RACIAL DISPARITIES ASSESSMENT AND REPORT - 2019

Midlands Area Consortium for the Homeless

Racial Disparity in People Experiencing Homelessness in the Midlands Area

Midlands Area Consortium for the Homeless (MACH) is the federally designated Continuum of Care for 13-counties in the central Midlands of South Carolina. MACH is a network of advocates, service providers and funders with the mission of expanding capacity to address Homelessness within the South Carolina counties of Aiken, Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Calhoun, Chester, Fairfield, Lancaster, Lexington, Newberry, Orangeburg, Richland and York.

In 2019, MACH's Data and Evaluation Committee examined data on racial disparities in people experiencing homelessness. The purpose of this data review is to better understands the population served with housing and service programs and examine disparities in service delivery.

Review of MACH's Data

To complete the analysis, MACH reviewed data from US Census estimates, 2018 Point-In-Time count (PIT), Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), the CoC Racial Equity Analysis Tool provided by HUD, and state agencies (Medicaid, Department of Social Services, Department of Juvenile Justice, State Law Enforcement Division, State Department of Education, Department of Mental Health). The PIT count is an annual assessment of the number of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons on a single day. The data allows communities to identify whether a person is an individual, a member of a family unit, or an unaccompanied youth. In addition, communities identify if a person is chronically homeless, indicating long-time or repeated homelessness and the presence of a disability along with demographic information. HMIS is a local information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness. The Racial Equity Analysis Tool is provided by HUD and designed to help CoC's identify racial disparities in the system. The tool is an overlay of the racial distributions of people living in poverty by race and ethnicity, age, and veteran status, sourced from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2011-2015 5-year estimates, and the most recent PIT count data. In 2018, the CoC conducted a needs assessment to better understand the contributing factors and dimensions of youth homelessness. This was completed by identifying a cohort of youth through HMIS, who were confirmed to be unaccompanied and literally homeless between 2014-2017. Through data use agreements and support from   the SC state data-warehouse, SC Medicaid, SC Department of Social Services (DSS), SC Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), State Department of Education (SDE), SC Department of Mental Health (DMH), and the State Law Enforcement Division (SLED), the assessment team received all data related to the cohort's lifetime engagement with each system and examined areas of inequity.

Findings
Racial Inequalities in Homelessness
As Table 1 and Table 2 below indicate, within the 13-counties of the MACH Continuum of Care, African Americans make up 32% of the general population, but more than 65% of the individuals experiencing homelessness during the 2018 Point-In-Time Count. African Americans are even more disproportionately overrepresented in families with children who are experiencing homelessness (general population 32%/experiencing homelessness 77%). Whites, Native American/Alaskans, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Other/Multi-Racial groups are all underrepresented in those experiencing homelessness when compared to the general population. When examining unsheltered homelessness in the 2018 PIT count, 100% of the

families with children who were unsheltered were African American. This disparity persists even in comparison to the population living below the poverty line. In MACH's 13-counties, 43% of all individuals living below the poverty line are white and 49% are African American. When examining disparities in ethnicity, data indicates there is not a significant difference in the ethnicity of the total population and of those experiencing homelessness. There is a slightly lower percent of Hispanic or Latino individuals experiencing homelessness when compared to the overall population.

These disparities were confirmed when reviewing the 'CoC Racial Equity Analysis Tool'. In MACH's data, 49% of all people living in poverty identified as black; however, among the people experiencing homelessness during the annual point-in-time count 66% identified as black. Further, 67% of people in the 2017 unsheltered count during were black. For families experiencing homelessness during the count 77% were black. These two data sources confirm Black/African Americans are overrepresented in the homeless population when compared to the general population.

Table 1. 2017 Population Estimates		
Total Population Race		
White	925,321	64.54%
Black or African American	476,569	33.24%
Asian	30,127	2.10%
American Indian and Alaska Native	20,877	1.46%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	1,627	0.11%
Some other race	24,344	1.70%
Not Known	19	0.00%
Total Population Ethnicity		
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	79,693	5.56%
Not Hispanic or Latino	1,354,159	94.44%

Source: American Community Survey 2017 1 -yr estimates

Table 2: 2018 Point-In-Time Count						
Race	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Total	% Sheltered	% Unsheltered	% Total
White	318	67	385	31.64%	33.50%	31.95%
Black or African American	663	128	791	65.97%	64.00%	65.64%
Asian	<10	0	<10	N/A	N/A	N/A
American Indian or Alaska Native	<10	0	<10	N/A	0.00%	N/A
Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	<10	0	<10	N/A	0.00%	N/A
Multiple races	15	<10	N/A	1.49%	N/A	1.66%
Total	1005	200	1205	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Ethnicity	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Total	% Sheltered	% Unsheltered	% Total
Hispanic or Latino	36	<10	41	3.58%	2.50%	3.40%
Not Hispanic/Latino	969	195	1164	96.42%	97.50%	96.60%

Source: 2018 Point in Time Count

Disparities for Youth In Transition
An additional finding is African American unaccompanied youth (homeless youth between 17-24 years of age) are disproportionately represented in the sheltered population when compared to white youth and their rates in the general population. African American unaccompanied youth make up nearly 60% of unaccompanied youth in a shelter, but only make up a little over 30% of all youth throughout the 13-counties. For unsheltered youth, there was an equal number of white and African American unaccompanied youth counted in the 2018 PIT Count, although the number of white youth compared to African American youth is 2 to 1.

The 2018 needs assessment of youth in transition uncovered additional areas of disparities including race and gender differences in data. Some, but not all, of those findings include:
- Of youth who became homeless after exiting foster care, 70% are AA, but only 41% of all youth in foster care are AA;
- Of youth who became homeless with an arrest 42% were female, but only 22% of all juvenile arrests are of females;
- Of the youth who were homeless, 48% had a diagnosed mental illness, while only 17.5% of youth have ever been treated for a mental illness in SC.

Research in Racial Disparities
In September 2016, The Center for Social Innovation launched SPARC (Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities) to understand and respond to racial inequities in homelessness. Through research and

action in six communities, SPARC has begun a national conversation about racial equity in the homelessness sector. March 2018, the Center for Social Innovation released SPARC's Phase One Study Findings.

SPARC's report found key domains Influencing homelessness for people of color identified through oral histories collected across the study's communities:

- Economic mobility – Lack of economic capital within social networks
- Housing – Unavailability of safe and affordable housing options
- Criminal Justice – Involvement in the criminal justice system, especially felonies, creating on-going challenges with employment and housing
- Behavioral Health – Experiencing higher rates of traumatic stress, mental health, and substance use.
- Family Stabilization – Involvement in the child welfare system

Strategies to Better Understand Data and Improve Services

The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness identified, in an October 2017 policy article, strategies communities were implementing to better understand data and implement policies to improve access to housing and services for all people.

Strategies Identified:

- Use demographic data from the most recent census to map the racial profile of their community and then compare it to HMIS data to understand who is experiencing homelessness at disproportionate rates in their community

- Report on staff and board diversity compared to population experiencing homelessness and develop diversification goals

- Develop data-driven goals for including people of color with lived experience of homelessness into planning efforts

- Analyze data to determine if equitable permanent housing outcomes are being achieved and identify if there are ethnic or racial groups who are less likely to be exiting to permanent housing

- Integrate person-centered data to build out an understanding of service utilization patterns and the connection between those patterns and housing placements and/or other outcomes; use these data points to inform planning and resource allocation

- Map the points of entry and precipitating causes of homelessness and assess whether there are significant differences among people of color

- Geographically map where people experiencing homelessness live, work, or spend their time to ensure that place-based investments in outreach, services, and housing opportunities are equitably reaching people of color

- Identify systemwide goals to drive progress toward equity and identify data points to measure progress toward those goals

- Regularly review data, assess impact, and refine and strengthen strategies and activities

Recommendations for MACH

Through the systematic review of existing data and the literature on evidence-based methods to address disparities, the following strategies are recommended for adoption to encourage a homelessness system that is more representative of the community served:

- By the end of 2019, complete a survey of all MACH partners to gauge diversity in leadership, review equal access policies, and explore how people of color are involved in planning.

- By the end of 2022, constitute the CoC Board of Directors have equal representation of people of color, compared to the 13-county demographics.

- Annually, the MACH Membership and Training Committee will host cultural competency training for MACH members that includes content on underlying, systemic issues contributing to racial disparities in housing.

- By the end of 2020, monitor HUD funded CoC and ESG funded projects on their efforts to mitigate racial disparities in the provision and outcomes of homeless assistance.

- Annually, review data to assess trends in housing and homelessness related to disparities in access to services and those exiting to permanent housing, to minimally include an examination of racial, ethnic, and LGBTQ+.

For more information about this report contact Andy Pope: apope@uway.org