



The Cutting Edge

MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION IN NJ

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS UPDATE

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The MHANJ Supports SHA's Opening 1,000 Doors Campaign

The MHANJ supports the Supportive Housing Association (SHA) in seeking to increase the number of state rental assistance vouchers to house an additional 1,000 people, through their *Opening 1,000 Doors* campaign. By doing this our state leaders will further address the housing needs of those living in poverty with disabilities. This effort will save dollars, which are now misdirected to prisons, homeless shelters and emergency rooms.

To learn more and sign the petition [click here](#).

Tune In to the MHANJ on TV

The MHANJ's "Red Carpet" interview television show recorded at our Evening of Excellence recently aired as a special episode of *One-on-One* with

Understanding Homelessness in New Jersey

Homelessness and Mental Illness

Each year in the United States, approximately 3.5 million men, women and children experience homelessness. While there is no one direct reason that can be identified for all of them, some common factors do exist for many. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), approximately one in four homeless individuals have Serious Mental Illness (SMI); this is more than four times the rate of SMI in the general population.



Chronically homeless individuals, in particular, have a higher rate of health problems and disabilities, which often include any mental illness, SMI and/or a substance use disorder. They experience significant barriers to accessing much needed regular physical and behavioral health treatments, and have higher rates of expensive hospitalizations as a result. In fact, nationally, chronically homeless persons account for about 50% of medical spending.

Homelessness often has negative effects on physical health, mental health, substance use practices and accessing care. Without affordable housing and regular medical care, this cycle is fated to continue to repeat itself.

Quick Facts

- About 12% of the US homeless population are veterans; nearly 45% of homeless veterans live with mental illness.
- Jail inmates with mental illness are more than twice as likely as other inmates to have been homeless at the time of arrest.

Steve Adubato. The show features interviews with key leaders in behavioral health in New Jersey. [To watch the show online, click here](#).

An interview with Senator Joseph F. Vitale focusing on behavioral health issues in New Jersey will air on the show *NJ Capitol Report* on Saturday, August 8 at 8:30 a.m. on WNET, 11:30 a.m. on FiOS 1 News NJ, and 12:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. on NJTV.



Did you know?

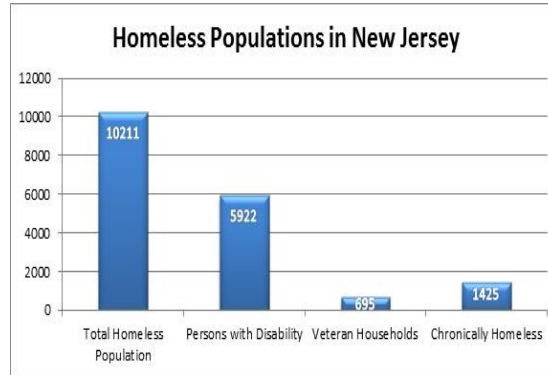
The MHANJ's Walk/Run has had a makeover, including a new theme, "Fight Stigma, Walk for Awareness," and a new logo.

People who have mental health challenges and substance use disorders, as well as their friends and family, face many hurdles. The stigma related to these issues is one of the biggest barriers to treatment.

It is our hope that our new logo and theme will help increase awareness,

- Nearly 1/3 of all ER visits are made by chronically homeless persons -- this accounts for an average cost of \$44,000 per person, per year.

NJ Counts 2015 Point-in-Time Report



[Click here to see larger version of graph.](#)

The *NJ Counts 2015*, New Jersey's annual Point-In-Time Count of the Homeless population, released by Monarch Housing Associates this summer, reported that, on the nights of January 27, 2015 and February 3, 2015, there were a total of 10,211 homeless men,

women and children in New Jersey, of which 1,425 were [chronically homeless](#). From the total, 974 were [unsheltered](#), of the remaining 9,237 [homeless individuals who had shelter](#), 6,934 were in emergency shelters, 2,281 were in transitional housing, and 22 were in safe havens. The report also highlighted the fact that 42% of the total homeless population in New Jersey mentioned having some type of disability, including 2,339 with some form of mental illness, 1,914 with substance abuse issues and 974 with co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse issues.

Overall, this is a nearly 14% decrease from the number counted in 2014. According to the report, the total number of homeless individuals has steadily decreased over the last five years, from 14,078 in 2011 to 10,211 in 2015. [To read more click here.](#)

To read the entire Monarch Housing Associates *New Jersey's 2015 Point-In-Time Count of the Homeless* report [click here](#).

To read the Fact Sheet [click here](#).

Housing First Works

Housing First is a program that offers homeless individuals and families permanent housing first, then focuses on getting services for whatever issues or ailments they might have. The philosophy behind this model is that housing is integral to good health and well-being. Once settled in a new home, the person or family can begin to focus on recovery or stabilizing their health conditions. Participation in, or acceptance of, services is not mandatory, but it has been shown to benefit the

and support, while also opening up the dialogue to build greater understanding and acceptance of behavioral health issues.

The Walk will benefit the Mental Health Association in New Jersey, in partnership with Monarch Housing Associates.

Please join us!

Southern NJ Walk

Sat., September 19, 2015
Non-Competitive Walk
[CLICK HERE NOW for more information and to register.](#)

Northern NJ Walk/Run

Sat., October 3, 2015
Non-competitive Walk and 5K Run
[CLICK HERE NOW for more information and to register.](#)

How Can You Help?

For more information about team development, leadership opportunities, sponsorship and/or volunteering, please contact Stacy Greene, Statewide Director of Development, at 973-571-4100, ext. 128, or sgreene@mhanj.org.

individual and/or family in maintaining housing and improving overall health.

Often, homeless individuals suffer from various disabilities, such as mental illness, substance use disorders or chronic physical health conditions. Without proper care, these individuals are often "high-utilizers" of expensive Emergency Room (ER) services. In addition to improving overall quality of life for individuals who are homeless, this program offers an effective way of dealing with the high cost of these expensive ER and hospital visits.

Here is some important information about *Housing First* based on an evaluation of the Pathways to Housing program and Closer to Home Initiative in New York City and the San Francisco Bay Area:

- Housing first models lead to higher rates of housing retention.
- 83% of formerly chronically homeless tenants remained housed after one year. Among them, 79% of those with Serious Mental Illness remained housed for three years.

For more about Housing First in New Jersey, [click here](#).

Homes for the Homeless: NJ Hill Day 2015



Left to right: Bob Kley, Vice President and COO of the MHANJ; Margaret Upchurch, Peer Advocate for the MHANJ in Ocean County; Monique Hickson from Triple C Housing; Nicole Schlett from Triple C Housing; Congressman Frank LoBiondo; Michele Green-Ferrante, Director of Programs and Services for the MHANJ in Ocean County; and Michael Leotis, Peer Specialist for the MHANJ in Ocean County.

On July 14, 2015 Bob Kley, the Mental Health Association in New Jersey's (MHANJs) Vice President and COO, and several representatives from the MHANJ in Ocean County were among 45-plus delegates from all over New Jersey who spent the day in Washington, D.C., meeting with Senators, members of Congress and their aides for the *Homes for the Homeless*, NJ Hill Day 2015. During their trip, they were able to present their policy priorities regarding affordable housing and housing vouchers.

According to Bob, "The lack of housing vouchers, coupled with

lack of affordable housing are a critical catch-22 for those with disabilities, mental illness, substance use disorders, the poor and the homeless. The community has proven that programs like *Housing*

Would you like to help
MHANJ continue its
advocacy initiatives?



First work -- and we can effectively end homelessness in our community -- once we have the proper resources. Our advocacy efforts focused on strengthening the Federal commitment to support real growth of housing vouchers, expansion of housing tax credits, and fully funding the National Housing Trust Fund."

The Congressional representatives they met with were supportive of the group's goals, but also shared in their frustration with the roadblocks and challenges that come with this type of work.

Margaret Upchurch, Peer Advocate for the MHANJ Ocean County Peer Outreach Support Team (POST), who also attended, shared her personal story of multiple periods of homelessness, frustrations with finding affordable housing even with a voucher, and lack of housing opportunities in the wake of Superstorm Sandy. She told the representatives, "I lost my job in 2008 and my home in 2011 and for the first time in my life I was homeless. Then I lost everything in Superstorm Sandy and was again homeless! We need these vouchers to be able to live." Regarding the opportunity to share her story and do this important advocacy work she stated, "I met with Senator Menendez's aide and Congressman LoBiondo. The experience was invaluable. They listened intently and were very sympathetic to me."

expand opportunities and
PLEDGE ON!

Commit for **another 25 years...and Beyond!**

ADAAnniversary.org



Learn more about [MHANJ's Government Affairs](#) efforts.

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