



For Immediate Release

May 5, 2011

Contact

Michael Hurst, (317) 472-7633

2011 HOMELESS COUNT SHOWS INCREASE

***Job Loss Is The Single Greatest Reason Reported;
Numbers for Families and Youth Remain High***

INDIANAPOLIS – Economic conditions that have devastated the state of Indiana have taken their toll in Indianapolis too, evidenced by a five percent increase in the number of people identified in the recent homeless count reported by the Coalition for Homelessness Intervention and Prevention (Coalition).

The 2011 Indianapolis Homeless Count shows that 1,567 individuals were homeless on January 27, the date on which the count was held in Indianapolis. That was up 79 individuals from January 2010. For the fifth year in a row, teams of social service providers and community volunteers surveyed individuals who were homeless and who were staying in emergency shelters, transitional programs and on the street. They found a significant increase in the number of people who reported multiple episodes or longer periods of homelessness, were survivors of domestic violence, were experiencing alcohol and substance abuse addictions, or had a prior criminal conviction. In addition, the number of families and children experiencing homelessness remained high and would have seen a dramatic increase but for a current federal program supported by the federal stimulus. The report identifies a number of reasons people become homeless, but the most reported reason by far among those experiencing homelessness on January 27 was loss of a job.

“The Coalition and our partners on the frontlines of the battle against homelessness are disappointed but not surprised that the number is up this year,” said Timothy C. Joyce, executive director of the Coalition for Homelessness Intervention and Prevention. “Tough economic times mean job loss, family stress, substance abuse and other situations leading to homelessness. The lack of available jobs has moved the number up and in the wrong direction for the second year in a row and the largest jump in nine years.”

Joyce credited the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program, part of the federal stimulus law, for a decline in the number of families who were homeless and in shelter on the night of the count. The count found 155 families, 248 children and 196 adults, in shelter or staying in transitional programs, down from 191 families in 2010. The prevention and re-housing program, which is administered through local agencies, helps those who would otherwise become homeless and provides housing for people who are homeless. From its inception in October 2009 to January 2011, the stimulus funded program has been responsible for housing or preventing homelessness for 473 Indianapolis families with 872 members.

The federal stimulus money is running out, however, “We are hopeful that government leaders, private individuals and charities will recognize that the need is still there,” Joyce said. “We also hope the economy begins to pick up and more jobs are created so that access to housing and supportive services can become a reality for our most vulnerable neighbors and we can once again reverse the growing number of homeless across our city.

-more-

While the decline in the number of homeless families staying in emergency shelter and the success of the safety net from federal stimulus preventing additional families from being counted was good news, the count still pointed out that a large number of Marion County children did not have a home of their own. In addition to counting individuals and families living in emergency shelters, transitional programs and on the street, the count tallied the number of children who are enrolled in Marion County schools and who are receiving services under the federal McKinney-Vento Assistance Act. That law requires schools to identify and provide services to students without permanent housing including children who are not only homeless and in shelter but also those who are “doubled up” – living in hotels or with another family. In addition to the 248 children living in emergency shelters or transitional programs, the count found 2,925 students in Marion County schools who did not have a home of their own.

“Homelessness can lead to academic and behavioral problems, developmental delays and malnutrition,” Joyce said. “If we’re going to break the cycle of poverty, our community must ensure that this is the last episode of homelessness for these children. If we end and prevent homelessness for our youth today, they have a better chance of leading an independent and sustainable life tomorrow. It’s critical for their future and it’s essential for the future of our community.”

National research suggests the number of people who experience homelessness at some time during the year is three to five times the number counted January 27. That means 4,500 to 7,500 people in Marion County are likely to experience homelessness in 2011.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires that every community receiving federal funds for programs to aid the homeless must conduct a count every two years during the last two weeks of January. Since 2007, the Coalition has performed the count annually. The Coalition partnered with the Indiana University Public Policy Institute to coordinate the count and prepare a report.

For a full version of the report, visit www.chipindy.org.

###

The Coalition for Homelessness Intervention and Prevention is a nonprofit agency created in 1996 to advocate for homeless and near-homeless people in Indianapolis and to help organizations that serve them work together more effectively. CHIP led the Blueprint to End Homelessness planning effort and now serves as the lead agency to mobilize the community to work together to implement its recommendations.