

South Central Assembly Pandemic Response Series Webinar 11

Homeless in the Pandemic

June 24, 2021



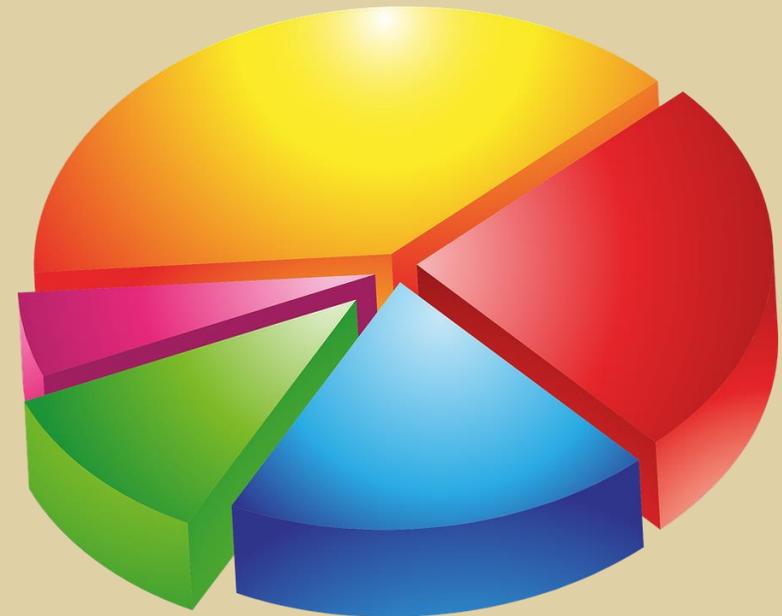
York County

**Coalition on
Homelessness**

York County Coalition on Homelessness is a collaborative of community partners, social service organizations and passionate volunteers who work together to help those facing homelessness across York County get connected to safe places to live and the vital resources they need.

York County at a Glance

- Annual Numbers (October 2019 – September 2020):
 - 2,050 individuals assisted (1,272 households)
 - 1,094 individuals served in emergency shelters (984 households)
- Point in Time
 - 2020 Sheltered: 312
 - 2020 Unsheltered: 58
 - 2021 Sheltered: 219
 - 2021 Unsheltered: 17*



*Pandemic – and federal financial support - impact



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Street Outreach



- First 'coordinated street outreach' project in York County began during the pandemic
 - Friends & Neighbors of Pennsylvania – new partner
- Began assisting individuals with navigating the 'shut down' in March 2020 and have continued to assist
- Assisted between 55-70 individuals each month
- Connection with UPMC Street Medicine (beginning in June 2021)
- Connection with York County Food Bank for food bags intentionally produced for those experiencing homelessness outdoors (no can openers or heating needed, softer food options, etc.)
- Challenges with urban and rural populations were similar: lack of 'in person' resources, lack of technology, people isolation and avoiding outreach for their own safety

Emergency Shelter



Pre-pandemic congregate space

- Emergency Shelters
 - Reduced capacity did not result in full capacity
 - Population shifted; less children in family shelters, more singles
 - Winter shelter need did not meet estimates
 - Opened 64 nights, served 63 unduplicated across 153 ‘bed nights’
 - Had capacity ready for 60 every night
- Policy changes and shifts in protocol for shelter staff and residents
- Hotel Usage – and it’s challenges
 - Difficult to maintain relationships with hotel partners for additional shelter space; stigma around the population served and the pandemic
 - Quarantine/Isolation use: partners challenging to maintain; difficult to maintain with ‘volunteer’ staff
 - Served 38 individuals from March 2020 – January 2021
- Best practices: communication & resource share, working with staff and health professionals to lessen concerns



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Direct Services



- Service change to virtual, learning curve for some with using technology, losing some with lack of technology access
 - 38% drop Coordinated Entry housing assessments from March 2020 to May 2020
- Reaching households & helped complete paperwork or find housing without in-person work
- Shifting back to in-person assistance
- Staffing challenges; keeping positions filled, keeping staff from burn out
- Best practices: validating, asking staff for suggestions on problem solving, providing education, and protective gear and asking clients what their comfort level includes

Landlords



- From unable to view units (no one allowed in), to no units available (eviction moratorium); housing market slow down
- Housing Navigator – Coalition staff to assist with housing most challenging from Coordinated Entry referrals
- Increasing engagement and opportunities to incentivize, including education on what accepting a subsidy means, mediation opportunities

Positive Impacts



- Increased communication & partnership between stakeholders
- Increased communication with other communities (regional problem-solving)
- Increased engagement with business partners
- Additional funding!
- New conversations around affordable housing
- New providers engaged (such as street outreach)
- Strengthened relationships between health and housing
- Respect & support for the work done within this sphere