

Riverside County Department of Public Social Services 2011 Homeless Count and Survey Comprehensive Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background:

In January, the County of Riverside joined hundreds of cities and counties throughout the United States in a one-day “Point-in-Time” (PIT) count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals through a coordinated county-wide operation using a total of 202 county and city staff, community volunteers and homeless individuals to canvass the county in the early morning hours of January 24 and 25, 2011. In addition to the countywide PIT count, a survey was completed by 384 homeless individuals during a 10-week period from January 24 through March 9, 2011. The PIT count and survey is required on a bi-annual basis by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to gain a better understanding of each local jurisdiction’s current homeless populations and as a pre-requisite to receive federal funding for homeless programs.

The County of Riverside Department of Public Social Services has commissioned PIT homeless counts since HUD began requiring them in 2005. The County of Riverside receives about \$6.5 million annually from HUD that is used to fund Supportive Housing Program services for the county’s homeless population that include: street outreach, transitional and permanent supportive housing for homeless individuals; and toward support of the County of Riverside’s Continuum of Care, a collaborative of local cities, the county, nonprofit organizations, faith-based and other community-based organizations, that serves as a centralized information and coordination hub for general homeless information, grant opportunities, and other community information aimed at alleviating and ending homelessness.

2011 Point-in-Time Homeless Count Summary:

The County of Riverside Department of Public Social Services contracted with an independent firm to complete this year’s PIT homeless count and survey. *Applied Survey Research (ASR)*, a Northern California-based research firm with expertise in conducting PIT counts in counties and cities throughout California and the west. During the PIT count, ASR-trained enumerator teams were deployed from six designated sites throughout the county: Hemet, Indio, Moreno Valley, North Palm Springs, Riverside and Temecula.

The Contractor used a different methodology in conducting the 2011 count than was done in past years. The major modifications in methodology from counts done in previous years include:

- ***Increasing the role and prominence of homeless and formerly homeless individuals*** used as “guides” in assisting enumerators in the PIT count. This year, community volunteers were paired in teams with a homeless guide who assisted in identifying “hot spots” where homeless people congregate and who they knew by association to be homeless; and
- ***Using an observation-only “peer-to-peer” method of enumerating*** in hard-to-count or remote areas. This methodology allowed teams to go into secluded areas to identify homeless individuals without making direct contact of those being counted, thereby adding to the safety of the enumerators.

- A “multiplier” methodology that is recognized by HUD was used with the observation count to determine an average number of homeless people that can be attributed to vehicles, vacant buildings and/or encampments counted by the volunteer teams in hard-to-count locations. The number of individuals enumerated using the multipliers are estimates based on empirical data from the 2011 County of Riverside Homeless Survey. Survey respondents who indicated they usually stay in a car, van, RV, encampment or abandoned building at night were asked to indicate how many people usually stay there, producing a mean number of people for each of these sleeping locations. The multipliers used were: 1.51 for cars; 1.86 for vans/RVs; 3.13 for tents/structures; and 3.98 for abandoned buildings. As an example, for every tent/structure found in an encampment, the multiplier of 3.13 was applied to each tent/structure. So, if 10 tents were observed then the count for that encampment would be 31 persons.

The 2011 PIT homeless count found a total of 6,203 homeless individuals in two groups: (1) Those who were counted in homeless shelters throughout the county (N=1,113 individuals); and (2) Those who were unsheltered and found in known “hot spots” living in places such as: streets, abandoned buildings, freeway over/underpasses, cars, RVs, encampments and other areas. The multipliers (described above) were applied to this second group for the total unsheltered count (N=5,090 individuals).

2011 Homeless Survey Summary:

Applied Survey and Research trained homeless workers and service provider volunteers to implement a brief survey to 384 unsheltered and sheltered homeless individuals. The survey instrument was designed to collect a range of information on homeless individuals as well as assess a variety of issues related to homelessness, including: level of education, ethnicity, familial status, access to health care, income, domestic violence, mental health history, geographic history, substance abuse, and veteran’s status.

Analysis:

When the last homeless count was conducted in 2009, the county, state and nation were at the beginning of the economic downturn that has disproportionately impacted Riverside County in comparison to many other metropolitan areas. The State of California Employment Development Department reported an 11.7 percent unemployment rate in January, 2009 when the last PIT homeless count was done. In January, 2011, the county’s unemployment was up to 14.8 percent; but at its peak in July, 2010, a record 15.4 percent were out of work. Severe cuts at the state level have also dealt a second economic blow to Riverside County and its cities that continue to experience some of the worst budget cutbacks in decades. As a result, the number of individuals and families seeking public assistance from the Department of Public Social Services has grown at an alarming rate. Since 2007, the number of new applicants to three primary public assistance programs grew by the following percentages: CalWORKs: 71 percent; CalFresh Food and Nutrition Services (Food Stamps), 203 percent; and Medi-Cal, 35 percent. *Nearly one in four Riverside County residents received public assistance in 2010.*

Based on this, it is not surprising that the 2011 County of Riverside’s Homeless Count and Survey results reflect the current economic climate in Riverside County and its cities. This year’s total countywide homeless count of 6,203 shows **an 84 percent increase** from the number of homeless counted in 2009. Data in the report that supports the negative impact the economic downturn has had on the county’s homeless population includes:

- An annual estimation of homelessness in Riverside County based on the PIT count shows that homeless people are *experiencing longer periods of homelessness*, based on 2009 estimations.
- Riverside County's *chronic homeless population** based on the PIT count shows an estimated 160 percent increase from 2009.
- The number of *unsheltered homeless* grew from 61 percent in 2009 to 82 percent in 2011.
- The number of homeless *veterans* increased slightly from 13 percent in 2009 to 14 percent in 2011; however, of the veterans who reported experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), *88 percent of them indicated that their PTSD prevents them from getting work/housing*.
- Homeless respondents experiencing *domestic/partner violence* or abuse increased from 8 percent in 2009 to 14 percent in 2011.
- The number of respondents who reported *chronic health problems* increased from 22 percent in 2009 to 29 percent in 2011.
- Those who experienced *substance abuse* increased from 30 percent in 2009 to 42 percent in 2011.

*A person who is defined by HUD as chronically homeless is "an unaccompanied individual with a disabling condition who has been: continually homeless for one year; or has experienced four or more episodes of homelessness within the past three years."

Homeless Count Populations by Jurisdiction:

The chart below is a break-out of the total number of homeless individuals (sheltered and unsheltered) with and without the multipliers used in this year's count. The 2007 and 2009 totals are without multipliers and are based on an actual count of identified homeless individuals (sheltered and unsheltered combined).

| Jurisdiction | 2007 Total | 2009 Total | 2011 Total (without multipliers) | | | 2011 Total (with multipliers) | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| | | | Unsheltered | Sheltered | Total | Unsheltered | Sheltered | Total |
| Incorporated total | 3,998 | 2,586 | 2,148 | 946 | 3,094 | 3,073 | 946 | 4,019 |
| Banning | 102 | 69 | 54 | 0 | 54 | 109 | 0 | 109 |
| Beaumont | 36 | 38 | 19 | 0 | 19 | 49 | 0 | 49 |
| Blythe | 106 | 133 | 67 | 0 | 67 | 152 | 0 | 152 |
| Calimesa | NC | 0 | 41 | 0 | 41 | 116 | 0 | 116 |
| Canyon Lake | NC | 0 | 5 | 0 | 5 | 7 | 0 | 7 |
| Cathedral City | 99 | 83 | 12 | 0 | 12 | 14 | 0 | 14 |
| Coachella | 33 | 19 | 63 | 0 | 63 | 89 | 0 | 89 |
| Corona | 274 | 127 | 133 | 61 | 194 | 186 | 61 | 247 |
| Desert Hot Springs | 75 | 127 | 22 | 0 | 22 | 22 | 0 | 22 |
| Hemet | 480 | 172 | 79 | 27 | 106 | 87 | 27 | 114 |
| Indian Wells | NC | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Indio | 684 | 572 | 174 | 340 | 514 | 265 | 340 | 605 |
| Lake Elsinore | 115 | 68 | 113 | 0 | 113 | 113 | 0 | 113 |
| La Quinta | NC | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Menifee | NC | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Moreno Valley | 45 | 28 | 124 | 0 | 124 | 237 | 0 | 237 |
| Murrieta | 8 | 5 | 23 | 0 | 23 | 40 | 0 | 40 |
| Norco | 6 | 3 | 25 | 0 | 25 | 27 | 0 | 27 |
| Palm Desert | 12 | 38 | 6 | 62 | 68 | 10 | 62 | 72 |
| Palm Springs | 260 | 204 | 38 | 89 | 127 | 62 | 89 | 151 |
| Perris | 379 | 146 | 113 | 0 | 113 | 161 | 0 | 161 |
| Rancho Mirage | NC | 3 | 10 | 0 | 10 | 14 | 0 | 14 |
| Riverside | 1,174 | 632 | 850 | 367 | 1,217 | 1,063 | 367 | 1,430 |
| San Jacinto | NC | 11 | 37 | 0 | 37 | 62 | 0 | 62 |
| Temecula | 105 | 69 | 122 | 0 | 122 | 162 | 0 | 162 |
| Wildomar | 5 | 36 | 14 | 0 | 14 | 20 | 0 | 20 |
| Unincorporated total | 375 | 780 | 1,060 | 167 | 1,227 | 2,017 | 167 | 2,184 |
| Aguanga | NC | 0 | 18 | 0 | 18 | 34 | 0 | 34 |
| Anza | NC | 0 | 97 | 0 | 97 | 178 | 0 | 178 |
| East Hemet | NC | 0 | 10 | 0 | 10 | 10 | 0 | 10 |
| Home Gardens | NC | 0 | 18 | 0 | 18 | 35 | 0 | 35 |
| Homeland | 8 | 0 | 18 | 0 | 18 | 20 | 0 | 20 |
| Idyllwild | NC | 3 | 7 | 0 | 7 | 7 | 0 | 7 |
| March Air Reserve Base | 131 | 249 | 15 | 160 | 175 | 32 | 160 | 192 |
| Mead Valley | 1 | 4 | 123 | 0 | 123 | 263 | 0 | 263 |
| Mecca | 71 | 414 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 10 | 0 | 10 |
| Nuevo | NC | 0 | 87 | 0 | 87 | 184 | 0 | 184 |
| Quail Valley | 3 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 6 | 0 | 6 |
| Romoland | NC | 0 | 17 | 0 | 17 | 26 | 0 | 26 |
| Rubidoux | 32 | 10 | 111 | 0 | 111 | 238 | 0 | 238 |
| Sun City | 20 | 27 | 13 | 0 | 13 | 29 | 0 | 29 |
| Thousand Palms | 9 | 8 | 0 | 7 | 7 | NC | 7 | 7 |
| Valle Vista | 20 | 2 | 61 | 0 | 61 | 154 | 0 | 154 |
| Winchester | 1 | 1 | 70 | 0 | 70 | 156 | 0 | 156 |
| Woodcrest | NC | 0 | 10 | 0 | 10 | 11 | 0 | 11 |
| Other unincorporated areas | 79 | 62 | 375 | 0 | 375 | 624 | 0 | 624 |
| Total | 4,373 | 3,366 | 3,208 | 1,113 | 4,321 | 5,090 | 1,113 | 6,203 |

Comparisons of previous homeless count data:

Based on the changes in methodology used by ASR in this year's homeless count and survey and how the data is presented, some of the results in this report are not easily comparable to the 2009 and 2007 counts. The counts in 2007 and 2009 were conducted using an actual head count/survey method where volunteer enumerators (which included DPSS staff, community volunteers and homeless individuals) made physical contact with the homeless individuals they found as they canvassed the county and conducted face-to-face interviews with each to determine if they were homeless.

The observation-only method in this year's count allowed teams of homeless guides and community volunteers to venture into more remote areas as observers rather than enter encampments and buildings or knock on the doors of vehicles to do face-to-face interviews to determine if a person is homeless. The observation-only method is determined by HUD to be an acceptable practice to ensure the safety of the enumerators. Since no physical contact was made by volunteers in this year's count, ASR used a "multiplier" methodology recognized by HUD to determine an average number of people that is applied to the number of vehicles, buildings and encampments counted by the volunteer teams in these hard-to-count locations.

While the methodology used in this year's count presents a challenge in comparing the data from 2009 and 2007; it also brings to light the complexity of conducting an accurate and unbiased one-day count of a homeless population. As with communities throughout the nation, there are many external factors that can influence this process, including: the region's current economic situation; transience of homeless people; changes and shifts in where services for homeless individuals and families are offered; weather; time of day; and other factors.

To access the full report, go to the DPSS Homeless Program Unit website:

<http://www.riversidehomeless.org>

For questions about the 2011 Homeless Count and Survey, please contact:

Judith Murdock, Homeless Programs Manager, Riverside County DPSS Homeless Program Unit: Phone: (951) 358-5636; Email: jmurdock@riversidedpss.org.