

YWCA Greater Newburyport

One Night Homeless Count

January 26, 2017

Full Report



our mission

YWCA is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.

We address these injustices within our community through safe, affordable and supportive child care and youth development, housing and wellness opportunities.

YWCA Greater Newburyport is a part of an international women's movement. Across the globe, we have more than 25 million members in 122 countries, including 2 million members in 230 local associations in the United States.

introduction to the count

The YWCA Greater Newburyport conducted the One Night Homeless Count on Wednesday, January 26, 2017. The goal of the count was to raise awareness of homelessness within the community, as well as to supply HUD with information about the population of homeless individuals in Newburyport, Newbury, Rowley, Salisbury and Amesbury. The One Night Homeless Count is performed throughout the country by volunteers and agencies committed to reducing the pain caused by homelessness and ultimately eliminating homelessness. The count is currently conducted on the last Wednesday of January.

Once again this year, the YWCA Greater Newburyport partnered with the Amesbury Council on Aging and local volunteers in order to get a more accurate count by widening the focus area and engaging more people. The One Night Homeless count consists of volunteers going out into the community to places known to be habited by homeless individuals and families (both outside and at local hotels, motels and Our Neighbors Table), calling local housing providers who shelter homeless households (shelters and transitional housing programs), calling local police departments, calling local social service agencies and compiling McKinney-Vento data from the local school districts.

By using all five data points, it is our hope to more fully evaluate the scale of the homeless crisis in our area. We acknowledge that there may be some duplication using this method instead of the strict HUD method. The greatest potential for duplication comes in the use of the data from the school districts. We therefore exclude from the count those school age children identified in the hotels, motels and transitional housing programs from the count as they are presumably counted in the school's data.

The official HUD One Night Homeless Count excludes data collected from the school districts and any person living in a hotel or motel who pays for their room (most housing advocates would include people living in hotels as homeless for two reasons, first the room may not have a kitchen which by definition means it is not fit for human habitation and second because the person has no tenancy rights meaning they can be asked to leave at any time. Both of these reasons would other under circumstances define the person as homeless, however HUD has decided that if a person pays for the room on their own, as opposed to a state voucher, that they are not homeless by definition). As a result, the HUD One Night Homeless Count for our area in 2017 would be a much lower number (5 individuals on the street and 10 individuals in transitional housing).

While our counting method is as comprehensive as possible given time and resources, there is an acknowledgement in our community, the numbers reported here are lower than the actual number of homeless households. We are unable to determine the number of households living in "summer cottages" who will lose their housing come spring, nor are we able to determine the number of individuals "couch surfing." We do believe that by using the data from the schools and social service agencies that we have captured some of these households. However, school data is limited to children enrolled in school and probably excludes high school students who are adept at hiding their homeless status. And many adults may not report their homeless status to an agency.

results

Total Homeless	467
Children	334
Adults	133
Women	41
Men	81
Seniors	7
Veterans	4

figure 1

count by location	
Observed on Street	4
Reported on Street	1
Reported homeless not on street	17
Hotel/Motel	112
Transitional Housing	10
School Districts	333

figure 2

The number of homeless individuals counted this year was slightly lower than the number of individuals counted last year, 467 compared to 508. However, it must be noted that Turning Point lost their McKinney-Vento funding to provide transitional housing to homeless households. This alone resulted in a decline of 29 individuals living in transitional housing. In 2017 we also did not obtain data from local council on aging programs as we did in 2016, and this represented a decline in 28 individuals counted. Had these numbers been included, our count for this year would have exceeded the count from last year.

In part the reason for the growth in homeless adults is our experience in conducting the one night homeless count over time. We now have better relationships with the hotels and motels and while we still greatly undercount the number of people living there (managers insist there are no children in the rooms, which we know from school data to be untrue) our improved relationship with managers means that they are more willing to share who is in the rooms.

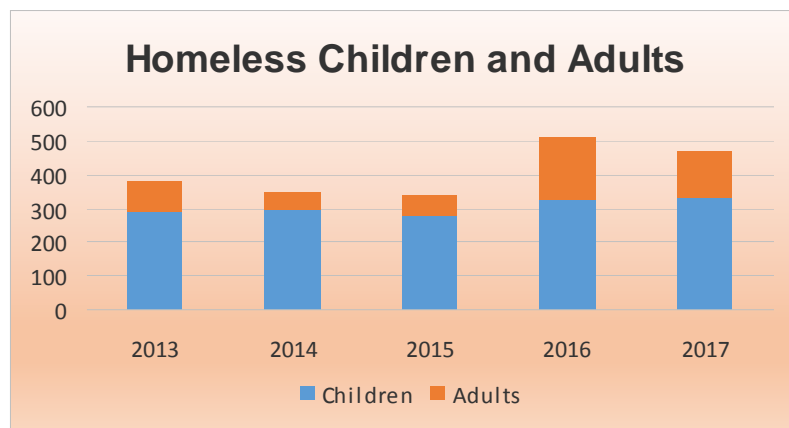


Figure 3

In contrast, the number of homeless children continues to grow according to school district data (see figure 3 below). In 2013 the number was 291 and in 2017 it was 333. Children represent the majority of homeless individuals identified in our count each year. Most of these children live in hotels, motels or are doubled up illegally in apartments with other families or friends. Few of the children are living in transitional housing settings and none are living on the streets. Addressing the housing needs of these families should be the highest priority of both state and federal authorities, REGARDLESS OF THE FACT THAT HUD CANNOT SEEM TO INCLUDE THEM IN THE HOMELESS COUNT.

The closure of Turning Points programs has also had a negative impact on the communities' ability to serve homeless households. While it is not clear that the closing of turning point led to the increase in number of people living in hotels and motels, it is disturbing to see a correlation between these two factors this year (see figure 4 below).

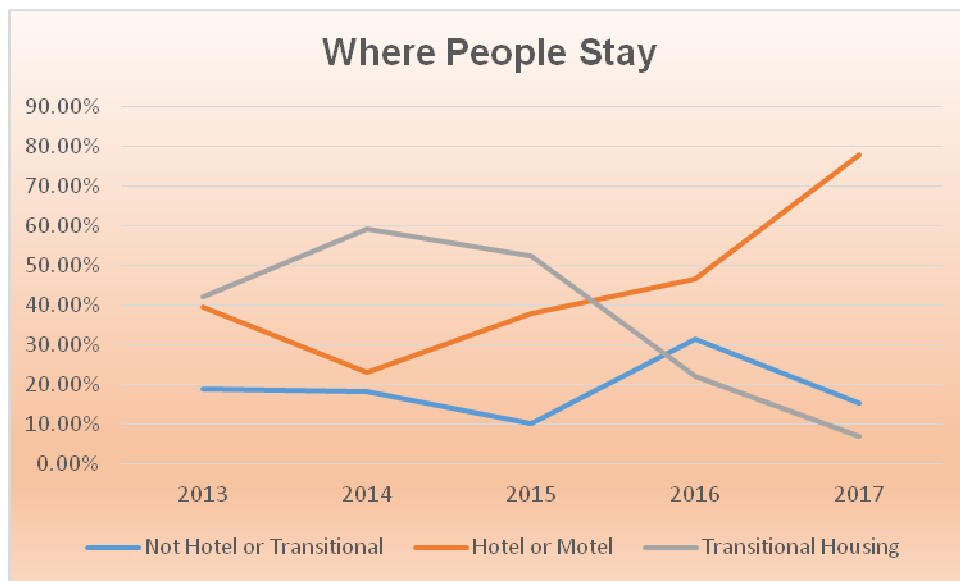


Figure 4

acknowledgments

YWCA would like to thank the following people for their help with this project.

Annmary Connor, the YWCA Board Vice President for organizing all of the volunteers, contacting social service agencies and police departments and her assistance with compiling the data.

Courtney Hutchinson of the Amesbury Council on Aging who recruited volunteers from the Amesbury COA. Joe LeBlanc and Vanessa Kahrman from the Amesbury COA for their volunteer work, and all three of them for going from hotel to hotel talking with managers.

Stephen Coffey, Lindsey Stanton from the Life Line Spirit Hunters, who volunteer to hike around Amesbury in search of places people were staying.

Pamela Brown, Meo Young and Jean Berger, YWCA Board Members and Former Board Members who volunteered to walk Newburyport and Newbury in search of homeless individuals.

Danielle Holmes, YWCA Board President, who spent the evening volunteering her time at Our Neighbor's Table in Amesbury interviewing guests to determine where they lived and whether or not they were homeless.

And our friends Kevin Hurley and Lisa Greene at the North Shore HOME Consortium who hope that one year we will actually do the One Night Homeless Count in the manner prescribed by HUD. Alas, again this year, they will have to re-interpret our report to fit into HUD's little boxes.