



HOUSING
ALLIANCE
DELAWARE

****For Immediate Release****

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DELAWARE SEES A 35% INCREASE IN HOMELESSNESS, ESPECIALLY FOR FAMILIES WITH THE LOWEST INCOMES

On behalf of the Delaware Continuum of Care, Housing Alliance Delaware conducted the 2021 Point in Time (PIT) Count on January 27, 2021. On that night, 1,579 people were experiencing homelessness in Delaware. This is a 35% increase from the 2020 PIT census of 1,165 people.

Due to COVID-19 safety concerns and logistical challenges, the 2021 PIT census did not include people who were unsheltered (living in cars, encampments, and other places not meant for human habitation). If people living in unsheltered situations were included, the number would have been even higher.

Each of the additional 414 people counted as homeless in 2021 were people in families with children. 243 (58%) of the additional people were children under the age of 18.

Of the people experiencing homelessness on the night of the 2021 PIT, 61% were Black. Black people and families are far overrepresented in the homeless population, as this racial group makes up only 22% of Delaware's general population. In Delaware, families with children headed by a Black adult are 8x more likely to experience homelessness than families with a white head of household.

In 2020, COVID-19 significantly impacted the homeless response in Delaware. Congregate emergency shelter beds decreased by more than 100 beds. In addition, bed utilization was at an all-time low of 48% on the night of the PIT. In other words, more than half of congregate emergency beds in Delaware were not occupied. This was primarily due to the need to implement social distancing in high risk congregate settings, to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Many households were sheltered in hotels and motels through the Division of State Service Centers and non-profit homeless assistance providers. Non-congregate sheltering is recommended by housing and public health experts, as it is far safer than sleeping in a

congregate setting during COVID-19. This was especially true in January of 2021 when transmission and hospitalization rates in Delaware were at an all-time high.

On the night of the 2021 PIT, 839 people were temporarily sheltered in a hotel or motel in Delaware, compared to 50 people in 2020. Additionally, many people stayed, and continue to stay, in hotels and motels for extended periods of time due to the lack of safe and affordable housing options in our communities.

On the night of the 2021 PIT, only 37 of the 839 people staying in hotels and motels were being served by a rapid re-housing (RRH) program in Delaware. Another 273 formerly homeless people were safely housed in their own apartments, continuing to receive support from rapid re-housing programs.

RRH is designed to help homeless households move quickly into rental housing by providing housing search help, rental assistance, and housing stabilization services.

In 2020, Delaware jurisdictions allocated more than \$1.5million in U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) COVID relief funding to RRH programs. This is a significant investment, far beyond what is typically available in any given year. It is more critical than ever that Delaware take full advantage of these resources.

As RRH programs continue to scale up their efforts to quickly re-house homeless people and families, it is clear that the primary challenge they face is not a lack of short-term financial resources.

The staggering 35% increase in homelessness in Delaware is indicative of the affordable housing crisis facing our state. Housing remains out of reach for thousands of Delawareans, forcing far too many to rely on temporary shelter for far too long.

Delaware has a shortage of 20,000 affordable housing units for the lowest income households (those with incomes less than 30% Area Median Income). Nationally, Delaware has the 17th highest housing wage in the country – meaning that the household income needed to afford a market rate rental unit is the 17th highest in the nation.

The COVID-19 crisis has shed a bright light on the housing and homeless crises facing our state. Solving these problems requires significant and strategic investments in both the short term crisis, as well as the long term solution - which is to ensure that everyone in Delaware has access to housing.