2017 Community Needs Assessment for AL-501

Mobile County is the second most-populous county in the state of Alabama, where Baldwin County serves as the largest county in the State of Alabama. As of 2015, the total population for the combined counties was 619,104 people. The average median income (AMI) for Mobile County is $33,710 annually, with Baldwin County's AMI at $40,250. In 2015, 18.50% of the families residing in Mobile County lived below the poverty line, while 8% of the population residing in Baldwin Co. were below the poverty line. These figures result in an estimated 91,067 individuals and families at risk for homelessness or currently facing homelessness. Mobile and Baldwin County have a shortage in safe and affordable housing. Additionally the Mobile Housing Board in an effort to redevelop several of their projects will be closing 4 of their housing projects, one of which is a senior living facility. The closing of these four facilities will result in the loss of over 1700 units of subsidized housing for low income families and senior citizens.
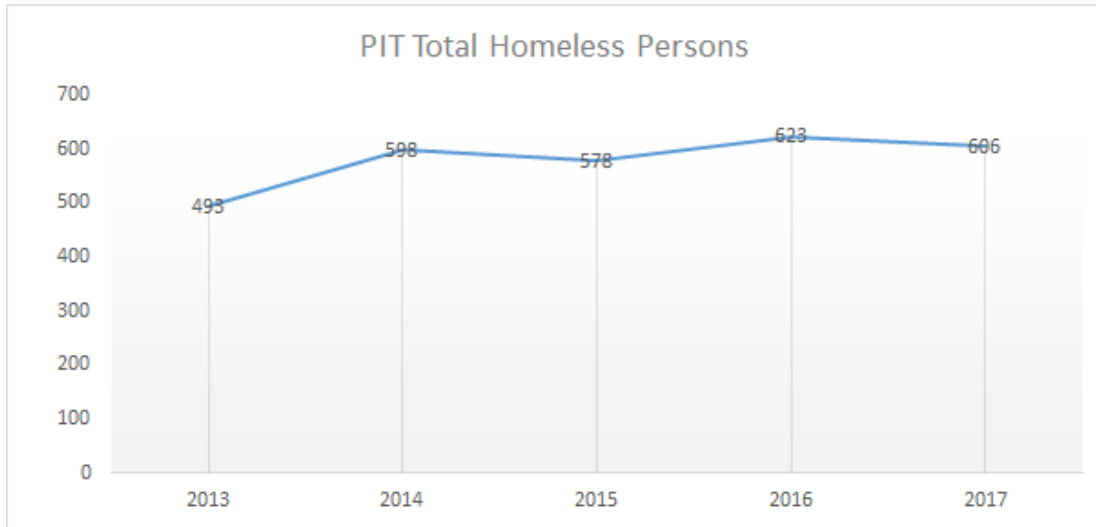
According to Out of Reach 2017, a report released by the National Low Income Housing Coalition, the entire state of Alabama has a shortage of affordable housing for the average renter. The report also indicates that rental housing is more expensive in Mobile and Baldwin Counties in comparison to the average for the state of Alabama, while the average wage of renters for the area is slightly less than the state average. Additionally within the City of Mobile the average 1 bedroom unit costs $686 per month, which amounts to 41% of the monthly AMI. This creates an environment where households and individuals are often paying more than they can reasonably afford for rental housing and are more likely to lose housing due to non-payment of rent. Almost all homeless families and individuals lack sufficient income to pay rent on an ongoing basis, particularly given the extremely high cost of market-rate housing within the two counties. In this context, subsidizing rent and related housing costs is key to enabling homeless families and individuals secure and retain permanent housing. Without the assistance of ESG, many seeking housing assistance would not be able to gain access to suitable housing.

The homeless crisis in Mobile and Baldwin County has slightly increased from the previous year with those individuals residing on the street, as evidence by the annual Point in Time Count, Project Homeless Connect and data collected through the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and the Coordinated Entry Process. This situation requires an urgent, coordinated response from the local governments and community partners throughout our catchment area.
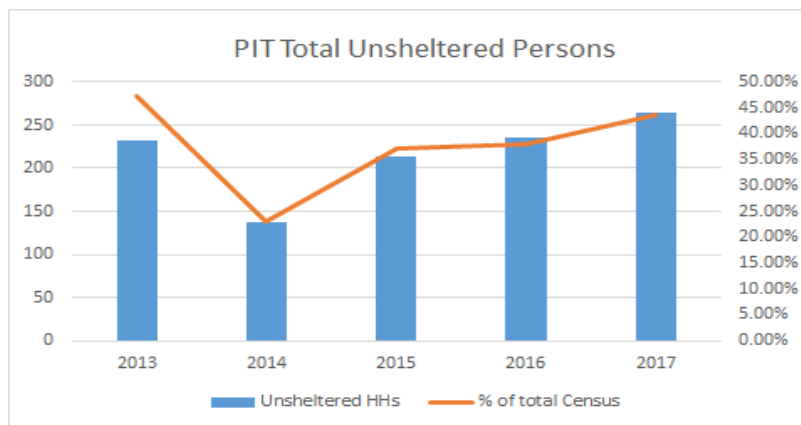
Point in Time Count

CoC AL-501 conducted its most recent annual Point-in-Time (PIT) count for the night of January 24, 2017. Information regarding sheltered homeless was collected from the HMIS and from emergency shelter and transitional housing providers not participating in the HMIS for all beds reported on the 2017 Housing Inventory Chart (HIC). Volunteer teams canvassed both Mobile and Baldwin Counties, on January 25, 2017, surveying persons in outdoor locations. Additional surveys were conducted during the communities annual Project Homeless Connect event, a
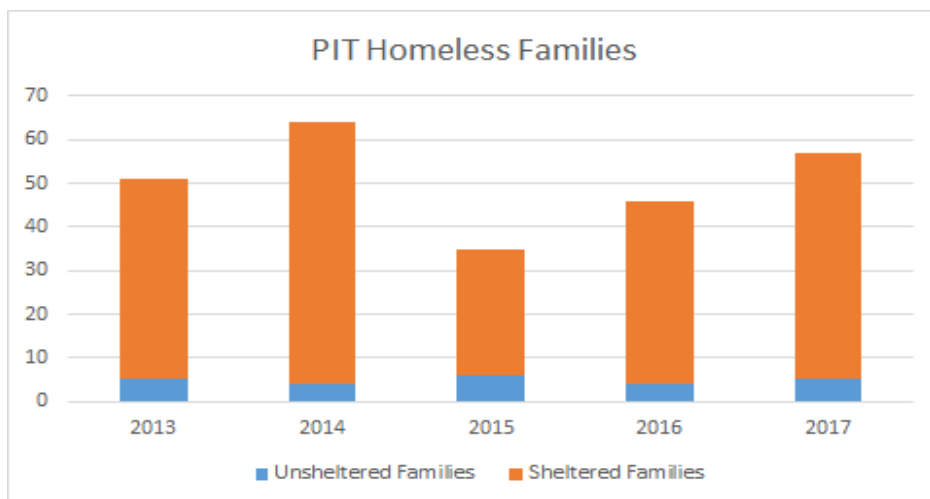
service fair involving 41 individual service providers, which saw over 300 participants on January 27, 2017.

The 2017 Point-in-Time Count identified 606 homeless persons. Although this is a modest decrease from 2016, it is still above the previous 3 years levels, as seen in the chart above. Additionally both the number and percentage of unsheltered persons increased over 2016 from 236 (37%) to 265 (44%) as seen in the chart below. The overwhelming majority of unsheltered homeless persons (93%) were in households with no children, which is consistent with information gathered through the coordinated entry system over the last calendar year.

Homelessness among families with children continues to be an issue for the community though a smaller percentage of the homeless population than households with no children. While the PIT number of unsheltered homeless families has remained relatively consistent at around 5 households for the last 5 years, the number of sheltered families has inched up over the last 3 years from the communities 10 year low of 29 in 2015 to 52 in 2017.

PIT Homeless Families

In the 2017 PIT Count 65 persons reported that they met HUD's definition for chronic homelessness, which is the lowest chronic homeless count in the last 5 years, and down from 80 persons in 2016. However, the percentage of chronic homeless that were unsheltered increased from 63% in 2016 to 86% in 2017. Please note that PIT counts of chronically homeless may be higher than actual because they are self-reported.

Coordinated Entry (Coordinated Assessment System)

In the 2016 calendar year 1,585 households (2,726 persons) were assessed by the local CoC's Coordinated Entry provider, Community Connections Network (CCN). Of those households 71% (1,131) were households with no minor children, while 27% (432) were households with at least one minor child. Additionally, 63% of persons in adult only households reported no disabling condition. The project maintained a waitlist of an average of 575 households during 2016. The system currently (as of July 5, 2017) has a waitlist of 453 households of which 82% (373) are adult only households, 80% of which reported no disability.

The current CoC homeless assistance system for the area contains multiple housing interventions, including permanent supportive housing, rapid re-housing, transitional housing and prevention. Almost all of these interventions target specific sub-populations including the chronically homeless, disabled homeless, families with children, youth, veterans and victims of domestic violence. As a result, individuals and adult only households with no disability often remain on the coordinated entry waiting list for long periods of time.

System Performance Measures

CoC AL-501 submitted System Performance Measure reports to HUD in May 2017 for FY2016 (year ending 9/30/2016). The reports showed a modest decrease in the number of persons entering the system for the first time (1st time homeless) from 1,748 in FY2015 to 1,740 in 2016, but showed an increase in the number of persons who accessed emergency shelter and

transitional housing beds from 2,318 in 2015 to 2,392 in 2016. These numbers indicate that the community continues to see a great need for homeless services.

Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR)

The Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) is a report to the U.S. Congress on the extent and nature of homelessness in the United States. It provides counts of people experiencing homelessness and describes their demographic characteristics and service use patterns. The AHAR is based on local data from Point-in-Time (PIT) counts, Housing Inventory Counts (HIC), and Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS). AL-501 submitted an AHAR to HUD on 12/16/2016 for the year ending 09/30/2016. Below are some of the data reported.

- Emergency Shelters for families with children (not including DV) served 297 people in 89 households. These beds tracked in HMIS had an average bed utilization of 83% for 59 year round beds.

- The one HMIS participating transitional housing program for families served 106 persons in 33 households and had an average bed utilization rate of 72% for their 61 year round beds.

- Emergency Shelters for adults (not including DV) served a total of 2,102 persons and had an average bed utilization of 68%.

These numbers again confirm the continued need for homeless assistance programs in the community. Please note that the lower utilization rate for adult shelter beds is due to limits imposed by the emergency shelters on the number of nights an individual can occupy a shelter bed in a month and should not be attributed to a lack of need. For example a single male homeless in our CoC can only access emergency shelter for a maximum of 20 nights the first month, and 13 nights a month after that. And that is if they utilize both emergency shelters in the CoC.

Summary

All reports and analysis indicate that there continues be a need for homeless assistance programs in the Mobile and Baldwin county community. The homeless assistance system that is addresses the needs of many in our homeless population. However there continues to be a gap in services for adults with no disability, that it appears would be best filled by short to medium term rental assistance in addition to an increase in the areas affordable housing stock.