

New Bedford's Point-in-Time Count shows decline in homelessness in 2021

The City of New Bedford has concluded and finalized its annual Point-in-Time Count of individuals experiencing homelessness for 2021. The Point-in-Time (PIT) Count is required by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) and is conducted across the nation during the last 10 days of January.

The number of individuals experiencing homelessness in New Bedford has decreased 7%, to 372, and was less than the average count of 391 over the prior decade. The number of unsheltered people counted during the 2021 PIT Count, 43 people, was the lowest count recorded since 2014. The number of sheltered people (those living in emergency or transitional housing), 329, was the lowest count recorded since 2013, with the exception of 2017.

In previous years, more people experiencing homelessness lived in family households with children compared to adult-only households; this year marks the first time the number of people within family households experiencing homelessness (165) equaled the number of people in adult-only homeless households (164). The count also found that there were no families or children under 18 living on the streets in 2021; 28 individuals in the city were unaccompanied youth (a HUD definition that includes those who are between ages 18-24), an increase of eight individuals since 2020.

This year also marks the first time since PIT counts have been recorded in New Bedford that no unsheltered individuals identified as being a veteran.

Consistent with 2020 statistics, fewer people meeting the

definition of chronic homelessness in 2021 were living on the streets, and more were living in shelter, with the most vulnerable people housed rather than on the streets.

The Point-in-Time Count (PIT) is conducted in New Bedford through the efforts of the New Bedford Continuum of Care, known as the Homeless Service Providers Network (HSPN). The HSPN is convened and staffed by the City's Office of Housing and Community Development.

The City's Housing and Community Development staff attribute the improvements this year to a range of factors, including the proactive use of best practices for moving families and individuals more quickly from unstable living situations into more stable and sustainable housing solutions, and the diverse coalition of service providers that have strategically worked throughout the pandemic this past year to better meet homelessness challenges.

The New Bedford PIT Count helps identify vulnerable groups by conducting surveys that provide demographic characteristics, history of homelessness, self-identified challenges, and other vital information. The census counts both sheltered and unsheltered individuals and families experiencing homelessness on a given night; due to the pandemic, this year's PIT Count extended for several days to ensure an accurate count—and was undertaken by a professional Street Outreach Team from Steppingstone. The information collected through the PIT Count is used to help measure New Bedford's progress towards ending homelessness and to help refine and strategically focus future planning efforts toward that end. Typically, the data collected through these efforts provides a reliable snapshot of both sheltered and unsheltered individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

For more information about the approach being taken by the city's HSPN in addressing homelessness, visit www.nbhspn.com.