sample**</b>
Emergency Shelter	0	0.0
Street	0	0.0
Vacant Buildings	0	0.0
Hospital/Treatment Facility	0	0.0
Local jails	0	0.0
Transitional Housing	27	10.3
Permanent Supportive	86	32.7
Overcrowded Housing	21	8.0
Doubled Up with Others	102	38.8

Substandard Housing	16	6.1
Other	11	4.2

Significant findings:

- Households at risk of becoming homeless are most likely “doubling up” with family or friends. These situations are often the result of economics: although the Stamford-Norwalk Metropolitan Statistical Area has one of the nation’s highest median incomes, it also has the nation’s highest fair market housing costs.
- A high percentage of respondents reported that they currently live in permanent supportive housing environments. Although classified as at-risk due to the uncertainty of on-going government support for such housing programs, this percentage also shows the commitment of the Greater Norwalk Area to providing alternative types of housing for special needs populations.

**Table 2-8. Source of Income, By Head of Household**

Source of Income	Persons Reporting	Percentage of Sample**
Employment	81	30.8
TFA/AFDC	34	12.9
SAGA	18	6.8
Social Security	46	17.5
Disability/SSI	72	27.4
Unemployment Comp.	2	<1.0
No income	33	12.5
Other income	19	7.2

\*\*Households can report more than one source of income. Percentages may not equal 100.

Significant findings:

- Only a slightly higher percentage of households at risk of becoming homeless have employment income (30.8%) as compared with homeless households (29.3%). These figures again underscore that in the Greater Norwalk Area the economy is good, yet the high cost of housing outpaces the earned income of many households.
- Nearly 28% of the households at risk of becoming homeless receive SSI or disability income. This figure is consistent with the high percentage of heads of household with mental illness and the high percentage of households residing in permanent supportive housing environments.

**Table 2-9. Reason for Loss of Housing**

<b>Reason for Loss</b>	<b>Persons Reporting</b>	<b>Percentage of Sample**</b>
Eviction	51	19.4
Release from Correctional Facility	19	7.2
Released from Program	34	12.9
Financial Difficulties/Cost of Housing	68	25.8
Other	69	26.2

\*\*Households can report more than one reason for loss of housing. Percentages may not equal 100.

Significant findings:

- The category “other” refers to persons who have not yet lost permanent housing but are at serious risk of imminently losing housing. This category includes households where domestic violence is present and the imminence of flight is great, and households with pending evictions and insufficient resources to move directly to another permanent housing unit.
- Financial reasons are the most often cited for a loss of permanent housing. Nearly twenty-six percent (26%) of households who are doubled up with family and friends, living in overcrowded situations, or living in another at-risk environment lost secure housing as a result of the high cost of housing while 19.4% lost secure housing as a result of eviction. Again, the disparity between income and housing costs appears to be, at least in part, responsible for the difficulties many families have in maintaining permanent housing.

**Table 2-10. History of Homelessness**

<b>History</b>	<b>Persons Reporting</b>	<b>Percentage of Sample</b>
Homeless less than 3 months	70	26.6
Homeless more than three months	148	56.3
Did not report length of time homeless	46	17.5
Household has previously been homeless	59	22.4

Significant findings:

- Over 56% of the respondents indicated that they had been displaced from permanent housing for more than six months. This number indicates that the affordable housing crisis in the Greater Norwalk Area is one with few quick remedies or solutions for displaced households.
- Slightly more than 22% of the households displaced from permanent housing had been homeless at least one other time. This number indicates that at-risk households have nearly a one in four chance of cycling in and out of serious housing crises. A similar cycle exists within the homeless populations.

**Table 2-11. Structure of Family Households**

Sixty-six (66) of the households at risk of becoming homeless are family households.

<b>Structure of Household</b>	<b>Persons Reporting</b>	<b>Percentage of Sample</b>
Children present	51	77.3
Children in other non-shelter housing	9	13.6
Do not report where children are presently	6	9.0

**Table 2-12. Family Size**

n=66 (family households)

<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Persons Reporting</b>	<b>Percentage of Sample</b>
1 child	32	48.5
2 children	20	30.3
3 children	13	19.7
4 children	1	1.5
5 children	0	0.0

**Table 2-13. Age of Children**

A total of 115 children live in families at risk of becoming homeless.

<b>Age, in Years</b>	<b>Persons Reporting</b>	<b>Percentage of Sample</b>
>1	1	<1.0
1	21	18.3
2	13	11.3
3	8	6.9
4	4	3.5
5	6	5.2
6	2	1.7
7	9	7.8
8	5	4.3
9	8	6.9
10	4	3.5
11	8	6.9
12	3	2.6
13	5	4.3
14	3	2.6
15	5	4.3
16	7	6.1
17	3	2.6
18	0	0.0

Significant findings:

- Nearly 30% of the children living in at-risk families are two years old or younger.



### 3.0 Comparative Statistics: 1997 to 1999

	1997 Survey	As percentage	1999 Survey	As percentage	Change
<b><u>Number of households</u></b>	190	**	273	**	
<b><u>Households by Ethnicity</u></b>					
Head of Household, White	70	36.84%	87	31.87%	-4.97%
Head of Household, Black	98	51.58%	134	49.08%	-2.49%
Head of Household, Hispanic	18	9.47%	43	15.75%	6.28%
Head of Household, Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0.00%	4	1.47%	1.47%
Head of Household, Native American	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0.00%
Other	0	0.00%	2	0.73%	0.73%
Not Reported	4	2.11%	3	1.10%	-1.01%
<b><u>Heads of Household by Gender</u></b>					
Male	128	67.37%	183	67.03%	-0.34%
Female	58	30.53%	90	32.97%	2.44%
Not reported	4	2.11%	0	0.00%	-2.11%
<b><u>Households by Special Needs</u></b>					
Mental Health	85	44.74%	110	40.29%	-4.44%
Drug/Alcohol Abuse Treatment	128	67.37%	157	57.51%	-9.86%
Mental Retardation	2	1.05%	5	1.83%	0.78%
Physically Disabled	11	5.79%	23	8.42%	2.64%
AIDS/HIV	8	4.21%	30	10.99%	6.78%
Emotional or Physically Abused	10	5.26%	26	9.52%	4.26%
Victim of Domestic Violence	7	3.68%	28	10.26%	6.57%
Dually Diagnosed	70	36.84%	76	27.84%	-9.00%
Vocational Rehabilitation	**	**	112	41.03%	**
<b><u>Households by Current Form of Shelter</u></b>					
Emergency Shelter	177	93.16%	217	79.49%	-13.67%
Street	25	13.16%	30	10.99%	-2.17%
Vacant Buildings	1	0.53%	9	3.30%	2.77%
Hospital or Treatment Facility	0	0.00%	22	8.06%	8.06%
Local jails	2	1.05%	7	2.56%	1.51%

**Households by Source of Income**

Employment	48	25.26%	80	29.30%	4.04%
General Assistance	16	8.42%	43	15.75%	7.33%
TFA	6	3.16%	8	2.93%	-0.23%
Social Security	9	4.74%	39	14.29%	9.55%
SSI	36	18.95%	40	14.65%	-4.30%
Unemployment Compensation	4	2.11%	2	0.73%	-1.37%
Other	7	3.68%	14	5.13%	1.44%
None	49	25.79%	67	24.54%	-1.25%

**Households by Reason for Housing Loss**

Eviction	51	26.84%	91	33.33%	6.49%
Financial Reasons	47	24.74%	69	25.27%	0.54%
Release from Correctional Facility	9	4.74%	34	12.45%	7.72%
Release from Treatment Program	12	6.32%	25	9.16%	2.84%
Fled Violence in the Home	7	3.68%	28	10.26%	6.57%
Other	25	13.16%	73	26.74%	13.58%

**History of Homelessness**

Homeless less than 3 months	57	30.00%	76	27.84%	-2.16%
Homeless more than 3 months	110	57.89%	190	69.60%	11.70%
Not reported	0	0.00%	7	2.56%	2.56%
Has previously been homeless	33	17.37%	99	36.26%	18.90%

**Number of Homeless Families**

Number of homeless families	13	**	49	**	**
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Number of homeless children in families	22	**	97	**	**
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**Size of homeless families**

1 child	7	53.85%	20	40.82%	-13.03%
2 children	5	38.46%	19	38.78%	0.31%
3 children	0	0.00%	7	14.29%	14.29%
4 children	0	0.00%	2	4.08%	4.08%
5 children	1	7.69%	1	2.04%	-5.65%

Average number of children in homeless families	2.7	**	2.0	**	**
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**Homeless Children by Age**

1	2	5.71%	12	12.37%	6.66%
2	1	2.86%	3	3.09%	0.24%
3	3	8.57%	7	7.22%	-1.35%
4	1	2.86%	7	7.22%	4.36%
5	4	11.43%	9	9.28%	-2.15%
6	2	5.71%	5	5.15%	-0.56%
7	0	0.00%	7	7.22%	7.22%
8	2	5.71%	6	6.19%	0.47%
9	0	0.00%	7	7.22%	7.22%
10	1	2.86%	5	5.15%	2.30%
11	1	2.86%	4	4.12%	1.27%
12	0	0.00%	5	5.15%	5.15%
13	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0.00%
14	1	2.86%	5	5.15%	2.30%
15	1	2.86%	6	6.19%	3.33%
16	1	2.86%	4	4.12%	1.27%
17	3	8.57%	5	5.15%	-3.42%
18	0	0.00%	1	1.03%	1.03%

## **Summary and Conclusions.**

Statistically, the typical homeless household is comprised of a single adult male. He is a non-Hispanic black male between the ages of 30 and 39 years. He is currently staying in emergency shelter. It is quite likely that he has at least one special need, such as for mental health services or alcohol or substance abuse treatment. If he is fortunate, he has a job. He is, however, almost as likely to have no source of income at all. He was likely displaced from previous housing as a result of eviction or an inability to pay the rent. He has probably been homeless for more than three months and there is greater than a one in three chance that he has been homeless at least once before.

It is critical, however, to note that although a “typical” homeless household can be derived statistically there is no typical homeless household. These households have a wide variety of critical needs, many of which need to be addressed in order to ensure successful placement in and retention of permanent housing. It is also critical to note that these needs -- for both the individual household and the community -- change over time.

As in 1997, approximately half of homeless households are those headed by non-Hispanic black individuals. Non-Hispanic white households comprise just under 32% of all homeless households, while Hispanic households account for almost sixteen percent. The percentage of homeless households headed by Hispanic individuals marks a significant increase from 1997, where Hispanic households accounted for just over 9% of the homeless population. This increase is, however, consistent with the continued increase in the Greater Norwalk Area’s total Hispanic population and the expanded access to bilingual/bicultural staff at many local agencies.

Mental health services, alcohol and substance abuse treatment and services for the dually diagnosed continue to be the top service needs among the Greater Norwalk Area’s homeless. It is important to note, however, that the percentage of homeless households reporting a need for each of these services declined from 1997 to 1999. This decline is likely the result of the expansion of existing supportive services and housing opportunities for these sub-populations during that two year period.

As the need for certain services decline, the need for other services increased. Survey data indicates that there is a growing need for services for persons with AIDS or HIV and for persons who are victims of domestic violence and other forms of emotional or physical abuse. For victims of domestic violence and other abuse, transitional housing is a primary need. For households with AIDS or HIV, permanent affordable housing is the primary need.

One common thread shared among all survey respondents was the inability to afford permanent housing. Nearly 60% of the respondents reported a regular stream of income through employment, Social Security or disability payments. Despite these fairly reliable and steady sources of income, the cost of market rate housing in the Greater Norwalk Area remains out of reach. The remaining 40% of respondents either had no income (24.5%) or had time-limited sources of income such as Temporary Assistance to Needy

Families (TANF), State-Administered General Assistance (SAGA) or unemployment compensation. Insufficient financial resources are also the primary reason why respondent households lost permanent housing.

Once households become homeless, it is difficult to break the cycle. Nearly 70% of the respondent households had been homeless for more than three months. In 1997, that figure was just under 58%. Further, once a household becomes homeless, there is a greater than one in three chance that that household will again become homeless.

Several conclusions can be drawn from this data:

- Regardless of family size or structure, source of income, specialized service needs or reason for loss of permanent housing, the high cost of housing in Norwalk and the surrounding communities places permanent housing out of the reach of many. For those persons with special needs or a reliance on public assistance or other government benefits, this gap between income and housing is even more critical.
- The high number of homeless households with special needs indicates that even though efforts have been made to develop subsidized housing for persons with special needs, additional dwelling units for this population are still needed in order to meet the demand. It is also worth noting that recent changes in public assistance eligibility requirements, the time-limited nature of public assistance and the elimination of SSI benefits to certain individuals may result in an increase in the number of special needs persons entering emergency shelter in the coming years.
- For every household that is homeless, there is another household at risk of becoming homeless. These at-risk households currently reside in substandard homes, in overcrowded units, or doubled up with family or friends. Solving the Greater Norwalk Area's homeless crisis, therefore, goes beyond finding permanent housing for those in shelters. Solving the crisis includes improving the quality and availability of existing housing, increasing the number and types of affordable housing units, and enhancing the affordability of housing for many low and moderate income households.



**Attachment B -- Process.**

**1999 Point-in-Time Survey of the Homeless  
Survey Timeline**

<b>WHAT</b>	<b>WHEN</b>	<b>WHO/HOW</b>
Volunteer Recruitment	January 1999	Lead agencies make contacts with local colleges, participating organizations and volunteer organizations to identify possible volunteers.
"Training the Trainers"	Week of February 7, 1999	Persons with experience in conducting the survey were selected and trained how to teach key community personnel to train others in survey implementation.
Volunteer Training	Week of February 14, 1999	First of four training sessions held.
Survey Distribution	March 5, 1999	Surveys mailed to all participating agencies in each participating Continuum of Care Area.
Survey Period	Week of March 15, 1999	Trained volunteers surveyed area homeless.
Survey Collection	Week of March 22, 1999	Participating agencies returned completed surveys to central location for quality control.
Survey Review/Quality Control	Week of March 29, 1999	Surveys examined to ensure completeness and to verify that all participating agencies had returned any completed forms.
Data Entry	Week of March 29, 1999	Volunteers entered survey data into a relational database.
Initial Analysis	Week of April 12, 1999	Entered data reviewed to ensure that each entry was complete and not duplicated. Run initial queries.
Preliminary Results	Week of April 26, 1999	First run of data (untested) shared with providers to help them in planning Supportive Housing Program applications.
Data Testing	Early May 1999	Test preliminary results and data.
Gaps Analysis	No later than week of May 24, 1999	Use tested survey data to complete Gaps Analysis Chart in Supportive Housing Program application.
Issuance of Report	No later than June 15, 1999	Distribute to participating agencies, media, elected officials and other interested parties.

## **Attachment C -- Roster of Participating Agencies**

\*\* Member, Advocates to End Homelessness

Alcohol & Drug Dependency Council  
American Red Cross - Mid-Fairfield Chapter  
Bread & Roses\*\*  
Catholic Family Services\*\*  
Children's Connection  
Christian Community Action  
Community Connections\*\*  
Connecticut Counseling  
Connecticut Renaissance  
Domestic Violence Crisis Center\*\*  
Family & Children's Agency\*\*  
F. S. Dubois Center\*\*  
Haitian Coalition for Advancement  
Hall-Brooke Hospital\*\*  
Homestead\*\*  
Human Services Council of Mid-Fairfield\*\*  
Interfaith Housing Association\*\*  
Keystone House\*\*  
LMG Programs, Inc. - Liberation/Meridien/Guenster\*\*  
Macedonia Church - AIDS Ministry  
Mid-Fairfield AIDS Project\*\*  
Mid-Fairfield Substance Abuse Coalition\*\*  
NEON\*\*  
Norwalk Emergency Shelter\*\*  
Norwalk Public Schools  
Norwalk Community Health Center  
Norwalk Department of Youth Services  
Norwalk Fair Housing Office\*\*  
Norwalk Health Department\*\*  
Norwalk Hospital\*\*  
Norwalk Housing Authority\*\*  
Norwalk Human Relations Commission\*\*  
Norwalk Police Department, Community Policing Division\*\*  
Norwalk Redevelopment Agency\*\*  
Norwalk Senior Center  
Norwalk Senior Services Coordinating Council  
Project Return  
Salvation Army\*\*  
Senior Services Coordinating Council  
South Norwalk Community Center  
State of Connecticut Department of Children & Families  
State of Connecticut Department of Social Services\*\*  
The Family Centers  
The Weed & Seed Program  
Westport Department of Social Services  
Wilton Department of Social Services