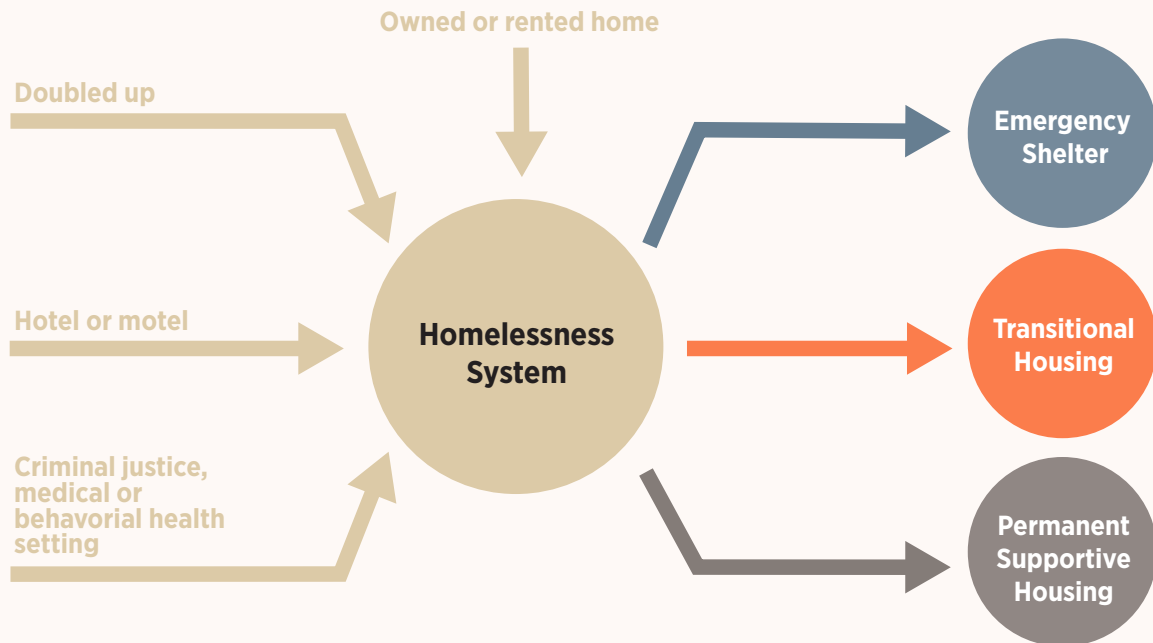


Families Involved in the Allegheny County Homelessness System



August 2015



The Allegheny County
Department of Human Services
One Smithfield Street
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15222

PHONE 412.350.5701
FAX 412.350.4004
www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs

ANALYSIS AND CONTENT

Ryan Burger, Abigail Horn, Brian Bell and Erin Dalton

EDITOR

Evelyn Whitehill

REVIEWERS

Andy Halfhill, Kathryn Holko, Kyle Jennison, Charles Keenan, Michael Lindsay and Michael Yonas

Allegheny County Department of Human Services

This report was prepared by the Office of Data Analysis, Research and Evaluation (DARE), an office within the Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) that supports policy development, quality improvement, planning and decision-making through research, analysis and engagement. DARE reports are available for viewing and download at www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/resarch.aspx. For more information about this publication or about DHS's research agenda, please email dhs-research@alleghenycounty.us.

DHS is dedicated to meeting the human services needs of county residents, particularly the most vulnerable populations, through an extensive range of prevention, intervention, crisis management and after-care services. To learn more about DHS and available services, visit the DHS website at www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/index.aspx or call **412-350-5701 (TDD 412-473-2017)**.

© 2015 Allegheny County DHS
Published 2015 by Allegheny County DHS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Glossary	<i>iv</i>
Tables and Figures	<i>vi</i>
Key Findings	<i>1</i>
Introduction	<i>2</i>
Methodology	<i>2</i>
Demographics of Family Members	<i>3</i>
Service Usage Dynamics	<i>5</i>
2009 First-Entry Cohort	<i>7</i>
Living Situation Prior to System Entry	<i>8</i>
Point of Entry	<i>9</i>
Length of Stay and Movement within the System	<i>10</i>
Re-Entry	<i>13</i>
Pre- and Post-Entry Service Involvement	<i>14</i>

GLOSSARY

Acronyms

DHS	[Allegheny County] Department of Human Services
HMIS	Homeless Management Information System
HUD	[United States Department of] Housing and Urban Development
PIT	Point-in-Time Count
PSH	Permanent Supportive Housing
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
TH	Transitional Housing

Definitions

Family — A family is defined as one adult and at least one other adult (spouse/partner) and/or child.

Homeless Episode — For purposes of this report, re-entry into a program within the system within 30 days of exit from a previous entry was considered a single homeless episode.

Program Definitions

Entry into/exit from the following three program types were analyzed:

Emergency Shelter Services (shelter) — Shelters provide temporary housing and support for individuals or families who are in immediate need of a place to stay. Most shelters cap their stays at 60 days and have few limitations on admission criteria (extensions beyond 60 days may be granted if a housing opportunity is imminent). Allegheny County has 18 emergency shelters (including three shelters for victims of intimate partner violence) plus a severe weather emergency shelter that operates from November through March. Seven of these shelters (123 beds) serve families with children.

Glossary*(continued)*

Transitional Housing (TH) — Transitional Housing provides temporary (maximum of two years) housing combined with supportive services designed to assist the individual/family in gaining self-sufficiency and permanent housing upon program completion. Transitional Housing programs may tailor their supports to specific sub-populations such as individuals in recovery from substance abuse, ex-offenders or veteran families, and may have specific eligibility criteria that clients are required to meet prior to enrollment. Included in Transitional Housing programs are bridge and PennFree bridge housing programs, which follow a similar program model but allow for a maximum length of stay of one year as opposed to two years. Allegheny County has 57 transitional housing programs (591 beds); 25 of the programs serve families with children.

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) — Permanent Supportive Housing combines housing with more intensive services for those with one or more chronic disabling conditions, and does not have a limit on length of stay. Some PSH programs follow the Housing First model in which chronically homeless individuals with a permanent disability can enter the program directly from living on the street without preconditions, while other PSH programs require that clients meet certain criteria and exhibit a commitment to the program's principles (often called a "housing ready" model). Forty-five PSH programs are located in Allegheny County; 30 of these programs dedicate all or part of the program (1,193 beds) to families. Recent changes to federal regulations allow PSH access to families in which any member has a diagnosed permanent disability.

TABLES AND FIGURES

Tables

- TABLE 1: Demographics of Adults in Families Accessing the Homelessness System, 2009 through 2013 4
- TABLE 2: Demographics of Children in Families Accessing the Homelessness System, 2009 through 2013 5
- TABLE 3: Families Accessing Homelessness Services, by Service Type, 2009 through 2013 6
- TABLE 4: Demographics of Adults in 2009 First-Entry Cohort 7
- TABLE 5: Demographics of Children in 2009 First-Entry Cohort 8
- TABLE 6: System Re-Entry by Service Type at Entry (Adults in Families) 14

Figures

- FIGURE 1: Family Bed Capacity by Program Type, 2005 through 2013 6
- FIGURE 2: Prior Living Arrangement and First Point of Entry for 2009 Entry Cohort 9
- FIGURE 3: First Entry by Service Type, Adults in Families, 2009 through 2013 10
- FIGURE 4: 2009 First-Entry Cohort Exit Outcomes and Length of Stay (in Days), Shelter as First Entry 11
- FIGURE 5: 2009 First-Entry Cohort Exit Outcomes and Length of Stay (in Months), TH as First Entry 12
- FIGURE 6: 2009 First-Entry Cohort Exit Outcomes and Length of Stay (in Months), PSH as First Entry 13
- FIGURE 7: First Service Involvement for 2009 First-Entry Cohort Adults, Relative to First Entry 15
- FIGURE 8: First Service Involvement for 2009 First-Entry Cohort Children, Relative to First Entry 16

KEY FINDINGS

- From 2009 through 2013, the number of families accessing emergency shelter increased by approximately 30 percent, from 175 to 227 families. The number accessing transitional housing increased by 65 percent and the number living in Permanent Supportive Housing more than doubled.
- Families with children ages five and under were slightly over-represented in the homelessness system when compared to the population of Allegheny County while children ages 12 through 17 were under-represented.
- Forty percent of all families entering emergency shelter for the first time in 2009 left on their own within two weeks and more than half exited the system within three weeks of entering. The vast majority never re-entered the system.
- The average length of stay in shelter increased by nearly three weeks, from an average of 21 days in 2005 to an average of 41 days in 2013.
- Families entering transitional housing as a first placement in 2009 on average stayed for 10 months prior to exit. Fewer than half of these 61 families remained engaged in the system for more than eight months.
- Only 14 families (slightly less than six percent) of the 2009 entry cohort re-entered the homelessness system within two years of exiting. These female-headed households averaged 15 months between exit and re-entry. This re-entry rate is much lower than that observed among individuals.
- Both adults and children in families show high levels of involvement in human services prior to entry into the homelessness system, particularly in the child welfare and mental health systems.

INTRODUCTION

In 2014, the Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) conducted a review of its homelessness services system as a first step in planning for and promoting effective strategies for reducing homelessness. The review included a variety of components, including a qualitative review of the experience of homelessness from the client perspective and an analysis of Allegheny County's Point-in-Time (PIT) count of individuals and families. Data were analyzed to identify client demographic characteristics as well as service entry and exit trends. This report provides information about the population of families experiencing a housing crisis in Allegheny County from 2009 through 2013, with a particular focus on the 2009 entry cohort. Information about individuals accessing the homelessness system is provided in a companion report.

METHODOLOGY

Data Sources

Allegheny County's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Homeless Management Information System is an information system used to collect client-level data about all adults and children entering Allegheny County's homelessness system. These data are used to measure program performance, allocate funding, coordinate services, conduct service reviews and track client progress across the array of services available in the system. Some information (e.g., veteran status, income or disability) is self-reported, although Transitional Housing (TH) and Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) programs typically require verification of these data. Additional data about bed capacity were available in the Allegheny County Housing Inventory Chart.

Data Warehouse

The Department of Human Services Data Warehouse is a central repository of social services data, which allows DHS to track and report client demographic and service data across its program offices and beyond. The Data Warehouse contains approximately 1.25 billion records for more than one million distinct clients. It contains data from 29 data sources (internal and external to DHS) including child welfare, behavior health, school systems, family support centers, criminal justice system and public benefits.

Target Population

This report focuses on family households in which a head of household is accompanied by a child or other adult.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF FAMILY MEMBERS

In 2013, 2,515 family members (1,030 adults and 1,485 children) in 898 families accessed services in the Allegheny County homelessness system. Families accounted for approximately 40 percent of the total population accessing homelessness services. An additional 282 families consisting of 292 adults and 547 children accessed shelter and housing services at one of three domestic violence shelters in the county, but client-level data for these families are not recorded in HMIS, so these 282 families were not included in the analysis.

The vast majority of families had a female head of household, and females were over-represented by nearly 30 percent when compared to the general adult population of Allegheny County. African American-headed families accounted for 60 percent of families served over the five-year period, a rate nearly five times greater than that of the African American population in Allegheny County. This disproportionality was greatest in emergency shelter services, where more than 70 percent of all adults in families served were African American. Approximately five percent of adults in families were veterans, and 20 percent of all family members (seven percent of children and 39 percent of adults) had a permanent physical or mental health disability.

While the number of family members accessing homelessness services increased by more than 400 adults and more than 500 children over the five-year period¹, the overall demographic characteristics of this population remained quite constant. **Table 1** details race, gender and age of adults in the families that accessed services from 2009 through 2013.²

¹ An increase in the number of clients served in the homelessness service system is largely attributable to an increase in system capacity, which provided the opportunity for additional families to access services, rather than an overall increase in the number of families experiencing a housing crisis in Allegheny County.

² Annual figures are unduplicated, but when enrollments extend for more than one year, client counts are duplicated across multiple years.

TABLE 1: Demographics of Adults in Families Accessing the Homelessness System, 2009 through 2013

³ Rates for the Allegheny County population are taken from the 2010 Census.

CATEGORIES	DESCRIPTION	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	ALLEGHENY COUNTY ³
GENDER	MALE	88	82	104	139	182	462,137
		15%	14%	15%	16%	18%	47%
	FEMALE	501	511	588	713	848	519,548
		85%	86%	85%	84%	82%	53%
RACE	AFRICAN AMERICAN	348	353	421	509	603	116,309
		59%	60%	61%	60%	59%	12%
	WHITE	177	182	213	286	364	822,357
		30%	31%	31%	34%	35%	84%
	OTHER	2	6	18	24	37	43,019
		0%	1%	3%	3%	4%	4%
	NO DATA	62	52	40	33	26	0
		11%	9%	6%	4%	3%	0%
AGE	18-24	124	114	123	140	183	123,613
		21%	19%	18%	16%	18%	13%
	25-34	179	191	246	300	367	157,549
		30%	32%	36%	35%	36%	16%
	35-44	161	168	192	234	272	145,894
		27%	28%	28%	27%	26%	15%
	45-54	103	93	110	135	160	186,865
		17%	16%	16%	16%	16%	19%
	55-64	18	22	19	40	43	162,705
		3%	4%	3%	5%	4%	17%
	65+	4	5	2	3	5	205,059
		1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	21%
Total		589	593	692	852	1,030	981,685

Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%.

The number of children accessing homelessness services in Allegheny County increased by more than 500 during the study period. However, demographic characteristics remained largely unchanged, with African American children accounting for slightly more than 60 percent of all children, and boys and girls equally represented. Children ages six through 11 increased as a proportion of the population in the system, while older children (ages 12 through 17) slightly decreased as a proportion. Children five and under were slightly over-represented when compared to the general population of Allegheny County while children ages 12 through 17 were under-represented.

TABLE 2: Demographics of Children in Families Accessing the Homelessness System, 2009 through 2013

⁴ Allegheny County population counts are taken from the 2010 Census.

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	ALLEGHENY COUNTY ⁴
GENDER	MALE	465	486	549	693	758	123,513
		50%	50%	52%	52%	51%	51%
	FEMALE	464	493	514	647	727	118,150
		50%	50%	48%	48%	49%	49%
RACE	AFRICAN AMERICAN	571	637	676	838	898	45,552
		61%	65%	64%	63%	60%	19%
	WHITE	192	197	252	331	401	174,938
		21%	20%	24%	25%	27%	72%
	OTHER	42	44	79	131	156	21,173
		5%	4%	7%	10%	11%	9%
NO DATA	124	101	56	40	30	0	
	13%	10%	5%	3%	2%	0%	
AGE	5 AND UNDER	375	387	405	555	598	76,283
		40%	40%	38%	41%	40%	32%
	6-11	263	282	325	397	468	78,719
		28%	29%	31%	30%	32%	32%
	12-17	242	243	253	301	326	86,661
		26%	25%	24%	22%	22%	36%
	18+ ⁵	49	67	80	87	93	N/A
		5%	7%	8%	6%	6%	N/A
Total		929	979	1,063	1,340	1,485	241,663

⁵ While these individuals age 18 and over are technically adults, they are included here because they sought service with a parent. They are part of a family and are not the head of household.

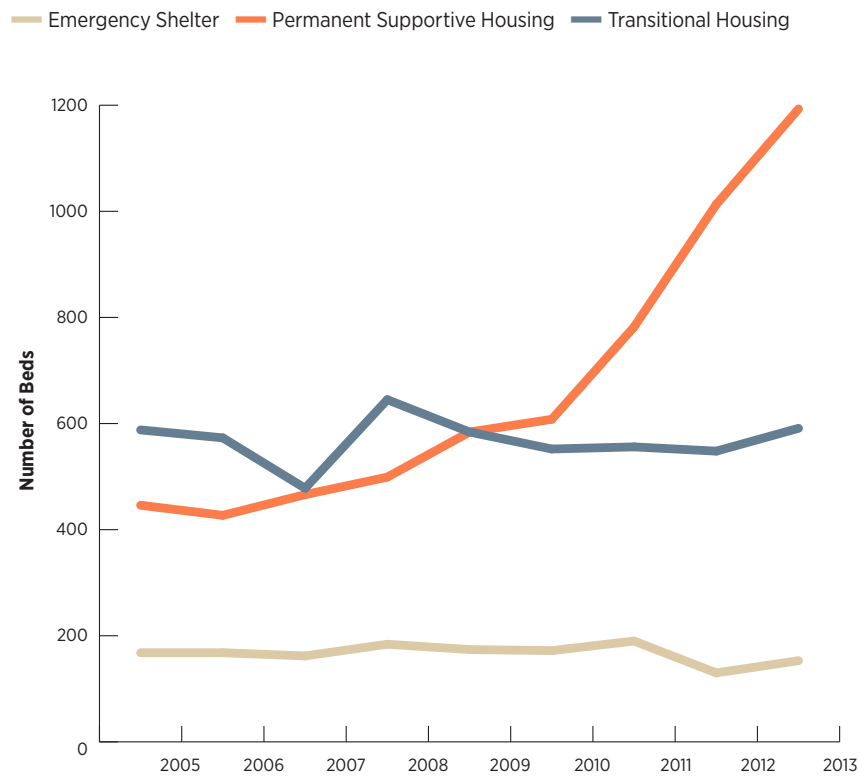
Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%.

SERVICE USAGE DYNAMICS

The number of beds available to serve families experiencing a housing crisis increased by more than 700 since 2005, funded primarily through competitive U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grants. The increase in permanent supportive housing beds and decrease in emergency shelter beds is reflective of national and local priorities to prevent and reduce homelessness whenever possible and to provide intensive supports and housing to the most vulnerable families. However, it should be noted that PSH's low turnover rate, due to its unlimited length of stay, means that families who might be appropriate for that level of service often enter emergency shelters instead because of the ease of access and greater availability.

⁶ Data are from the Allegheny County Housing Inventory Chart. Bed capacity excludes seasonal and overflow beds, Safe Haven beds and HPRP-funded beds available from 2009 through 2012.

FIGURE 1: Family Bed Capacity by Program Type, 2005 through 2013⁶



From 2009 through 2013, the number of PSH beds for families doubled; since 2005, it nearly tripled. Correspondingly, the number of families served in PSH programs more than doubled since 2009. While the increase in family members served in emergency shelter settings represents the smallest rate of increase across all service types, it still increased by approximately 30 percent from 2009 through 2013.

⁷ Figures are duplicated by service type in instances where families accessed multiple service types in a given year.

TABLE 3: Families Accessing Homelessness Services, by Service Type, 2009 through 2013⁷

SERVICE TYPE	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Emergency Shelter	175	143	163	171	227
Transitional Housing	280	308	290	362	382
Permanent Supportive Housing	231	271	346	445	489
Unduplicated Total	541	563	622	762	898

2009 FIRST-ENTRY COHORT

Choosing an entry cohort and following the movement of its members through the homelessness system allows us to describe when, where and for how long families accessed services. It is also an important measure of emerging need since it excludes those families who have accessed multiple services over time, or who have experienced long periods of enrollment in the system.

This analysis follows the entry cohort of families who entered the system for the first time in 2009. In 2009, 624 family members (239 adults and 385 children) entered the homelessness system for the first time; 134 adults in families entered shelter, 61 adults in families entered directly into TH and 44 adults in families entered PSH as their first point of access.

The demographic composition of the 2009 first-entry cohort closely resembled the overall composition of all families accessing the homelessness services system. However, both adults and children in the first-entry cohort tended to be younger than those in families who either entered prior to 2009 or who re-entered the system during this time frame, with adults 18 through 24 and children one through five accounting for proportionately larger shares than that of the overall family population of families in the system. Sixteen percent of adults and two percent of children in this entry cohort had a disability, and just one percent of adults were veterans.

TABLE 4: Demographics of Adults in 2009 First-Entry Cohort (N = 239)

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	COUNT	PERCENT
GENDER	Female	208	87%
	Male	31	13%
RACE	African American	150	63%
	White	72	30%
	Other	2	1%
	No Data	15	6%
AGE	18-24	65	27%
	25-34	87	36%
	35-44	69	29%
	45-54	15	6%
	55-64	3	1%

Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%.

TABLE 5: Demographics of Children in 2009 First-Entry Cohort (N = 385)

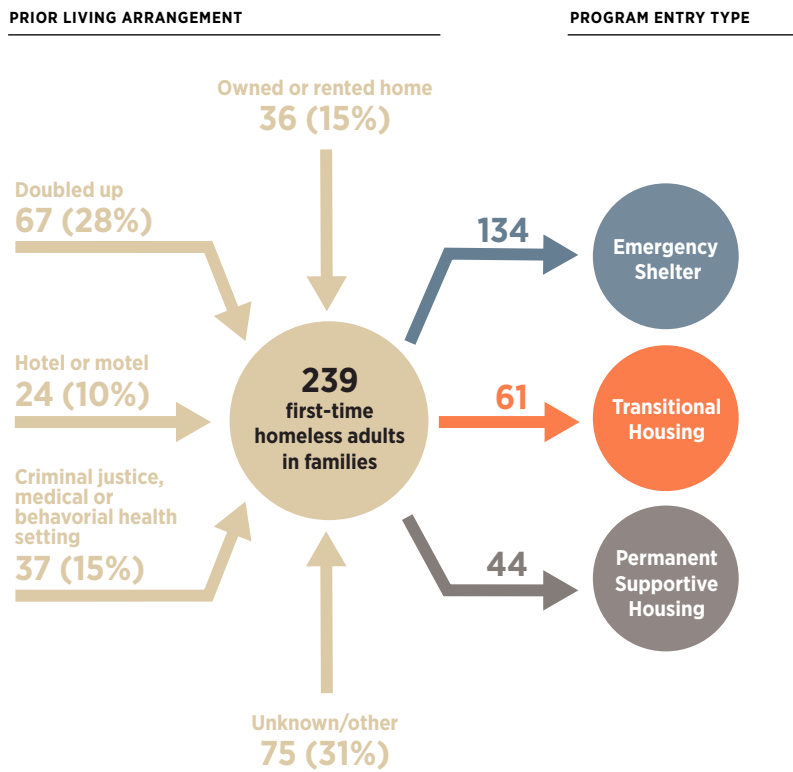
CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	COUNT	PERCENT
GENDER	Female	208	54%
	Male	177	46%
RACE	African American	254	66%
	White	83	22%
	Other	12	3%
	No Data	36	9%
AGE	5 and under	202	52%
	6-11	97	25%
	12-17	83	22%
	18 and over	3	1%

Living Situation Prior to System Entry

Due to the nature of shelter entry and resulting inconsistencies in data collection, data about prior living situation are not available for about one-third of families entering shelter. However, we can learn something about living situations prior to homelessness from the two-thirds of shelter entry data available as well as more complete data from those entering TH and PSH.

As shown in **Figure 2**, which shows prior living arrangements for these families, approximately 28 percent entered from a “doubled-up” situation with family or friends, 15 percent entered from their own home/apartment, and 15 percent came from an institutional setting. Since 2009, however, the percentage of families entering the system from situations in which they were living “doubled-up” with friends or family increased; by 2013, it accounted for 35 percent of families for whom prior living situation was known.

FIGURE 2: Prior Living Arrangement and First Point of Entry for 2009 Entry Cohort



Point of Entry

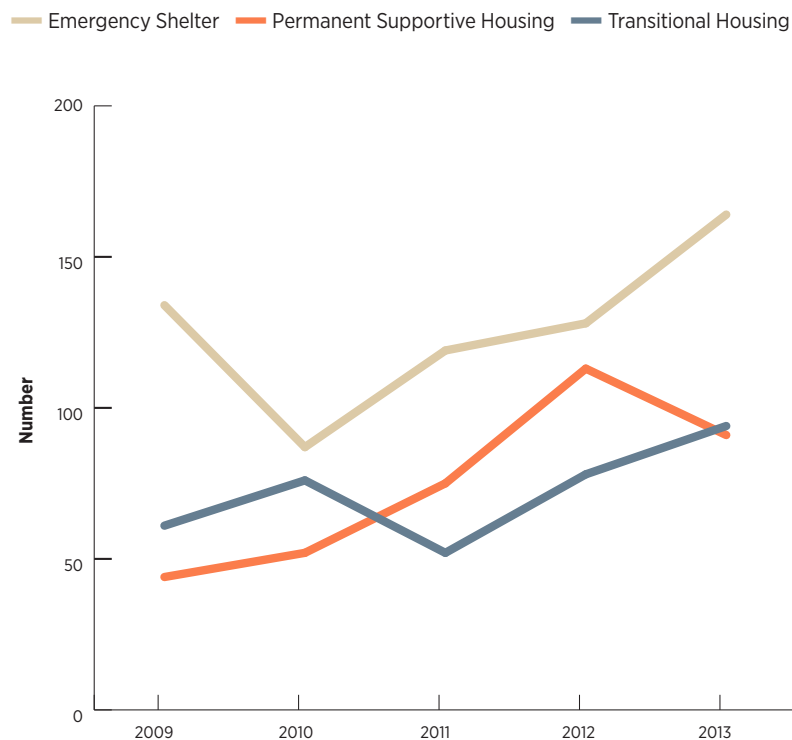
Figure 2 also shows that slightly more than half of the first-entry cohort entered shelter as a first point of entry, while approximately one in four families entered TH and one in five families entered PSH.

By way of comparison, Figure 3 details the service types accessed by families at initial entry into the homelessness system through 2013. While shelter continued to be the service type most frequently accessed by first-time entrants, the number of those entering PSH as a first placement more than doubled since 2009, and the number of families entering TH increased by approximately 50 percent over the same time period. The 2009 entry cohort varied significantly from first-entry cohorts in other years, with greater counts of families entering emergency shelters than any other year until 2013; it also included the fewest families entering PSH.

The differences between years may be due to more than one factor. For example, more families may have entered directly into PSH because of an increase in Housing First as a model and because there was an increase in PSH capacity due to HUD priorities. It should also be noted that some of the first entry into TH may reflect the way in which placements were made prior to implementation of Allegheny County’s coordinated intake system (i.e., a family would be placed in the first available setting for which it was eligible). In response to recent changes to federal

regulations, Allegheny County has designed and implemented a coordinated intake and assessment system centralized within DHS. The new system is designed to simplify the process of accessing services, reduce barriers to access and provide insight into system-wide issues such as the number of referral denials and other gaps in services. The introduction of a validated vulnerability assessment will also improve referrals to the most appropriate type of service, based upon need rather than exclusively upon availability.

FIGURE 3: First Entry by Service Type, Adults in Families, 2009 through 2013



Length of Stay and Movement within the System

The following sections explore what happened to cohort families up to two years following first entry, by initial service type.⁸ Each family could follow one of three paths following initial enrollment:

- continued enrollment in the same service type
- exit from the system
- continued involvement in the system but in another service type

⁸ This section does not address re-entry after the first episode of homelessness.

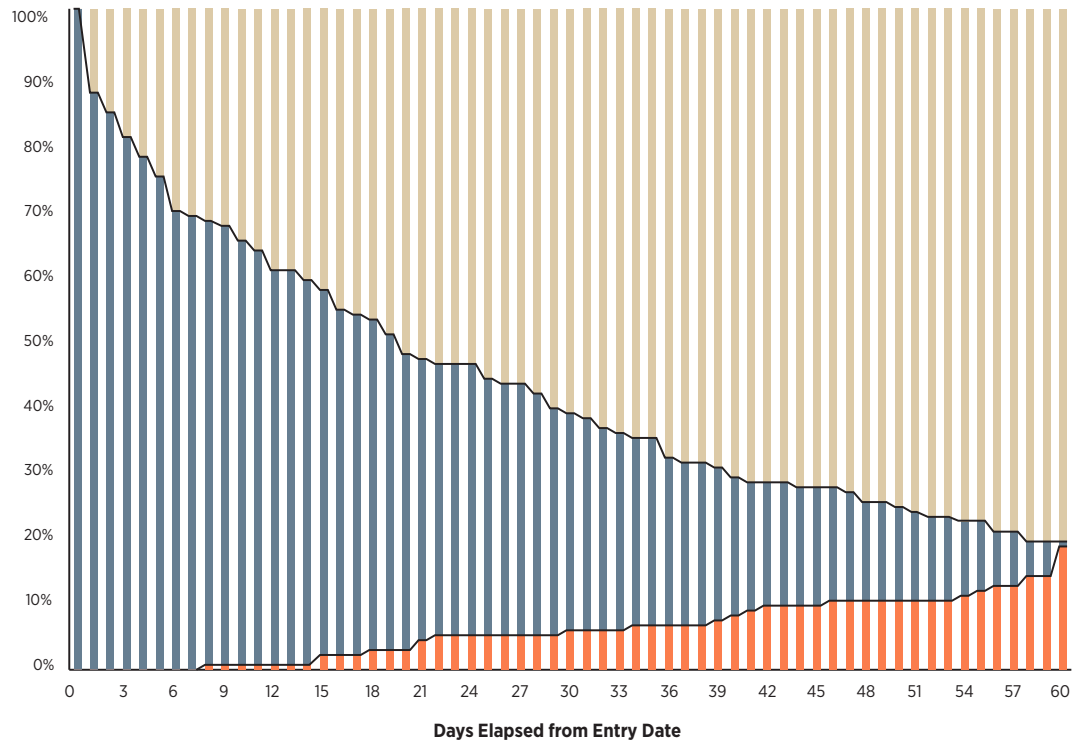
Emergency Shelter

Half of all families who accessed shelter as a first placement exited the system within three weeks of entering. However, for those who eventually moved from a shelter placement to TH or PSH, the average length of shelter enrollment was 43 days. Seventy-five percent of these families remained enrolled with the same provider agency when transitioning from shelter to another service type.

Over time, average length of stay in shelter increased by nearly three weeks, from an average of 21 days in 2005 to an average of 41 days in 2013. The vast majority of families accessing emergency shelter services experienced only a single enrollment, not just within emergency shelter services, but across the system as a whole. This is in marked contrast to the experiences of individuals, more than half of whom experienced multiple enrollments both within emergency shelter services and across the homelessness service system.

FIGURE 4: 2009 First-Entry Cohort Exit Outcomes and Length of Stay (in Days), Shelter as First Entry (n= 134)

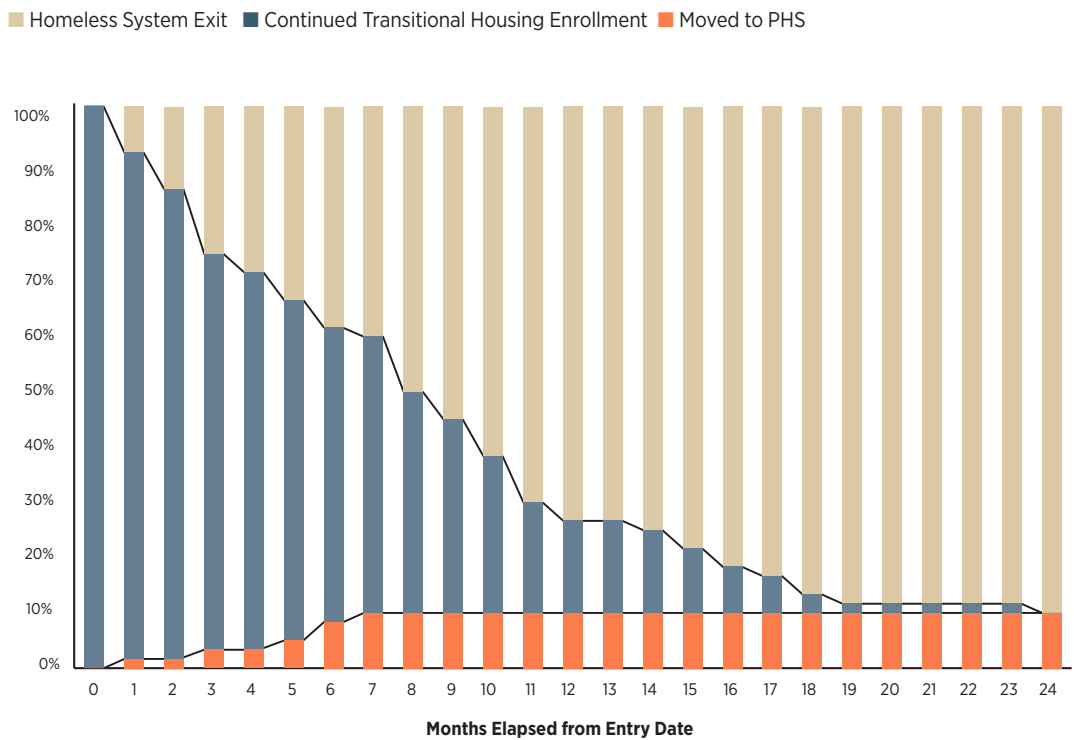
■ Homeless System Exit ■ Continued Service Enrollment ■ Moved to TH or PHS



Transitional Housing

Fewer than half of the 61 adults in families who entered TH as a first placement remained engaged in the system more than eight months after enrollment, either in the same or a different service type. Twenty-three percent of these families entered bridge housing programs with a maximum potential length of stay of 12 months, while the remaining 77 percent entered TH with the potential of a two-year length of stay. The actual average length of stay across programs was similar, with families accessing bridge housing programs staying for nine months and families entering TH staying for 10 months. Ten percent of families in this cohort moved to PSH from TH, and this movement typically occurred within seven months of enrollment. Although transitional housing programs are designed to serve for up to 24 months, only one family stayed more than 18 months.

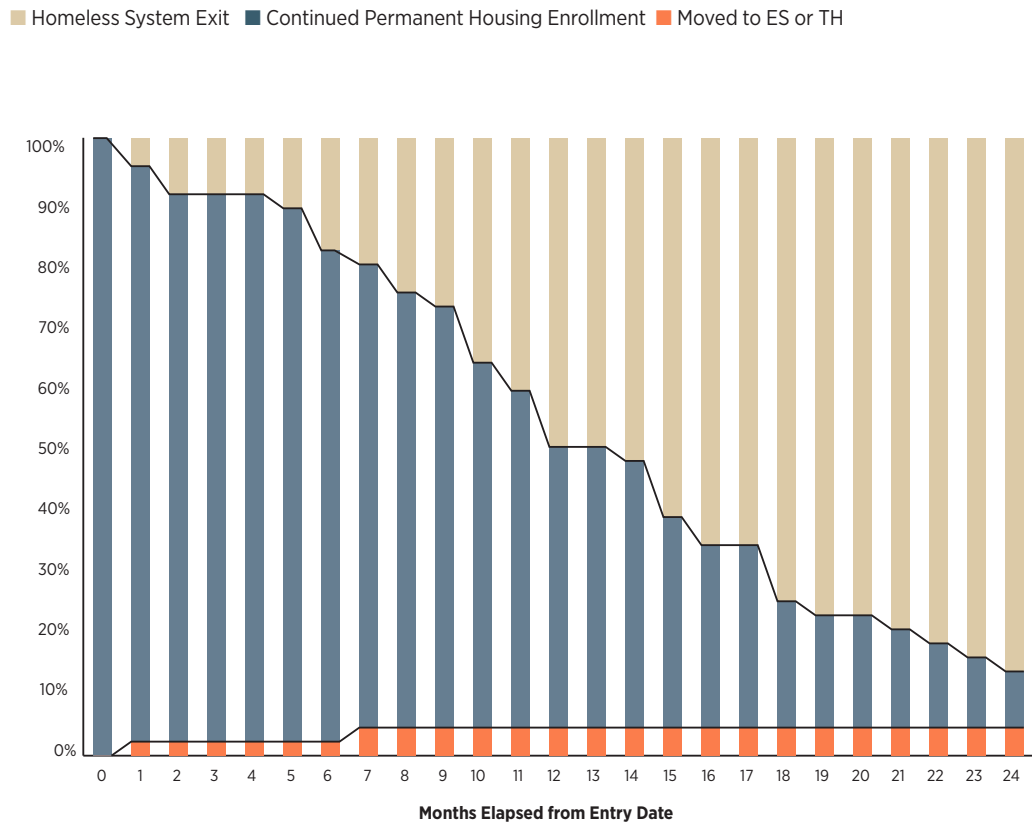
FIGURE 5: 2009 First-Entry Cohort Exit Outcomes and Length of Stay (in Months), TH as First Entry (n = 61)



Permanent Supportive Housing

Only 45 percent of entry cohort families entering PSH as a first placement (20 families) remained enrolled after 12 months. Not surprisingly, few families moved from PSH to another service type, as PSH represents the highest level of care in the system and does not have a maximum length of stay. The average length of stay was 19 months. Only four families remained in PSH for 24 months or more. By comparison, the entire population of families that participate in PSH — but not necessarily as their first point of entry — generally stay longer. In 2013, the average length of stay in PSH was slightly more than two years. This actually decreased since 2005 when the average stay was more than three years.

FIGURE 6: 2009 First-Entry Cohort Exit Outcomes and Length of Stay (in Months), PSH as First Entry (n = 44)



This examination of the 2009 family entry cohort illustrates that most families who accessed shelter as a first point of entry into the system did not move on to a higher level of care. While, in some instances, this may have been due to system barriers that prevented them from moving on to TH or PSH (e.g., inadequate referral linkages, short lengths of stay in shelter that prevent families from being adequately engaged, or unavailability of vacant units in TH or PSH), in other cases, the family may have needed only a short period of time in shelter to resolve its housing crisis. Expanding capacity, strengthening referral linkages, providing aftercare services to families exiting emergency shelters, and the new coordinated intake system will address many of the issues that families face when they require assistance during a housing crisis.

Re-Entry

Re-entry is an important measure that can determine the effectiveness of a homelessness service system. Often, multiple enrollments over a short period of time are part of a single homeless episode. For purposes of this report, re-entry into a program within 30 days of exit (primarily occurring in emergency shelter) is counted as a single episode. Re-entry after more than 30 days have elapsed from exit is counted as a new homeless episode.

The 2009 cohort families' system usage was tracked for two years following their initial exits. Most families who accessed multiple service types did so within a single homeless episode and did not experience gaps in service or disengagement from the homelessness service system while transitioning from one service type to another. However, a small number of families (14, or slightly less than six percent) re-entered the system after having left for more than 30 days. These 14 female-headed households generally experienced long elapsed periods of time between initial system exit and re-entry, with an average of 15 months passing between exit and re-entry. Nine of these families entered shelter initially, stayed for an average of four weeks and did not re-enter the system for almost 17 months. They showed wide variation in lengths of stay during initial shelter enrollment, with a low length of stay of just three days and a high of 45 days. The remaining five families re-entered the system following initial enrollment in TH or PSH, on average 11 months after exit. These families had shorter than normal initial stays in TH or PSH — just one family stayed longer than two months — which may have factored into their subsequent need to return to the system.

The following table outlines the types of services that were accessed by adults in families both at initial entry and at subsequent re-entry into the homelessness service system as part of a separate homeless episode.

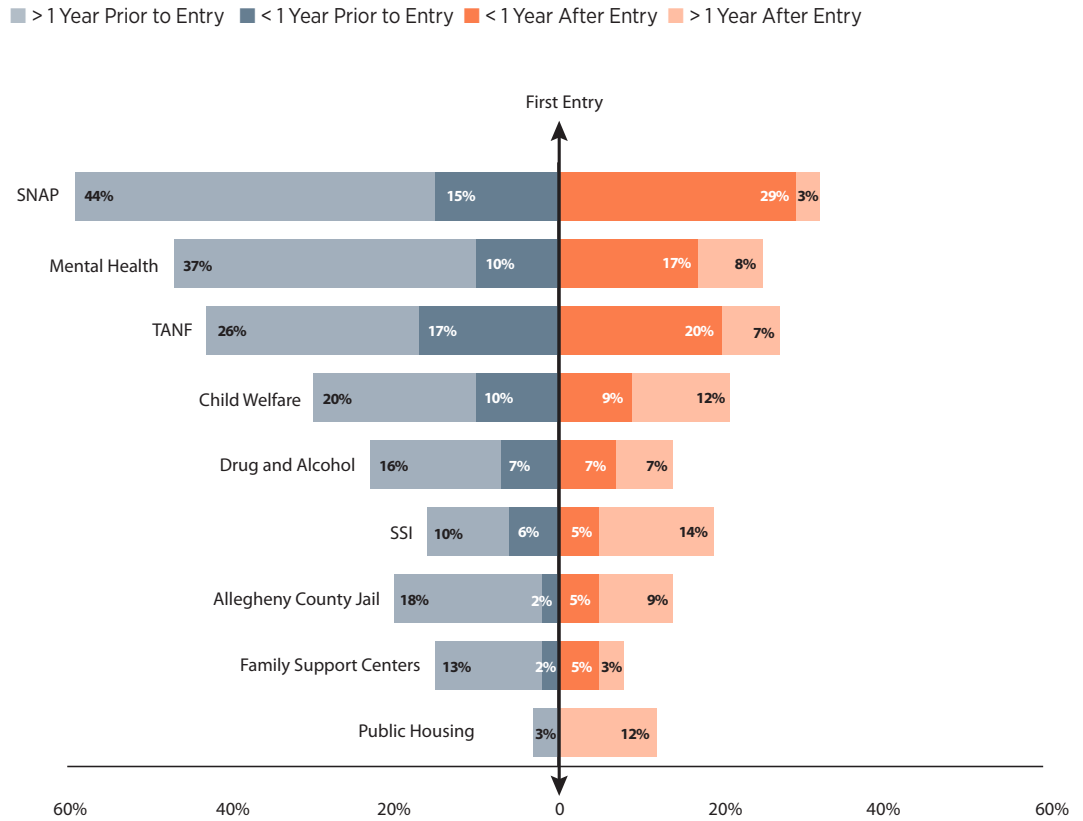
TABLE 6: System Re-Entry by Service Type at Entry (Adults in Families)

SERVICE TYPE AT INITIAL ENTRY	COUNT OF CLIENTS IN ENTRY COHORT	COUNT OF CLIENTS RE-ENTERING SYSTEM	PROGRAM TYPE AT RE-ENTRY		
			EMERGENCY SHELTER	TRANSITIONAL HOUSING	PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING
Emergency Shelter	134	9 (7%)	9 (100%)	0	0
Transitional Housing	61	4 (7%)	2 (50%)	2 (50%)	0
Permanent Supportive Housing	44	1 (2%)	0	0	1 (100%)
Total	239	14 (6%)	11 (79%)	2 (14%)	1 (7%)

Pre- and Post-Entry Service Involvement

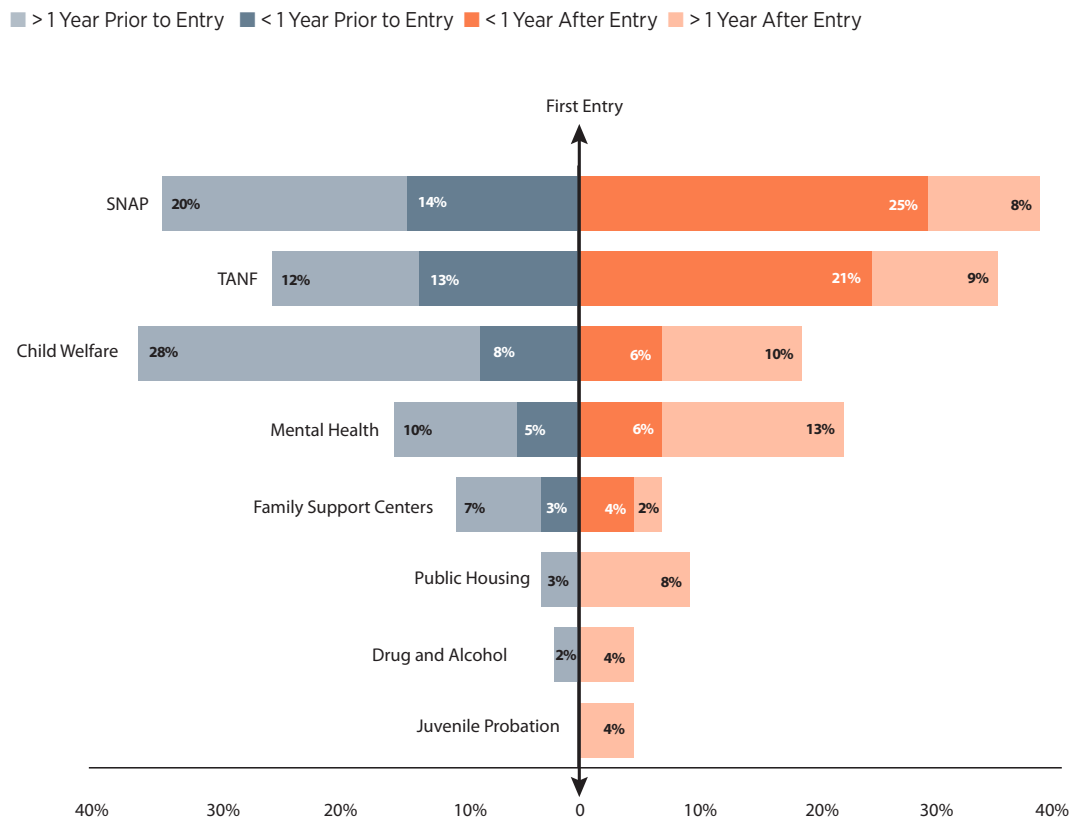
Adults in families show high levels of involvement in human services prior to entry into the homelessness system, particularly in the child welfare and mental health systems. Thirty percent of adults had prior involvement as a parent in the child welfare system, while an additional 21 percent became active in the child welfare system following their first homeless episode. Forty-seven percent of adults had prior involvement in mental health services, while an additional 25 percent received mental health services following their first homeless episode. Most adults (59 percent) had received benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) — an indicator of low income — prior to their first episode of homelessness, while an additional 29 percent enrolled in SNAP for the first time within one year of accessing service.

FIGURE 7: First Service Involvement for 2009 First-Entry Cohort Adults, Relative to First Entry



Children also showed significant involvement in the child welfare system both before and after experiencing their first episode of homelessness. More than one in three children in this entry cohort had past involvement in the child welfare system. Nineteen percent of the children became connected to mental health services after entering the homeless system.

FIGURE 8: First Service Involvement for 2009 First-Entry Cohort Children, Relative to First Entry



The significant rate of involvement in other systems, by both adults and children, reinforces the importance of coordinating care across systems to improve standards of care and case practice.