

Family Homelessness in Cuyahoga County

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Executive Summary

This paper discusses the problem of family homelessness in Cuyahoga County, and provides baseline estimates of risk and shelter use. The issue was addressed using a two-pronged approach. The first approach used data from a large, representative sample of persons living in the county to estimate how many people below the poverty level live in doubled up housing situations. Given that many people who become homeless live in doubled up housing situations prior to becoming homeless, this estimate was intended to provide a baseline estimate of possible risk of homelessness among the county's poor population. The second approach was to examine a much smaller data set, containing information on persons actually using residential homeless services. Data were provided by the Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services as part of a nationwide attempt to document and count the numbers of sheltered homeless persons in the United States. This analysis detailed the numbers of persons living in families in the county who used emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing facilities.

People Living Doubled up in Cuyahoga County

A total of 18,683 people in 2005 and 19,546 people in 2006 lived in doubled up housing situations in Cuyahoga County, about 10% of the poor population.

The following are characteristics of children under the poverty level living in doubled up housing situations (data are for 2006).

- The numbers of doubled up children increased between 2005 and 2006.
- An estimated 11,799 or 15% of poor children in Cuyahoga County were doubled up in 2006.
- 68.1% of doubled up children were school aged (over the age of six), and more than three quarters attended public school.
- More than three-quarters of doubled up children were African American.
- Three quarters of doubled up children did not live with their mothers
- 84% of doubled up children had no sibling or did not live with their siblings.
- Half (56.4%) of doubled up children lived in a rented house and 44% lived with a householder who owned their home.
- Almost two-thirds of doubled up children lived with their grandparents (61%)
- The annual median household income for households with doubled up children was \$14,590.
- 85% of all poor children lived in a home that had a serious rent burden.
- Doubled up children tended to live in larger and more crowded households than did children who were not doubled up.
- 71% of poor children lived in a household that received food stamps, but just over half of doubled up children's households received food stamps
- More than three quarters of doubled up children lived in the city of Cleveland.

The following are characteristics of adults under the poverty level living in doubled up housing situations in Cuyahoga County (data are for 2006).

- An estimated 7,747 adults or about 7% of the poverty population live in doubled up housing situations.
- 58% of adults living doubled up were women, 46% were under the age of 30, and about half were African American.
- More than one quarter of doubled up adults had not earned a high school diploma, and a third of doubled up adults were unemployed.
- 95% of doubled up adults were unmarried, and 14 % had at least one child.
- 35% of doubled up adults lived with non-relatives (other than friends) and 22% with their siblings.
- 87% of poor adults experienced a rent burden whether or not they were living doubled up.
- Doubled up adults lived in larger and more crowded households than adults who were not doubled up.
- 40% of households in which doubled up adults were living received food stamps.
- 69% of doubled up adults lived in the city of Cleveland.
- The largest proportion of people (both adults and children) living doubled up was in the city of Cleveland, and in an area that includes Beachwood, Lyndhurst, Mayfield Heights, and Solon.
- Outside of the City, and area that includes Euclid, Richmond Heights, South Euclid, and University Heights had a high proportion of doubled up adults.

Sheltered Homeless Families in Cuyahoga County

Among sheltered homeless families between 2005 and 2008:

- 3,748 unique individuals living in 1,211 families have entered county shelters since 2005.
- The number of families utilizing homeless programs in the county increased between 2005 and 2007.
- 81% of persons in families using county homeless programs used emergency shelter facilities, 16% used transitional housing, and 3% used permanent supportive housing programs.
- 65% of all individuals living in families are children.
- The highest proportion of children was seen in permanent supportive housing programs.
- The average family size across all programs and years was three people: two children with one adult, typically their mother.
- More than three-quarters of individuals living in families (85%) were Black/African American, 12% White and 3% another race.
- The average length of stay in shelter for individuals in families using emergency shelter was 51 days, with a median of 21 days.
- The average stay in transitional housing programs was 216 days, with a median stay of 183 days.
- 75% of individuals in families used shelter only once in the time period and 942 have stayed more than once.

- 207 individuals in families stayed three or more times in shelter with one person staying a maximum of six times. Multiple users tended to be in the emergency shelter system.
- Many families entering homeless shelters came from zip codes in Cleveland 44105 and 44108, two of the areas hit hardest by home foreclosures.

Among sheltered families in 2007:

- Among adults living in families, 94% were female (95% of heads of households were female).
- On average, adults living in families using emergency shelter were 30 years old when entering shelter, and adults living in families using transitional housing were 28 years old.
- The mean age of children in emergency shelter clients was six years old at shelter entry, and five years old for transitional housing clients.
- The two most often mentioned reasons for becoming homeless were unemployment and inability to pay rent or mortgage, accounting for 76% of the reasons transitional housing users became homeless, but just over a quarter of emergency shelter users. Having been evicted in the past week and domestic violence were more common for emergency shelter users.
- Less than 15% of all clients in the two programs reported being a victim of domestic violence.
- Just over one percent of adults in families were military veterans and more than 15% had a disability of long duration.
- The most common prior living situations were doubling up with family and friends, emergency shelter, and living in the family's own place.
- Families' stays in previous living situations tended to be short; almost half stayed less than one month, and almost 80% stayed less than three months. Emergency shelter clients had stayed for shorter times.
- Among families who stayed in their own place prior to entering emergency shelter, 75% reported being there less than three months, 58% less than one month, and a third reported living there for less than one week.
- Families exiting emergency shelter most often left for a housing opportunity, while transitional housing clients most often tended to leave because they had completed the program.
- A rental room, house, or apartment was the most common destination for transitional housing families but for less than a sixth of emergency shelter families.

This report helps establish a local base of information for Cuyahoga County by providing one of the first comprehensive assessments of the local situation for homeless families. Using multiple sources of data, we have examined family homelessness in Cuyahoga from different angles, using different sources of data. While the Census data we have presented contribute to our understanding of families at risk for becoming homeless in Cuyahoga County due to being doubled up, there are no universal definitions of being doubled up, the reasons for being doubled up are not often clear, and being doubled up, though a common occurrence for persons who will later become

homeless, is far from a perfect predictor of homelessness. The HMIS data focused more specifically on local homelessness data and revealed the characteristics of the area's homeless families.

By examining both risk for homelessness and the characteristics of those covered by the shelter system, this study has estimated the size of the problem on the local level. While these estimates are highly variable due to the differences and methodological challenges of both homeless research and the nature of our data sources, we have been able to establish some baseline numbers. The HMIS data in particular will be a crucial tool as local efforts to reduce and eventually end homelessness move forward. The continued collection and analysis of HMIS data during every stage of program planning and implementation will allow Cuyahoga County to better understand how effectively homeless programs in the community are serving families, keep families from falling through system cracks, and eventually, demonstrate the success of local interventions and systems changes over time. These efforts will ultimately strengthen the system overall as well as improve services for needy families.

Part I. Introduction

General Introduction

Family homelessness is a serious social problem and has the potential for becoming more widespread as affordable housing is lost due to the foreclosure crisis, economic conditions that undermine the job prospects of low skill workers, and access to public assistance benefits is curtailed. It is difficult to get an estimate of the scope of the family homelessness problem, in part because national studies have shown that families who use homeless services show few clear cut statistical differences from poor families in general. However, there may be precursors to homelessness or warning signs that can be used to estimate the size of an at-risk population.

Nationwide, communities are making commitments to avoid this trauma and helping to prevent families from becoming homeless in the first place by quickly restoring permanent housing arrangements when families do experience housing insecurity or homeless spells. While homelessness prevention is an ideal, planning for an effective approach to family homelessness requires a local base of information with which to move forward in terms of service planning and delivery (Metraux, Culhane, Raphael, White, Pearson, Hirsch, Ferrell, Rice, Ritter, & Cleghorn, 2001) that is not currently available. This study addresses this need by estimating the scope of family homelessness in Cuyahoga County, via analysis of secondary data sets including Census and county homelessness data. These analyses focus on prevalence, risk factors, particularly poverty status, rent burden and/or residing within other households in a doubled up living situation, the geographic distribution of homeless families, their characteristics, and patterns of service utilization including use of county shelters. Such estimates can aid in planning local strategies for addressing family homelessness. Studies and approaches undertaken in other cities to addressing family homelessness may also be useful in considering strategies to address these needs.

Who is Homeless and How Many Are Homeless?

Defining Homelessness. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)'s definition of a homeless person is "an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is: supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill); an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings" (McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987; Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2004)

Counting the Homeless. Counting the numbers of homeless persons is a major challenge with a long history, and is extremely controversial. The report *Homelessness Counts* published by the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) details the history of attempts to count the numbers homeless in the United States (NAEH, 2007a). A fundamental question noted in that report is who should be included in the count—for example, should those who are literally homeless and living on the street be counted

along with those who are in shelter, and those who are living doubled up with others. Other questions include where the homeless should be counted, and how they are best accessed and counted. For example, guidelines should be in place to ensure each person is counted only once, and when to count, given seasonal shifts in homeless patterns. Different times of the year or different seasons tend to translate to different numbers of persons on the streets and/or in shelters. For example, shelters might see more families in shelter during the summer months when children are out of school. On the flip side, more persons might be willing to live on the streets or in less secure shelters when the weather is warmer, while an influx to indoor shelters might be seen in colder winter months. There are fluctuations in the living situations of persons and/or families that make estimating their numbers accurately at one point in time difficult.

Counting persons who live on the street is fraught with methodological problems given that persons could literally live anywhere—in cars, abandoned buildings, under freeways, and various other places that might not be visible or known to others. Attempts to estimate the unsheltered homeless tend to be at particular points in time (such as one day) to attempt an unduplicated count. Only counting persons who enter shelter or who use services underestimates the magnitude of the homeless population because those numbers only examine persons who use services and end up in shelter, and fail to take into account those who are turned away for lack of space in shelter or for being ineligible for entering. HUD has instituted a system for counting what is sometimes referred to as the “sheltered homeless,” that is, those that have entered the shelter system. This system, the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), standardizes data collection of characteristics of those who enter the homeless service system—emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent housing units. Data from the HMIS will be described in detail later in this paper. Because shelter use patterns are dynamic, even shelter use data tend to be complicated.

National Estimates. Given all of the issues with how to count the homeless, getting an exact count of homeless persons living in the United States is nearly impossible, but different organizations have attempted estimates. A 1996 count estimated the numbers homeless based on numbers of persons served by soup kitchens, shelters, and homeless service providers, but did not include persons living on the street. This count estimated the numbers homeless at anywhere between 444,000 and 842,000 (NAEH, 2007b). In 2001, the Urban Institute (Burt, Aron, Lee, & Valente, 2001) estimated that more than 800,000 people, and 200,000 children in families are homeless on any given day, and the NAEH estimated that number to be 600,000 families and 1.35 million children in any given year (NAEH, 2006). Some of these families are “known” entities to the homeless shelter and other social service providers, while others live in their cars, motels, abandoned buildings, shantytowns or other structures, and others live on the streets. Still others stay with family, friends, or others--“doubled up,” either temporarily or long-term. The NAEH (2007) has estimated that the sheltered homeless make up 56% of all of those who are homeless, while 44% are unsheltered, that 59% of the homeless population is made up of individuals, while 41% is made up of members of families with children. In Ohio, they estimate that there are 12,213 sheltered, 3,952 unsheltered homeless persons (0.14% of the state population based on American Community Survey [ACS] 2005 population estimates) (NAEH, 2007a).

Causes and Consequences of Family Homelessness

Causes of Family Homelessness. The research and literature on family homelessness is fairly new, but has provided some important insights about what places families at particular risk. Comparing them with single adult homeless, research has found members of homeless families have been found to be more likely than homeless single adults to be younger, married, African American, have lower levels of education, have a female head of household, be employed, and have longer stays in shelter (Metraux, Culhane, Raphael, White, Pearson, Hirsch, Ferrell, Rice, Ritter, & Cleghorn, 2001; Shinn, Rog & Culhane, 2005). Members of homeless families have been found to be less likely than homeless adults to be substance abusers, have mental health disorders, and be considered chronically homeless (i.e., they stay in shelter for shorter periods) (Culhane & Metraux, 2008; Metraux et al., 2001; Shinn, Rog & Culhane, 2005).

In a review of the literature on family homelessness, Rog & Buckner (2007) found that very low income homeless families tend to be very similar to very low income housed families, making accurate prediction of homelessness, and therefore the development of prevention programs, difficult. Families with some characteristics, however, seem to be particularly overrepresented in the homeless population. These characteristics include having a high rent burden, being young, a female head of household, pregnant or having a child under one year old, living in crowded housing conditions and/or doubled up with others, having low levels of education and lacking work skills, moving frequently, experiencing family separations, belonging to an ethnic minority group, and lacking housing subsidies (Rog & Buckner, 2007).

Overall, research has found that the combination of a lack of affordable housing and low incomes put poor families at risk for becoming homeless (Choi & Snyder, 1999; Hill & Culhane, 2003; NAEH, 2007b). Other researchers argue that rent burdens, urban decline, spatial isolation of poor minorities and substandard housing and to a lesser extent, substance abuse, mental illness, and domestic violence all contribute to family homelessness (Choi & Snyder, 1999).

The causes of homelessness are complex, and it is difficult to predict who will become homeless and who will not. Thus, it might be more accurate to describe homelessness in terms of levels of risk. Such levels of risk include structural factors (e.g., policies) as well as individual factors (e.g., demographics), and some interaction between the two; that is, some combination of multiple individual factors and structural conditions place families at particularly high risk. The addition of some economic or personal crisis might be the deciding factor in determining who becomes homeless and who is able to avoid it (NAEH, 2007b; Poole & Zugazaga, 2003). Choi and Snyder (1999) found that when low-income families are one welfare check or paycheck away from homelessness, a job loss, eviction, or marital breakup could lead them to homelessness.

Residential Instability. Often living arrangements for those who are homeless or nearly homeless are temporary and unstable. Such instability in living situations has dire consequences for members of these families, including poor health outcomes and health care utilization (Kushel, Gupta, Gee, & Haas, 2005). According to data from the American Housing Survey from 2005, an estimated 2.3 million families with children

nationwide with incomes 50% below the area median are threatened by unstable housing situations, by being severely rent burdened, or living in severely substandard housing are renters and do not obtain housing subsidies (Khadduri, 2008). Unstable housing might be the result of such a crisis, and instability in living arrangements might go on for some time before a family actually enters shelter. In interviews with sheltered individuals, people said if they had been able to obtain affordable housing they could have avoided entering shelter (Poole & Zugazaga, 2003). Poole & Zugazaga (2003) found that people tend to make substantial efforts to avoid homelessness via their own capacity for self-help, then turn to personal networks (family first, then friends), and then to community networks (churches, police, social service agencies).

Research has found that people tend to have unstable living arrangements before becoming homeless, often living with family and friends temporarily, and enter shelter in part because they were asked to leave or were forced out of these living situations (Fischer, 2000). Research has suggested that stable housing is associated with having access to healthy food, services, education, and employment (Lubbell, Crain, & Cohen, 2007). Affordable housing, in turn, is related to residential stability, improved educational outcomes, and improved labor market outcomes (Lubell et al., 2007) while a lack of affordable housing spurs homelessness (NAEH, 2006). Lack of affordability is manifested in housing shortages, persons experiencing severe rent burdens, overcrowding, and substandard housing located in dangerous neighborhoods managed by unscrupulous landlords, as well as public housing with long waiting lists (Choi & Snyder, 1999; NAEH, 2006).

Effects/Consequences of Homelessness. Some of the effects and consequences of homelessness are difficult to separate from the causes of homelessness. For example, residential instability is both a cause of homelessness and it can be an effect of homelessness as well. There is also evidence that families must break up to get into shelter (Letiecq, Anderson, & Koblinsky, 1998), and this is an important risk factor for predicting future homelessness (Rog, Holupka, & Patton, 2007), but ends up also being an effect of homelessness. Shelters that house women and their children often do not allow men, so the family must break up to accommodate the individuals. Additionally, some shelters do not allow teenage boys (often as young as 11 years old) to stay with other women and children, giving the family a difficult choice to make: forgoing shelter altogether or separating the family so that younger children and a parent can enter shelter.

While shelter stays were seen as helpful in the emergency short-term, longer stays were correlated with decreased help from personal support networks, increased depression and increased use of medications to control anxiety. These findings were supported by Belcher (1991), who found that once the homeless enter emergency shelter, they have not only lost their home, increased substance abuse, and can no longer rely on personal support networks and their social isolation has increased.

The effects of homelessness on children are mixed. Though some research has suggested that homelessness has a negative impact on children, the flaws in the studies have called such results into question. In particular, the research has suffered from an inability to separate the negative effects of homelessness from the negative effects of living in poverty (Buckner, 2008). A recent longitudinal study comparing

formerly homeless and housed children research suggests that homeless children and housed children tend to have similar scores on cognitive assessments after controlling for poverty and related factors (Shinn, Schteingart, Chioke Williams, Carlin-Mathis, Bialo-Karagis, Becker-Klein, & Weitzman, 2008). Nevertheless, there is wide agreement in the literature that social support and housing subsidies are protective against poor outcomes for homeless families as well as helping to prevent families at risk from becoming homeless (Hill & Culhane, 2003; Letiecq, Anderson, & Koblinsky, 1998; Rog, Holupka, & Patton, 2007).

Addressing and Ending Homelessness

Federal policy currently focuses on disabled people and the issues faced by the long-term or chronic homeless rather than on those of families, because the evidence base is in this area. The evidence base for the issues homeless families face is evolving, and appropriate policies should be developed. McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in 1987 the major federal policy response put in place to meet critical urgent needs of the homeless. Though much of the previous research and policy efforts surrounding homelessness have focused on single adults rather than families, and especially on those chronically homeless, research suggests that a one-size-fits all is inappropriate for addressing family homelessness. Homelessness is costly for families, as well as for society as a whole, while prevention is substantially less expensive than assisting families with eviction and re-housing (NAEH, 2006).

The NAEH has promoted the idea that the key to ending homelessness is preventing it in the first place by keeping people housed¹ (NAEH, 2007b). This approach, referred to as Housing First, focuses on helping people to quickly acquire or keep a permanent housing situation and providing them with appropriate services to assist with long-term stability. The NAEH argues that preventing homelessness by helping people to avoid eviction and/or rapidly re-housing them is less expensive and more cost-effective than providing emergency shelter (NAEH 2006).² The key components to the approach are crisis intervention, emergency services, screening and needs assessment, permanent housing services, and case management services (NAEH, 2006). The approach maintains a focus on the rapid, efficient, and targeted administration of assistance, as well as close contact with clients, and anticipation of needs. There is evidence that supportive services must be tailored to meet the complex and dynamic nature of individual families' needs (Bassuk & Geller, 2006; Culhane & Metraux, 2008; NAEH, 2006). For example, through in-depth initial housing assessments, families with particular barriers to becoming re-housed are identified and the permanent housing strategy that best meets the family's needs families can be implemented.

Keeping families housed would seem to be an especially effective means of reducing the numbers of overall homeless because keeping one family from becoming

¹ The 10 essentials the NAEH argues for are: (1) making plans for ending homelessness; (2) obtaining data; (3) preventing homelessness via rent/mortgage and/or utility assistance; (4) providing services to families (5) offering outreach; (6) shortening homeless episodes; (7) rapidly rehousing those who have lost their housing; (8) ensuring access to public assistance; (9) ensuring an adequate supply of affordable permanent housing; and (10) increasing income to enable people to afford area rents (NAEH, 2006).

² Cost of annual emergency shelter bed \$8,067, more than a section 8 voucher (NAEH, 2006).

homeless would translate to helping, on average, three or more people at one time. An important component to keeping families housed is having adequate subsidies. The NAEH has reported that as many as 10 million eligible families do not receive subsidies because the housing subsidies are under funded (NAEH, 2007b). They also report that in many cities, waiting lists for applications for subsidized housing are several years long.

National Models and Best Practices. There are various national models and community approaches that have prioritized homelessness prevention, and communities around the country have adopted plans for eliminating homelessness. Strategies vary and are tailored to the resources and systems appropriate for and available in the locality. Different communities have made significant progress toward ending family homelessness implementing housing models according to the available resources and strategies appropriate for their area. Locke, Khadduri, & O'Hara (2007) describe a number of innovative service models across the country. Among other programs, those in Hennepin County, Minnesota, the District of Columbia, and Columbus, Ohio use centralized intake systems for in-depth intake assessments after which families are routed to the most appropriate interventions, with entry into shelter as a last resort. Short-term (or shallow) rent subsidies and/or utility assistance are used in a number of areas, including Portland, Oregon, Hennepin County, Minnesota, the District of Columbia, and Illinois' Homeless Prevention Program to keep families who are in their own places stay there. Communities find that the costs of providing short-term subsidies are far lower than the cost of providing shelter. Families who are already homeless or who have significant barriers to being quickly re-housed are often priorities for transitional or permanent housing units paired with intensive services (where needed and/or appropriate) for programs such as Beyond Shelter in Los Angeles and San Francisco's Family Permanent Supportive Housing Initiative (Locke, Khadduri, & O'Hara, 2007).

Data and tracking systems are central elements to any sound homelessness prevention strategy, and are important components to all of the programs mentioned above—from determining the size and peculiarities of the problem locally and designing appropriate interventions to evaluating the effectiveness of such interventions. Because data have been collected for many years, Franklin County, Ohio has been able to demonstrate a decrease of 40% in family homelessness between 1995 and 2004. Similarly, Hennepin County, Minnesota, was able to show a 43% decline in homeless families from 2000-2004, and in New York City a 19% decrease between 2003 and 2006, all decreases that coincide with the introduction of new and innovative programs in the areas. Data and tracking are continuing to become vitally important, and different communities across the country are recognizing the need to combine data systems across social service systems in order to better serve families in the communities. Data warehouses have been created in a number of areas, including Michigan, and the Bay Area (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2008), in which human service data are integrated to better understand the service usage and needs of people in the community. A similar system is used locally; the Invest in Children program integrates a number of different data systems to collect information to better identify high risk families that have very young children, to monitor whether they are being

reached with preventive services and assess whether progress is being made on child outcomes.

Because of the economic downturn and the huge amount of attention focused on the foreclosure crisis, housing issues are becoming highlighted on a national level. Innovative programs are being developed to buy foreclosed homes and develop them for affordable housing units. One of these programs, the National Housing Trust Fund bill was signed into law as part of the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008 (Pub. L. 110-289, 122 Stat. 2654, enacted July 30, 2008). The National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF) uses monies from Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to address housing issues primarily for very low income households, particularly rental housing (NHTF, 2008). However, with the government's takeover of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the future of the program is uncertain.

Barriers to Helping the Homeless. While there are some promising strategies for combating homelessness, there are barriers to implementing a series of policies. Political will is an important component of successful policy changes, and political will is influenced in turn by public perceptions and priorities. The NAEH notes that one issue that stands in the way of effectively addressing family homelessness is the public perception that the prototypical homeless person is a single adult man (NAEH 2006), not a family. Other barriers include the belief that homelessness is due to individual pathologies, such as laziness, mental illness, violence, and/or substance abuse and not structural or social issues (Lyon-Callo, 2004). A national survey found that although the general population's views of the homeless have become less stereotyped, and people tend to understand homelessness is a complex issue, there was also an inverse relationship between the economy and people's attitudes toward homelessness. Specifically, when the economy was in good shape, people were less likely to believe that homelessness was a serious social problem and were less likely to believe economic factors play a role in causing homelessness (Tompsett, 2006). Other issues include the use of "coded language" in talking about the poor, including distinguishing between the "deserving" versus "undeserving" poor, and setting goals of "self-sufficiency" (Roman, 2008). Such language tends to focus attention on the less seriously poor rather than those who are most needy.

Assessing Local Conditions: Cuyahoga County

Economy/Poverty/Affordability. In 2006, the U.S. Census Bureau released a report ranking Cleveland as the poorest big city in America, based on data from the ACS. By 2007, Cleveland was ranked second to Detroit in poverty, but only because poverty went up in Detroit, not because it fell in Cleveland. Though the methodology for determining such a ranking has been criticized for not taking into account issues specific to Cleveland such as middle class flight to the suburbs, and for not taking into account the greater metropolitan area (Schweitzer & Rudick, 2007), the dense concentration of poverty in the city remains a cause for concern.

The ACS estimated the population of Cuyahoga County in 2007 to be 1,268,506. The county saw a decline in its population of 5.7% between April of 2000 and July of 2006. About a third of Cuyahoga County's population was Black or African American in 2007, and 81.6% of those over age 25 had obtained a high school diploma (U.S Census

Bureau, 2008). With regard to housing stability, data from the 2000 Census indicate that 40% of persons aged five and older had moved into their home during the previous five years and more than 17% of occupied housing units had a householder that had been in their current unit for less than one year (Northeast Ohio Community and Neighborhood Data [NEOCANDO], 2008). In 2007, the estimated median household income was \$44,358, and 15.5% of the population was estimated to live below the poverty level. Almost a quarter (23.7%) of the total county population in 2007 was made up of children under the age of 18, and just over 6% were under the age of five. Nearly a fifth (18%) of all families with children under the age of 18 was estimated to be living in poverty. For families headed by females with no husband present, more than a third with children under the age of 18, (37%) were living in poverty, and half with children under the age of five were living in poverty.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's³ *Kids Count* tracking database compared the Cleveland's poverty numbers with those of other areas, and ranked Cleveland number 45th of 50 big cities, with an estimated 41% of its children under the age of five living in poverty. Cleveland ranks also ranks 47th for the proportion of its children (8%) who are living in extreme poverty.^{4,5} With regard to the number of single parent families with related children below the poverty level, Ohio was ranked 38th with 35%, and Cleveland ranked 37th with 42%. It is also estimated that a third of children in Cleveland are living in families where no parent has full-time year-round employment. Additional measures of the needs of the area's children include information on numbers receiving food stamps and free or reduced price lunches; in 2005, almost a third (27%) of children in Cuyahoga County benefited from food stamps and 39% received free or reduced price lunches (Annie E. Casey, 2008). Additionally, figures compiled from the Northeast Ohio Community and Neighborhood Data for Organizing (NEOCANDO) indicate increases in food stamp enrollment between 2000 and 2008, with the highest numbers among those living in Cuyahoga County's suburbs (NEOCANDO, 2008).

Affordability, Rent Burden and Housing Needs: Fair Market Rent. According to the most recent *Out of Reach* report released by the National Low Income Housing Coalition (Pelletiere, Wardrip, & Crowley, 2008), the fair market rent (FMR) for 2007-2008 in Cuyahoga County was \$725 for a two-bedroom apartment. The NLIHC calculated the hourly wage necessary to afford this rent without having a rent burden to be \$13.94 the equivalent of two full-time minimum wage jobs. According to HUD, rent affordable at 30% of the area's annual median income (AMI) of the area is \$266. Based on these calculations, 50% of renters in Cuyahoga County are unable to afford a two-bedroom FMR apartment.

In addition to the lack of rental affordability, a series of recent Center for Housing Policy reports using data from the American Housing Survey⁶, the Cleveland metropolitan area is suffering from an overall lack of affordability for its residents. According to their analyses, Cleveland was ranked 183rd of 210 metropolitan areas with regard to home rental affordability, with a nearly 3% increase in income needed to

³ Data are from 2006.

⁴ Extreme poverty is defined as living in a family with income 50% of the poverty level.

⁵ Detroit, Atlanta, and St. Louis were the cities with higher rates.

⁶ Cleveland data were collected in 2004

affordably rent a two-bedroom home in the area from 2006 to 2007. With regard to home purchases, Cleveland was ranked 165th of the 210 areas. Although the area saw a 10.55% decrease in income needed to buy a home, it remains difficult for many segments of the population to afford homes in the area; Cleveland was ranked the 16th least affordable market out of 31 metropolitan areas studied for working family⁷ homeowners, with 9.5% of these homeowners experiencing severe rent burdens⁸. Cleveland was also ranked 14th of 31 metropolitan areas because of its almost 12% of working family households with critical housing needs⁹, and Cleveland was also ranked 16th of 31 metropolitan areas for the percent increase in critical housing needs among working family households (31%). In the case of Cleveland, the housing affordability problem is due more to the large number of low income households than to the high price of the housing stock.

Home Foreclosures. A recent study projected that the foreclosure crisis will affect as many as 68,500 of Ohio's children in the coming years (Lovell & Isaacs, 2008). The Cleveland area has been hit hard by the home foreclosure crisis. According to a recent report, Cuyahoga County has had the highest number of foreclosure filings in the state for the last three years, and a 66.3% increase in the last five years (Schiller & Hirsh, 2008), with foreclosure filings quadrupling between 2000 and 2007 (Coulton, Mikelbank, & Schramm, 2008). In 2007 14,946 home foreclosures were filed in Cuyahoga County according to Policy Matters Ohio, the highest number of any county (Schiller & Hirsh, 2008). The foreclosure crisis is resulting in abandoned homes all over the greater Cleveland area, and the longer homes stay vacant the worse off the properties and surrounding neighborhoods are likely to be. A geographic focus is an important because neighborhoods affected by high rates of home foreclosure are increasingly at risk, and reported, high numbers of home foreclosures in an area lead to other foreclosures in the same area (Coulton et al., 2008).

One of the biggest dangers of the foreclosure crisis for very low-income families is if the homes they rent are foreclosed upon. A recent study estimated that the number of rental foreclosure filings increased by 26% between 2006 and 2007 (Rothstein, 2008). This study of renters affected by foreclosures found that the average cost to families who are evicted or must otherwise "start over" in a new place is \$2,558 (Rothstein, 2008). Renters must deal with losing security deposits, their current month's rent, as well as the costs of utility transfers, moving, storage, replacement of appliances, school transfers, and finding new housing and transportation. Such costs can be difficult or impossible for low-income families to bear, and Rothstein found that families tend to seek help from others, often doubling up with family and/or friends.

While home foreclosures can be seen on one level as contributing to making the housing market more affordable for low-income families, on another, foreclosures are having a disproportionate impact on these families, since they were often the targets of sub-prime loans. A recent study found that holding high cost sub-prime loans are strong

⁷ Working family is defined by working full-time, and earning at least \$10,712 but no more than 120% of the median income for the area.

⁸ Spending more than 50% of household income on housing and housing-related costs

⁹ Critical housing needs are defined by having a severe rent burden and/or living in severely dilapidated conditions.

predictors of home foreclosures, and that African Americans are disproportionately affected by these practices (Coulton, Chan, Schramm, & Mikelbank, 2008). While home foreclosure does not necessarily lead to homelessness for most families, combined with job loss or other in a series of events for a family, it could provide an environment in which living situations are particularly tenuous and could send families in need of homeless services and assistance.

Sources of Affordable Housing. Sources of subsidized housing in Cuyahoga County include housing vouchers, project-based section 8 housing, and public housing. Waiting lists for public housing are very long, and the resources available are inadequate to meet the need. There are many thousands fewer slots for housing subsidies and public housing units than there are people on the waiting lists, indicating there is a substantial need for affordable housing in the county.

Numbers of People Homeless in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County. The most recent point-in-time (one day) count of the area's homeless on January 29, 2008 reported by the Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Continuum of Care (CoC) found that there was a total of 2,272 persons (both single individuals and individuals in families) who were either in sheltered or unsheltered homeless situations. For individuals in families with children, the CoC reported that there were 219 people in emergency shelter and 223 in transitional housing, and 10 were unsheltered. People in families with children accounted for 21% of all sheltered homeless in the county, 6% of the unsheltered, and 20% of the total. These estimates were lower than those from 2007.

Local Organizations. One of Cleveland's greatest strengths is its network of local charitable organizations. A number of these organizations are already working together to serve and advocate for the homeless in the community. Among other organizations, the Cleveland Tenant's Organization works with tenants and operates an eviction diversion program to help families at risk to avoid homelessness, 211 First Call for Help works to refer people to appropriate organizations, and the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless (NEOCH) advocates for the homeless across the community.

Indicators of Need. In its 2007 report, the NEOCH compiled data from 211 First Call for Help, a central information helpline that offers referrals to thousands of community agencies. These data indicated that 211 had a total of 148,100 calls for 2007, with substantial increases in the particular types of calls, including a 51% increase in questions about landlord/tenant issues, and a 39% increase in calls requesting information about food banks. Housing-related calls included a 30% increase in the number of calls with questions about housing, and a 5% increase in calls with questions about shelter. Data on calls indicate that there were 15,781 calls to 211 for assistance with bill payment, 11,653 for referrals to homeless shelters or transitional housing, 5,390 calls regarding rent payment assistance, 2,124 requests for information on low income/subsidized private rental housing (211 First Call for Help Service Requests, 2007). These high numbers of calls for basic assistance¹⁰ suggest that need in the community are increasing.

¹⁰ Calls are not unduplicated and not necessarily made by people in need

Summary and Study Aim

Family homelessness is difficult to predict, even though there are some factors that seem to place families at particular risk. Structural and individual factors interact to place families at risk, but how these factors interact to produce homelessness locally is not well understood. The study develops local base of information on the numbers and characteristics of those experiencing family homelessness and risk factors for homelessness among poor individuals, families, and households¹¹ in Cuyahoga County.

¹¹ Examining characteristics of families is a complex undertaking, considering that families are composed of individuals with various relationships to one another, and unique characteristics of their own. In addition, members of households might or might not be related to one another, and therefore, there are particular characteristics of a household as a whole that are different from the characteristics of an individual and a family. Thus, in this report, characteristics of individuals, families, and households will be described separately, sample sizes will vary accordingly, and conclusions should be drawn keeping these points in mind. Individual characteristics include gender, race, age, marital status, education level, and employment status, while family characteristics include income, and household characteristics include income, rent, rent burden, crowding, household location, and poverty level.

Part II. Estimating the Numbers of Individuals Living in Doubled Up Housing Situations in Cuyahoga County

Introduction and Background on Doubled Up Living Situations

Previous research on housing problems has paid attention to the more visible homelessness (often referred to as literal homelessness) rather than more intermediate forms of housing problems such as people living in doubled up housing (Bolland, & McCallum, 2002, Cordray & Pion, 1991, Jenks, 1994, Marin & Vacha, 1994, Wright, Caspi, Moffitt, & Silva, 1998,). Because doubled up housing a situation often immediately precedes homelessness, knowing who is currently in a doubled up situation may be an important indication of who will ultimately become homeless (Wright, et al., 1998). A few studies have demonstrated the relationship between homelessness and those who are doubled up. For example research has found that a wide range of the homeless (46% - 82%) experience a doubled up housing situation before becoming homeless, especially female heads of household (First, Rife, & Toomey, 1994; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2008; Link et al., 1994).

According to a nationwide telephone survey, experiencing a doubled up housing situation is significantly associated with being homeless (Link et al., 1994). Another study found that of the 11 percent of the general population who had been doubled up at some point in their lives, 59 % had also been homeless at some point (Link et al., 1994). Some studies have suggested that people under 30 years of age are the most vulnerable population to experience a doubled up situation in the U.S. (e.g., Shlay & Rossi, 1992). Additionally, about 2 million single-parent families have been found to live in other people's homes, and 186,000 children are doubled up with relatives or friend (Jencks, 1994). A national phone survey in 1997 found that an estimated 18 million households reported providing temporary shelter to someone—primarily relatives and close friends, and lower income households more often reported having provided shelter than higher income households (Bolland & McCallum, 2002).

A doubled up situation is not only correlated with homelessness but also results in serious problems at the individual and familial levels (Link et al., 1994, Shlay & Rossi, 1992, Wright et al., 1998). Although a doubled up situation is physically different from literal homelessness (living on the street or in a shelter), its impact has been found to be similar to actual homelessness (Wright et al., 1998). First of all, a doubled up situation often results in household crowding that is connected with marital arguments, marital instability, psychological distress and tension among household members, and research has found that young people and children who live in crowded living situations receive less social support and experience greater psychological distress (Evans, Lercher, & Kofler, 2002, Fuller, Edwards, Vorakitphokatorn, & Sermsri, 1993). In interviews with homeless families with children, most reported having stayed with relatives and/or friends prior to entering shelter (Choi & Snyder, 1999b). Doubling up was reported for a relatively short period, ranging from a night to a week or two, usually because space and resources were limited in their doubled up housing arrangement. Relationships between the doubled up individuals and the person with whom they were doubled up often worsened during the stay due to crowding and limited space. For most doubled up persons, this put an extra strain on an already limited social network (Choi & Snyder, 1999b). In general, living in a doubled up situation seems to more seriously affect young

adults and children than adults. Housing problems create general instability in one's life, and this instability might prohibit young adults and children from progressing in other areas of life such as obtaining education or employment training resulting in detrimental long-term consequences on young adults and children (Wright et al., 1998).

HUD does not currently consider those who are doubled up in their definition of homelessness. Given the problematic nature of living in a doubled up situation, however, Congress has been considering refining HUD's definition of homelessness to include those people living doubled up in their reauthorization of the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Grants Program. In the Senate's version of the reauthorization, the Community Partnership to End Homelessness Act (S. 1518), the definition of homelessness includes those who are living doubled up (Burt, 2007, Cunningham & Henry, 2006, NAEH, 2007c). Very recently (July 31, 2008), the House Financial Services Committee (HFSC) passed a similar version of the bill (H.R. 840, The Hearth Act) which would expand the definition of homelessness to include those at imminent risk (within 14 days) of losing their current housing due to lack of resources, including those people living in a doubled up situation.

In response to such legislation, the NAEH set out to examine the implications of broadening the definition of homelessness (NAEH, 2007c). Noting that there is no widely accepted definition for a doubled up housing situation, the NAEH constructed a definition, and using the ACS, estimated the number of people that could be doubled up on a national level. They found that, depending on the definition of being doubled up that is used (these will be discussed later), anywhere between 2.4 million and 35 million people could be considered doubled up (NAEH, 2007c). The NAEH concluded that including "doubled up" in the definition of homelessness could have enormous funding implications.

Most studies on homelessness have focused on treatment approaches (i.e., mental health issues, substance abuse, shelter, transitional housing, etc.) rather than preventive approaches, but one of the most effective homelessness prevention strategies is keeping people housed. Another possibility is to deal with the doubled up housing situation. Few studies on doubled up housing have been conducted on the national or state level, but it might be important to understand more about doubling up (Bolland & McCallum, 2002, Wright et al., 1998). Better understanding the characteristics of people living doubled up in Cuyahoga County will contribute to developing our understanding of the potential risk factors for homelessness and hopefully for developing effective preventive programs for those at risk of homelessness. This section explores the doubled up housing situation in Cuyahoga County.

Purpose and Questions

We sought to estimate the number of doubled up people in Cuyahoga County by replicating locally the NAEH's estimation at the national level. In addition to the estimation, we explored the characteristics of the doubled up population in Cuyahoga County using descriptive analysis. Three questions guided our analysis. (1) How many people in Cuyahoga County are living in a doubled up housing situation? (2) How many children and adults in Cuyahoga County are living in a doubled up housing situation? (3) What are the characteristics of those living in a doubled up housing situation?

Measures

The ACS 2005-2006. There have been no studies directly assessing doubled up living situations in Cuyahoga County. A few states have conducted telephone surveys to estimate the numbers of those living in doubled up situations (Bolland & McCallum, 2002). Because the NAEH's estimates of those doubled up at the national level were based on a Census dataset, we utilized this same source for our analysis.

We used the Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample (IPUMS) of the ACS. The U.S. Census Bureau produces the ACS on an annual basis. The ACS, also known as the long form of the Census, is taken at a point-in-time and provides nationally representative estimates on demographic, social, economic, and housing characteristics of the U.S. population. This report analyzed the ACS datasets from 2005 and 2006 for Cuyahoga County¹². Although the purpose of the ACS is not specific to assessing doubled up living situations, it contains a useful variable that examines the relationship between the head of household and other members of the household. Using a number of other variables in the ACS datasets, we estimate the number and characteristics of doubled up people in Cuyahoga County. It should be noted that the ACS is a sample survey and that all estimates have a margin of error. Therefore, in the tables that follow, we note those differences that are statistically significant.

Definitions. Though there is no consensus about the definition of a doubled up situation (Cunningham & Henry, 2006, NAEH, 2007c), this report used the same definition of doubled up definition as the NAEH in their analysis of the numbers of people living doubled up nationally (NAEH, 2007c). The NAEH's definition examines the relationship between the householder and members of his/her household (see Figure 2-1). Specifically, the householder is asked to list the people in the household who have lived there for longer than two months or those who have no other regular place to stay, to indicate what their relationship is to them, and to give limited demographic information about them (such as gender, age, and race).

The definition of doubled up was constructed according to the relationship between a householder and the people living with him or her. The definition assumes a nuclear family relationship as a model, and those living outside of that nuclear family are considered to be living in a doubled up situation. The NAEH constructed three categories of living doubled up to try to capture a variety of living situations (NAEH, 2007c). These three categorizations and their estimates are described in Appendix A. We used the second of these three categories as our definition¹³-- those living with members of their extended family, friends, and non-relatives¹⁴ were considered doubled up for our analysis (NAEH, 2007c).

Because people live with others for various reasons, it might be meaningful to distinguish between voluntary and involuntary doubled up living situations. Some studies have defined the involuntary doubled up situation as living with others for economic reasons, and in lieu of having a specific question about why people live together poverty has been used as a proxy for economic reasons (Cunningham &

¹² Data for 2007 were recently released, but the complete data set was not yet available at this writing.

¹³ This was also the category considered most reasonable by the NAEH (NAEH, 2007c).

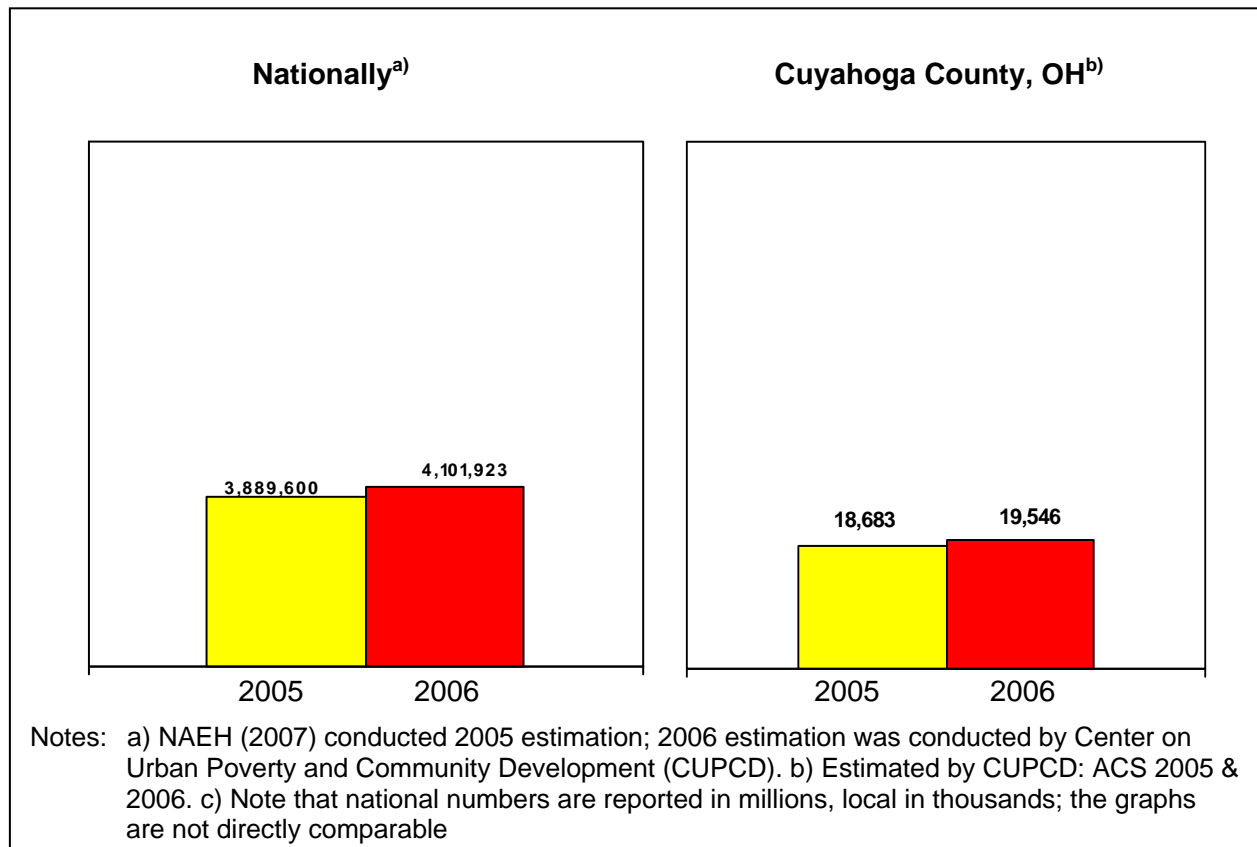
¹⁴ Family is defined as individuals who are related by blood, adoption, or marriage.

Henry, 2006, NAEH, 2007c). For a family of four, the federal poverty thresholds were \$19,350 in 2005 (Federal Register, 2005) and \$20,000, in 2006 (Federal Register, 2006). Thus, this analysis focuses on those living below the poverty level; those living above the federal poverty threshold were excluded regardless of their housing situation. Based on our analysis, 17% of people (n=221,825) in Cuyahoga County were living below the federal poverty threshold in 2005, and 14.9% in 2006 (n=191,739). According to the ACS, 14 percent of families and, 34% of female-headed households with no husband present were below the poverty level in 2005 (www.census.gov/). For 2006, 11% of families and 28% of female-headed households with no husband present were below the poverty level (www.census.gov/).

Findings: Doubled up in Cuyahoga County

We successfully replicated the NAEH analysis estimating the numbers of individuals below poverty living in doubled up housing situations on the national level, and then calculated the estimate on the local level (see Figure 2-2). The national estimate of doubled up people was between 2.5 million to 4 million in 2005 and 2006 (NAEH, 2007c). We estimated that of those living in poverty, 18,683 people in 2005 and 19,546 people in 2006 lived in doubled up housing situations in Cuyahoga County. In other words, about 10% of poor people living in Cuyahoga County resided in the homes of other family members, friends, or non-relatives.

Figure 2-2. National and Local Estimates of People Living in Doubled up Housing Situations

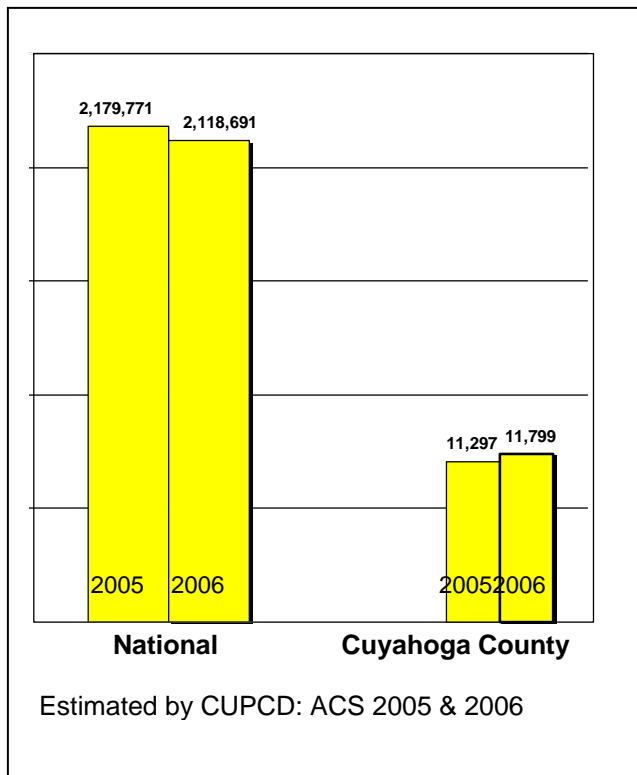


Characteristics of People Living Doubled up in Cuyahoga County. The characteristics of people under the poverty level who were living doubled up differed little between 2005 and 2006. For comparison purposes we examined two groups, both under the poverty level: those not living in doubled up housing situations and those who were living doubled up. The characteristics of doubled up people were analyzed separately for children and adults, for several reasons. First, when doubling up, it is common for families to separate, so children and adults might very well end up in different households. Thus, the patterns of the doubled up situation are likely to be different for each group. Second, several characteristics are not applicable to all of the age groups, such as educational attainment, living with children, disability, marital status, etc. We examine two categories of characteristics, those of the individual adult or child, and that of the household in which they are living doubled up. The individual characteristics of examined include background and demographic characteristics such as gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, educational attainment, number of children, presence of parents and siblings, and the relationship to the householder. The household characteristics of doubled up people are not specific to the individual, but instead are apply to all of those living in the household. Some household variables include ownership of the dwelling (i.e., owned vs. rented), how crowded the house was, rent burden, household size, median annual household income, median monthly rent (for a rented house), median mortgage payment, welfare receipt (public assistance and food stamps) and so on.

The examination of crowding in a household was calculated by taking the ratio between the number of rooms and the number of people living there. When the ratio is over 1.5, it is regarded as an overcrowded house (www.census.gov/). If a household paid more than 30% of its income to rent, it was considered to have a high rent burden; this is a common indicator of housing instability (Citro & Michael, 1995). The rent burden was examined by examining the proportion of the monthly rent and the monthly household income). We also examined those households experiencing severe rent burden—those in which more than 50% of the household income goes to rent. Finally, this report examines the geographic distribution of those living in a doubled up housing situation in Cuyahoga County. Using the Geographic Information System (GIS), we created a geographical map of the numbers living doubled up together with the poverty status of the area(s). The ACS dataset provides a specific geographic area code, which is referred to as the Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA). The PUMA is the smallest geographic area definition that is available in the ACS dataset. PUMAs generally follow the boundaries of county groups, single counties, or census-defined "places;" where these areas exceed 200,000 residents they are divided into as many PUMAs of 100,000+ residents as possible (<http://usa.ipums.org/usa/>). Cuyahoga County has 12 PUMAs, three of which are on the boundary of the city of Cleveland.

Characteristics of Doubled up Children. The numbers of children living in households

Figure 2-3. Doubled up Children



with incomes below the poverty level and doubled up with family, friends and non-relatives increased between 2005 and 2006 (See Figure 2-3).

Approximately one quarter of children in Cuyahoga County lived below the federal poverty threshold in 2005 and 2006 (26.6%, n=84,391 in 2005 and 24.1%, n=77,141 in 2006). Among them, an estimated 11,799, or 15% of poor children in Cuyahoga County were doubled up in 2006. More than half (51.7%) of doubled up children were boys and 68.1% of them were school aged (over the age of six), and most (77.1%) doubled up children attended public school. In terms of ethnicity, more than three-quarters (75.2%) of doubled up children were African American. Doubled up children appeared to be frequently separated from their parents—much more so than poor children not doubled up. Specifically, according to our data, 75.3% of doubled up children did

not live with their mother in the same household (n=8,879). However, 93.7% of poor children who were not doubled up lived with their mother (n=61,216). Moreover, for 93.9% of doubled up children, their father was not present (n=11,080). The absence of parenthood was the most distinguishing characteristic of doubled up children. In addition, 84.3% of doubled up children had no sibling or did not live with their siblings (n=9,951). A slightly larger number of doubled up children had a physical difficulty (1.4%, n=160) compared to children who were not doubled up (.5%, n=356) (See Table 2-1).

Table 2-1. Characteristics of Doubled up Children in Cuyahoga County (2006)

		Not Doubled up		Doubled up		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender*	Male	34,032	(52.1)	6,100	(51.7)	40,132	(52.0)
	Female	31,310	(47.9)	5,699	(48.3)	37,009	(48.0)
Age***	Below 6 yrs	20,493	(31.4)	3,763	(32.0)	24,256	(31.4)
	6-12	26,577	(40.7)	3,944	(33.6)	30,571	(39.6)
	13-15	11,774	(18.0)	2,532	(21.6)	14,306	(18.5)
	16-17	6,498	(9.9)	1,510	(12.9)	8,008	(10.4)
Race	African American	39,675	(60.6)	8,868	(75.2)	48,543	(64.2)
	White or others	25,767	(39.4)	2,931	(24.8)	27,059	(35.8)
Marriage**	Unmarried	64,995	(99.5)	11,707	(99.2)	76,702	(99.4)

	Married	347	(0.5)	92	(0.8)	439	(0.6)
Mother Link ^{1)***}	No	4,126	(6.3)	8,879	(75.3)	13,005	(16.9)
	Yes	61,216	(93.7)	2,920	(24.7)	64,136	(83.1)
Father Link ^{1)***}	No	50,915	(78.0)	11,080	(93.9)	61,995	(80.5)
	Yes	14,336	(22.0)	719	(6.1)	15,055	(19.5)
Live with Sibling ^{***}	No	9,517	(14.6)	9,951	(84.3)	19,468	(25.2)
	Yes	55,825	(85.4)	1,848	(15.7)	57,673	(74.8)
School Type ^{2)***}	Not enrolled	5,790	(10.4)	1,035	(10.9)	6,825	(10.4)
	Public	44,903	(80.3)	7,312	(77.1)	52,215	(79.9)
	Private	5,203	(9.3)	1,133	(12.0)	6,336	(9.7)
Physical Difficulty ³⁾	No	47,751	(99.3)	8,505	(98.2)	56,256	(99.1)
	Yes	356	(.7)	160	(1.8)	516	(.9)
Total		65,342	(100.0)	11,799	(100.0)	77,141	(100.0)

Notes: 1) Mother (or Father) Link: No= No mother (or father) of this person present in household

2) Excludes children under age six.

3) Indicates whether the respondent has a long-lasting condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities (e.g., walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying).

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$, *** $p < .001$

Data source: ACS 2006

Doubled up Children's Household Characteristics. Finally, we examined the household characteristics for the homes in which doubled up children resided. More than half (56.4%) of doubled up children lived in a rented house. The majority of the doubled up children lived with their grandparents (61.2%, $n=7,217$). The median monthly rent of the households in which doubled up children lived was \$719 ($n=6,658$), while that of children not doubled up was \$726. Nearly half (43.6%) of doubled up children lived with a householder who owned their home. The median monthly mortgage payment of these households was \$543 compared to \$704 for households with children not doubled up. The annual median household income for those households with doubled up children was \$14,590-- higher than that of households that did not have doubled up children \$10,565, though both incomes were substantially below the poverty level. We found that 85% of poor children lived in a home that had a serious rent burden regardless of the doubled up situation. Specifically, 85.6% of the households with children who were not doubled up suffered from a high rent burden ($n=46,030$) while 80.8% of the households having doubled up children had a high rent burden ($n=5,383$).

Table 2-2. Household Characteristics of Poor Children by Doubled up Status in Cuyahoga County (2006)

		Not Doubled up		Doubled up		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Relationship With Householder ¹⁾	Sibling	N/A	N/A	187	(1.6)	N/A	N/A
	Grandchild	N/A	N/A	7,217	(61.2)	N/A	N/A
	Other relatives	N/A	N/A	1,381	(11.7)	N/A	N/A
	Other non-relatives	N/A	N/A	3,014	(25.5)	N/A	N/A
Ownership ^{***}	Owned	11,522	(17.6)	5,141	(43.6)	16,663	(21.6)
	Rented	53,820	(82.4)	6,658	(56.4)	60,478	(78.4)
Median monthly mortgage ²⁾		\$704		\$543		\$684	
Median monthly rent ³⁾		\$727		\$720		\$726	

Median annual Income		\$10,565	\$14,590	\$12,074
Rent Burden ⁴⁾ ***	Below 30%	7,790 (14.5)	1,275 (19.1)	9,065 (15.0)
	30%-50%	7,240 (13.5)	1,332 (20.0)	8,572 (14.2)
	Above 50%	38,790 (72.1)	4,051 (60.8)	42,841 (70.8)
Household Size (n) ***	2-3	3,826 (5.9)	772 (6.5)	4,598 (6.0)
	3-4	29,509 (45.2)	4,062 (34.4)	33,571 (43.5)
	Above 5	32,007 (49.0)	6,965 (59.0)	38,972 (50.5)
Crowding ⁵⁾ ***	No	51,256 (78.4)	7,985 (67.7)	59,241 (76.8)
	Yes	14,086 (21.6)	3,814 (32.3)	17,900 (23.2)
Food Stamp ***	No	17,237 (26.4)	5,164 (43.8)	22,401 (29.0)
	Yes	48,105 (73.6)	6,635 (56.2)	54,740 (71.0)
Area***	Out of CLE ⁶⁾	28,275 (43.3)	2,715 (23.0)	30,990 (40.2)
	In CLE ⁶⁾	37,067 (56.7)	9,084 (77.0)	46,151 (59.8)
Total		65,342 (100.0)	11,799 (100.0)	77,141 (100.0)

Notes: 1) Only applicable to the doubled up population.

2) Only applicable to people living in an owned house.

3) Only applicable to people living in a rented house.

4) Only applicable to people living in a rented house;

rent burden=Gross monthly rent / Annual household income / 12 X 100%;
gross monthly rent= contract rent + additional costs (utilities & fuels)

5) Crowding index= Household size / Number of bedrooms in a household;
crowding index > 1.5

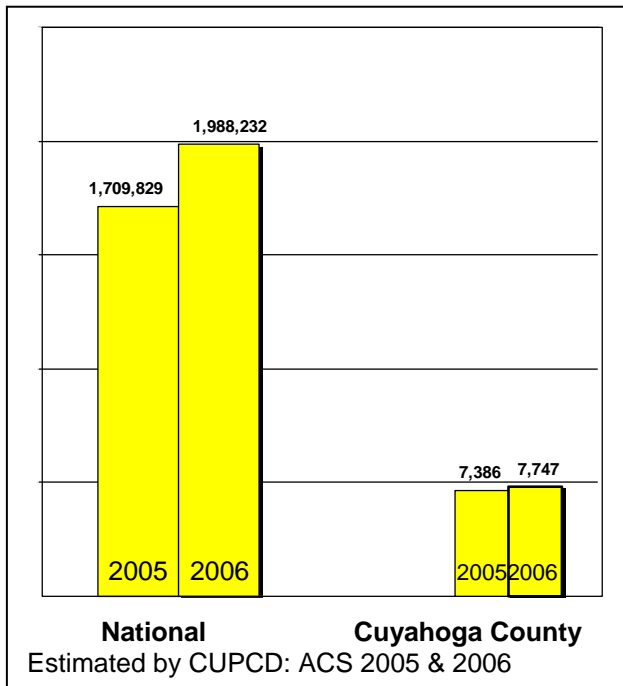
6) CLE=City of Cleveland

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$, *** $p < .001$

Data source: ACS 2006

The households in which doubled up children lived tended to be larger than the households in which poor children who were not doubled up lived. Almost two thirds (59%) of doubled up children as compared with just under half (49%) of children who were not doubled up lived in a household that had over five members. Doubled up children tended to live in more crowded households than those who were not doubled up; more than one-third (32.3%) of doubled up children lived in a crowded household while just over one-fifth (21.6%) of children not doubled up lived in a crowded household. With regard to public assistance receipt, 71% of poor children lived in a household that received food stamps regardless of whether they were living doubled up. Fewer households with doubled up children received food stamps, however—just over half (56.2%) of doubled up children’s households received food stamps but nearly three-quarters (73.6%) of poor households who did not have doubled up children received them. In terms of areas, more than three quarters of doubled up children (77%) lived in the City of Cleveland, and 56.7% of poor children who were not doubled up lived in the City of Cleveland (see Table 2-2).

Figure 2-4. Doubled up Adults



Characteristics of Doubled up Adults.

Approximately 14% of adults in Cuyahoga County lived below the federal poverty line in 2005 (13.9%, n=137,434) and 12% in 2006 (n=114,598). Among them, 6.8% (n = 7,747) lived doubled up at the home of other family members, friends, or non-relatives in 2006. Adults living doubled up in Cuyahoga County were largely female (58.2%, n=4,507), young (46.4% of adults were under 30; n=3,597), and African American (51.1%, n=3,957). Compared with the nearly half of those doubled up being under 30, almost a quarter (24.8%) of adults not doubled up were under 30. With regard to education and employment, 26.7% of doubled up adults had not earned a high school diploma (n=1,985) and 30.1% of doubled up adults were unemployed (n=2,329), compared with 15.6% (n=16,714) who were not doubled up. Most

doubled up adults were unmarried (94.9%, n=7,350), and 13.9 % had at least one child (n=1,079), compared with 35.1% of those not doubled up (n=37,488). In contrast to the pattern of children, fewer doubled up adults had a physical difficulty than adults who were not doubled up. This might be due in part to the fact that doubled up adults were younger than those who were not doubled up (See Table 2-3).

Table 2-3. Individual Characteristics of Poor Adults in by Doubled up Status, Cuyahoga County (2006)

		Not Doubled up		Doubled up		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Sex***	Male	38,359	(35.9)	3,240	(41.8)	41,599	(36.3)
	Female	68,492	(64.1)	4,507	(58.2)	72,999	(63.7)
Age***	18-29 yr	26,489	(24.8)	3,597	(46.4)	30,086	(26.3)
	30-39 yr	18,967	(17.8)	1,530	(19.7)	20,497	(17.9)
	40-49 yr	19,382	(18.1)	582	(7.5)	19,964	(17.4)
	50-59 yr	18,692	(17.5)	922	(11.9)	19,614	(17.1)
	60 yr-	23,321	(21.8)	1,116	(14.4)	24,437	(21.3)
Race***	African American	49,913	(46.7)	3,957	(51.1)	53,870	(47.0)
	White	52,870	(49.5)	3,582	(46.2)	56,452	(49.3)
	Others	4,068	(3.8)	208	(2.7)	4,276	(3.7)
Marriage***	Unmarried	86,325	(80.8)	7,350	(94.9)	93,675	(81.7)
	Married	20,526	(19.2)	397	(5.1)	20,923	(18.3)
High school Graduation***	No	27,352	(28.6)	1,985	(26.7)	29,337	(28.5)
	Yes	68,335	(71.4)	5,438	(73.3)	73,773	(71.5)
N of Children***	0	69,363	(64.9)	6,668	(86.1)	76,031	(66.3)
	1	13,779	(12.9)	1,000	(12.9)	14,779	(12.9)
	2+	23,709	(22.2)	79	(1.0)	23,788	(20.8)
Youngest Child***	No child	69,363	(64.9)	6,668	(86.1)	76,031	(66.3)
	Below 6 yrs	16,107	(15.1)	209	(2.7)	16,316	(14.2)
	Above 6 yrs	21,381	(20.0)	870	(11.2)	22,251	(19.4)
Employment***	Employed	29,305	(27.4)	1,591	(20.5)	30,896	(27.0)
	Unemployed	16,714	(15.6)	2,329	(30.1)	19,043	(16.6)
	Not in labor force	60,832	(56.9)	3,827	(49.4)	64,659	(56.4)
Physical Difficulty ^{1)****}	No	79,702	(74.6)	6,820	(88.0)	86,522	(75.5)
	Yes	27,149	(25.4)	927	(12.0)	28,076	(24.5)
Total		106,851	(93.2)	7,747	(6.8)	114,598	(100.0)

Notes: 1) Indicates whether the respondent has a long-lasting condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities (e.g., walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying).

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$, *** $p < .001$

Data source: ACS 2006

Household Characteristics of Doubled up Adults. Finally, the characteristics of the households in which doubled up adults live were examined. With regard to the person(s) with whom they lived, 35% (n=2,709) of doubled up adults lived with non-relatives (other than friends) and 21.8 % with their siblings (n=2,058). Half of doubled up adults lived in a rented house (50.1%, n=3,884), and on average, the household in which a doubled up adult lived paid about \$620 each month in rent (median monthly rent=\$620.90, n=3,884). A majority (87.5%, n=60,517) of poor adults experienced a rent burden regardless of their doubled up situation.

Approximately one-third (30.5%, n=32,614) of poor adults who were not doubled up lived in a household in which the home was owned compared to doubled up adults. The median monthly mortgage of the poor household that did not have doubled up adults was \$478 (n=32,614); but that of the poor household who had doubled up adults was \$669 (n=3,884). Similar to the patterns for doubled up children, doubled up adults lived in larger households and in more crowded housing situations than the adults who

were not doubled up. Specifically, 30.9% of those doubled up, as compared with 15.3% of non-doubled up adults lived with more than five people in the same household (n=2,393). In addition, 17.7% of doubled up adults lived in a crowded housing situation (n=1,373), while only 7.9% of not doubled up adults resided in crowded housing (n=8,426). Finally, 39.8% of households in which doubled up adults were living received food stamps (n=3,082) as compared with 42.5% (n=45,438) of the poor but not doubled up households. In terms of areas, most doubled up adults lived in the city of Cleveland (68.6%, n=5,315), while 55% (n=58,757) of the poor adults who were not doubled up resided in the city (see Table 2-4).

Table 2-4. Household Characteristics of Poor Adults by Doubled up Status in Cuyahoga County 2006

		Not Doubled up		Doubled up		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Relationship With Householder ¹⁾	Parent	N/A	N/A	870	(11.2)		
	Sibling	N/A	N/A	2,058	(21.8)		
	Grandchild	N/A	N/A	855	(11.0)		
	Other relatives	N/A	N/A	1,255	(16.2)		
	Other non-relatives	N/A	N/A	2,709	(35.0)		
Ownership***	Owned	32,614	(30.5)	3,863	(49.9)	36,477	(31.8)
	Rented	74,237	(69.5)	3,884	(50.1)	78,121	(68.2)
Median monthly mortgage ²⁾		\$478		\$669		\$499	
Median monthly rent ³⁾		\$612		\$621		\$612	
Median annual Income		\$8,653		\$12,276		\$13,643	
Rent Burden ⁴⁾ ***	Below 30%	16,504	(22.2)	1,100	(28.3)	17,604	(22.5)
	30%-50%	11,248	(15.2)	367	(9.4)	11,615	(14.9)
	Above 50%	46,485	(62.6)	2,417	(62.2)	48,902	(62.6)
Household Size***	1	32,936	(30.8)		(0.0)	32,936	(28.7)
	2-3	25,771	(24.1)	3,053	(39.4)	28,824	(25.2)
	3-4	31,844	(29.8)	2,301	(29.7)	34,145	(29.8)
	Above 5	16,300	(15.3)	2,393	(30.9)	18,693	(16.3)
Crowding ⁵⁾	No	98,425	(92.1)	6,374	(82.3)	104,799	(91.4)
	Yes	8,426	(7.9)	1,373	(17.7)	9,799	(8.6)
Food Stamp	No	61,413	(57.5)	4,665	(60.2)	66,078	(57.7)
	Yes	45,438	(42.5)	3,082	(39.8)	48,520	(42.3)
Area***	Out of CLE ⁶⁾	48,094	(45.0)	2,432	(31.4)	50,526	(44.1)
	In CLE ⁶⁾	58,757	(55.0)	5,315	(68.6)	64,072	(55.9)
Total		106,851	(93.2)	7,747	(6.8)	114,598	(100.0)

Notes: 1) Only applicable to the doubled up population.

2) Only applicable to people living in an owned house.

3) Only applicable to people living in a rented house.

4) Only applicable to people living in a rented house;

rent burden=Gross monthly rent / Annual household income / 12 X 100%;

gross monthly rent= contract rent + additional costs (utilities & fuels)

5) Crowding index= Household size / Number of bedrooms in a household;

Crowding index > 1.5

6) CLE=City of Cleveland

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$, *** $p < .001$

Data source: ACS 2006

Geographic Distribution of the Doubled up in Cuyahoga County. The geographic distribution of people living doubled up in Cuyahoga County was examined using the Geographic Information System. The estimated numbers and rates of the doubled up population in each PUMA area were drawn on the map. These are considered with the poverty rate of general PUMA areas. As mentioned earlier, the City of Cleveland is home to both the largest proportion of people who are doubled up as well as those who are poorest—both adults and children. Around Cuyahoga County, the proportion of people living doubled up was the highest in PUMA 606 city of Cleveland area (16.8% of poor population), and in PUMA 612, which includes Beachwood, Lyndhurst, Mayfield Heights, and Solon (with 13.4% of poor people living doubled up) (see Figure 2-5). The geographic distribution of doubled up children is displayed on Figure 2-6. Half of the children in PUMA 607 and 608 lived below the federal poverty threshold (over 47%, this is the city of Cleveland area), and nearly a third (28.9%) of the poor children in PUMA 606 were doubled up. PUMA 612 had the highest portion of doubled up children outside of the City (33.2%; see Figure 2-6). Finally, doubled up adults are displayed in Figure 2-7. PUMA 607 and 608 (city of Cleveland area) had the highest portion of doubled up adults in Cuyahoga County. Outside of the City, PUMA 611 had a high proportion of doubled up adults (10.1%; see Figure 2-6).

Table 2-5. Geographical distribution of poor doubled up in Cuyahoga County by poverty rate (2006)

PUMA Area	Overall Total Persons				Children				Adults			
	Poverty		Doubled up		Poverty		Doubled up		Poverty		Doubled up	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
601	8,371	(6.8)	82	(1.0)	3,499	(11.4)	0	(0.0)	4,872	(5.3)	82	(1.7)
602	14,320	(11.4)	575	(4.0)	5,295	(18.5)	177	(3.3)	9,025	(9.3)	398	(4.4)
603	17,802	(19.6)	1,268	(7.1)	6,199	(29.0)	718	(11.6)	11,603	(16.7)	550	(4.7)
604	10,017	(8.6)	537	(5.4)	3,227	(12.9)	238	(7.4)	6,790	(7.4)	299	(4.4)
605	6,323	(4.7)	302	(4.8)	1,735	(5.3)	116	(6.7)	4,588	(4.4)	186	(4.1)
606	21,769	(26.2)	3,666	(16.8)	7,825	(39.2)	2,261	(28.9)	13,944	(22.1)	1,405	(10.1)
607	37,794	(34.8)	4,562	(12.1)	17,368	(53.2)	2,505	(14.4)	20,426	(26.9)	2,057	(10.1)
608	32,858	(28.3)	4,903	(14.9)	14,759	(46.8)	3,600	(24.4)	18,099	(21.4)	1,303	(7.2)
609	11,745	(11.6)	667	(5.7)	4,878	(19.4)	567	(11.6)	6,867	(9.0)	100	(1.5)
610	15,192	(15.9)	2,004	(13.2)	5,596	(21.8)	1,039	(18.6)	9,596	(13.8)	965	(10.1)
611	12,904	(13.8)	626	(4.9)	5,977	(24.9)	318	(5.3)	6,927	(10.0)	308	(4.5)
612	2,644	(2.7)	354	(13.4)	783	(3.5)	260	(33.2)	1,861	(2.5)	94	(5.1)
Total	191,739	(14.9)	19,546	(10.2)	77,141	(24.1)	11,799	(15.3)	114,598	(11.8)	7,747	(6.8)

Notes: PUMA area code

- 1) 601: Bay Village/ North Olmsted / Rocky River / Westlake
- 2) 602: Berea / Brook Park / Fairview Park / Lakewood / Middleburg Hts.
- 3) 603: Brooklyn / Cleveland, 4) 604: Brooklyn / Parma / Parma Heights.
- 5) 605: Brecksville / Broadview Heights. / N. Royalton / Seven Hills / Strongsville
- 6) 606, 607, & 608: Cleveland
- 7) 609: Bedford / Bedford Heights. / Garfield Heights. / Maple Heights. / Warrenville Heights.
- 8) 610: Cleveland Heights. / East Cleveland / Shaker Heights.
- 9) 611: Euclid / Richmond Heights. / S. Euclid / University Heights.
- 10) 612: Beachwood / Lyndhurst / Mayfield Heights. / Solon

Data source: ACS 2006

Figure 2-5. Total poor persons doubled up in Cuyahoga County by area poverty rate (2006)

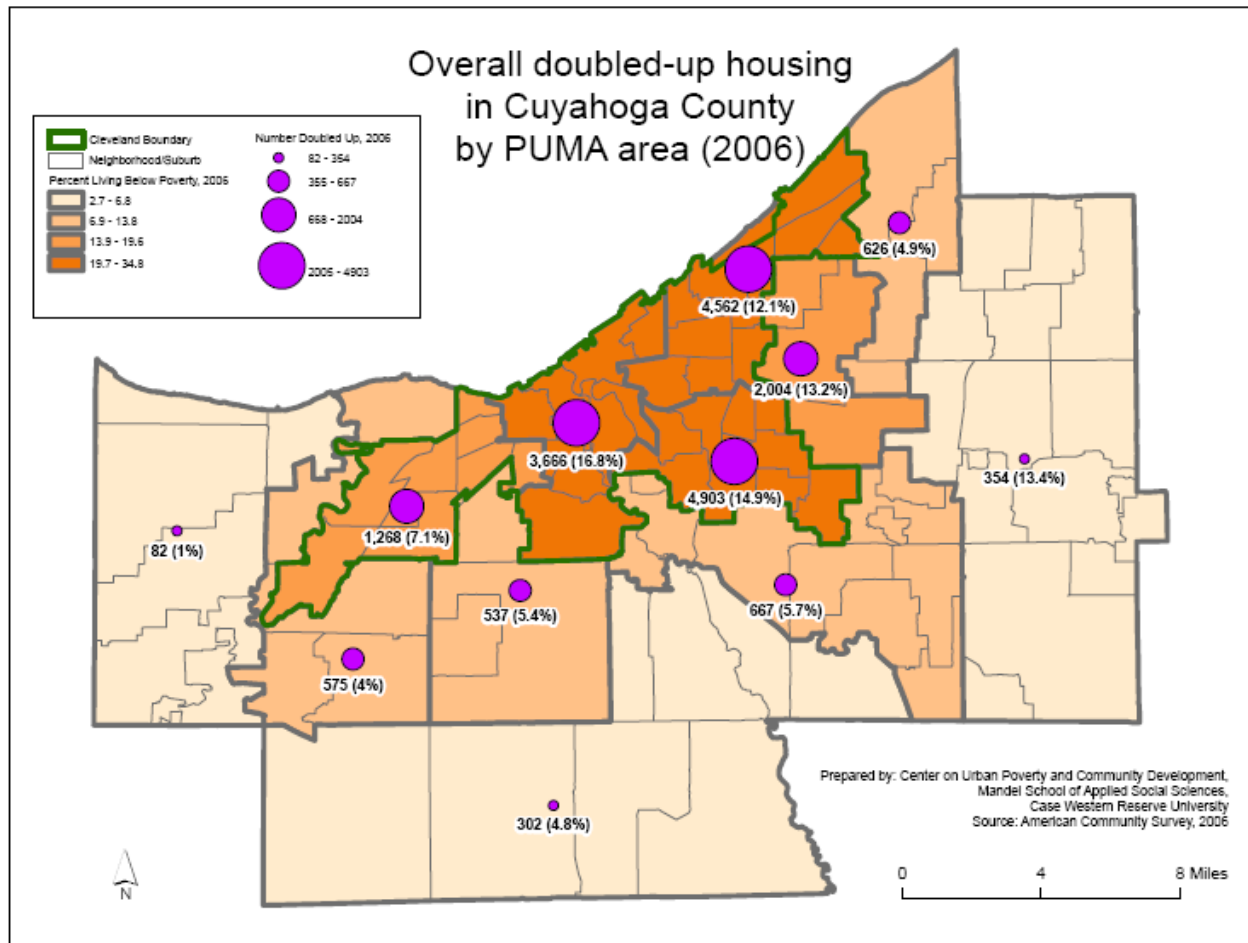


Figure 2-6. Poor Children Doubled up in Cuyahoga County by area poverty rate (2006)

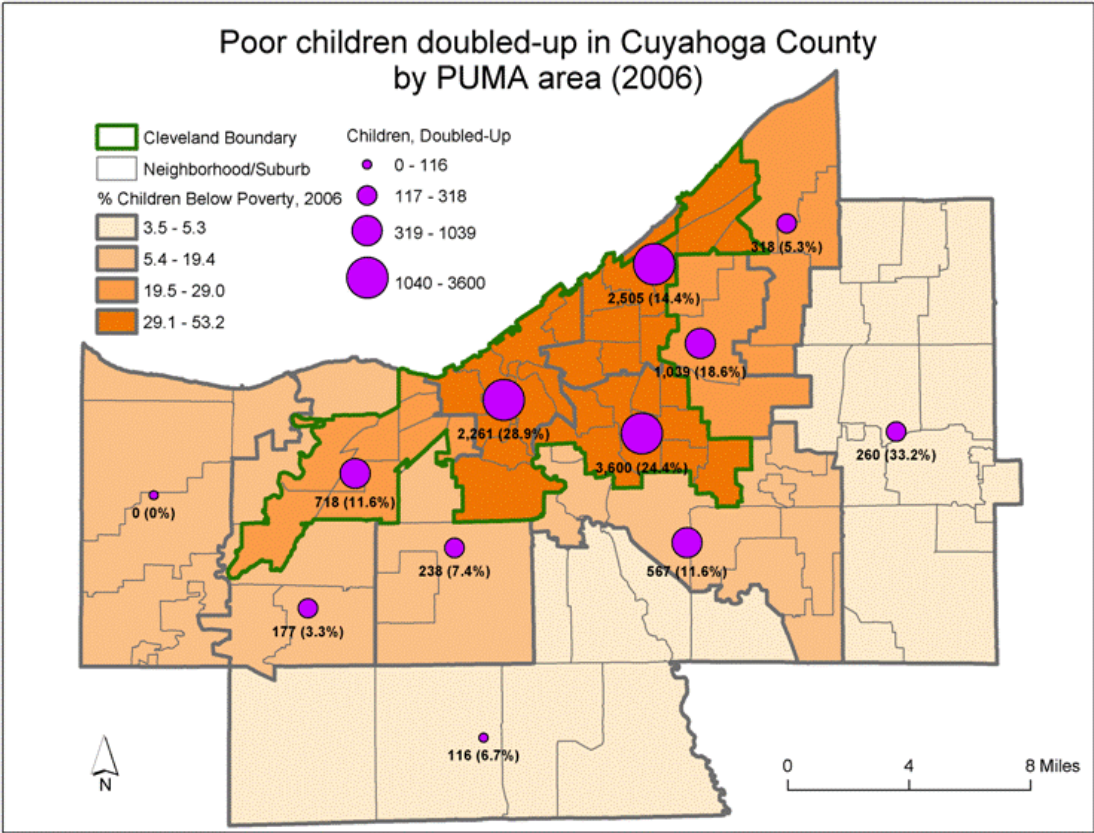
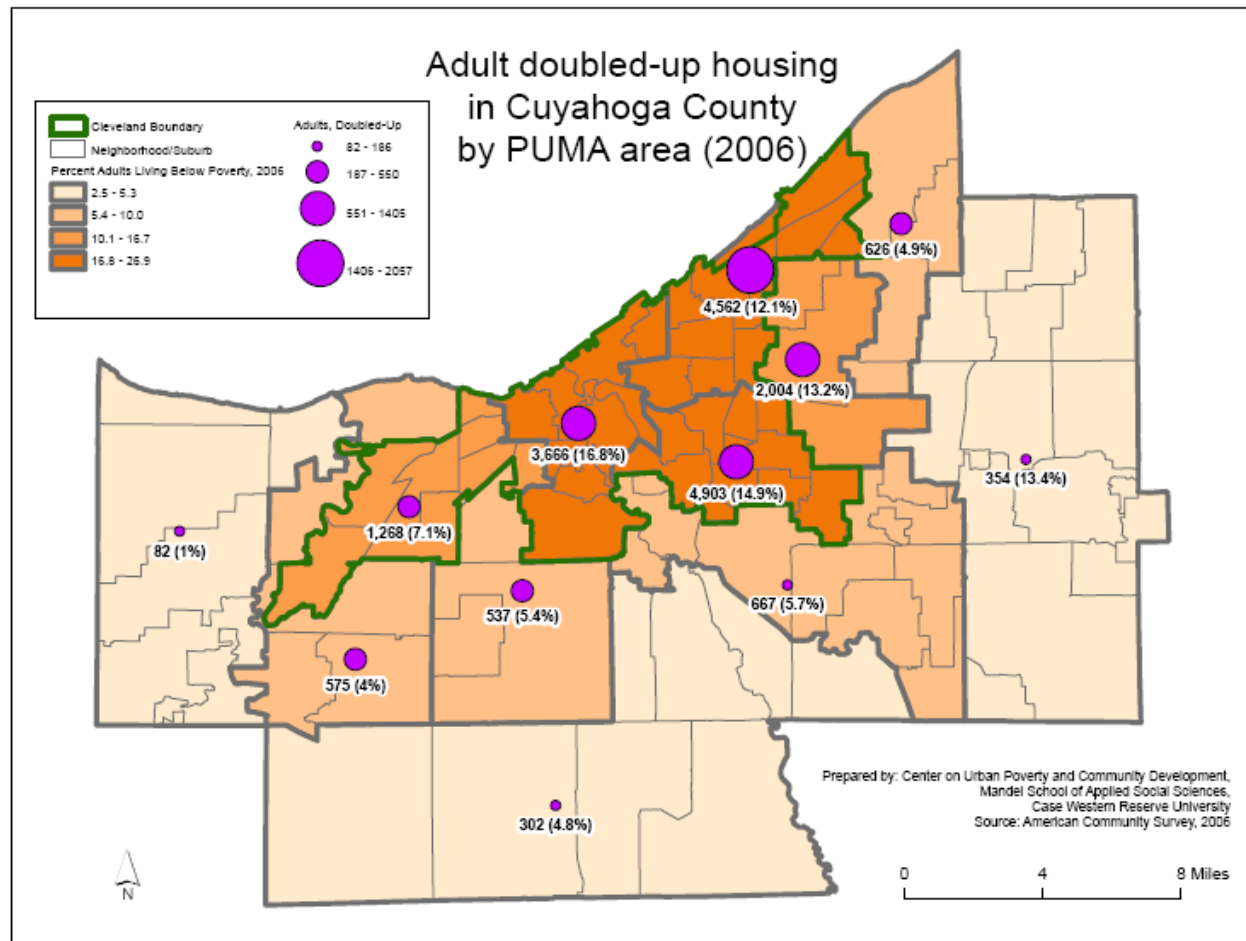


Figure 2-7. Poor Adults Doubled up in Cuyahoga County by area poverty rate (2006)



Summary and Limitations

Summary. Although living doubled up seems to be a common precursor to homelessness, little is understood about the mechanisms that drive this relationship or with regard to who among the doubled up become homeless and who do not. We aimed to estimate the number of doubled up people locally and explore their characteristics to move toward a better understanding of the doubled up. Using the ACS dataset, we replicated the NAEH’s study, which estimated the number of the doubled up population at the national level for people living below the poverty level. This report compared the doubled up situation (doubled up vs. not doubled up) among the poor, and we examined children and adults separately to determine whether there were differences between them.

Overall, about 4 million people in the U.S. living below poverty were living doubled up—that is, at the home of extended family, friends, or non-relatives in 2005 and 2006. It is estimated that about twenty thousand people in Cuyahoga County lived in a doubled up housing situation in 2005 and 2006, while about double that number, forty thousand people, in Cuyahoga County lived in households containing subfamilies in 2005 and 2006 (these families were not examined in detail in this report).

Regardless of their doubled up housing situation, the poor population tended to experience a high rent burden and low household income. Over 60% of the poor population had a serious rent burden (paying more 50% of household income) in Cuyahoga County. Households with children experienced more severe rent burdens than adults regardless of doubled up housing. While more than 10% of the poor lived in crowded housing, doubled up people lived in more crowded homes than people who were not doubled up. Moreover, doubled up children lived in more crowded housing situations than doubled up adults. The issues of rent burden and crowded housing among the poor have been frequently discussed in the social studies and in social policy for homelessness (Nelson, 1994). Increased public assistance will relieve the poor from high rent burdens. Such assistance could not only help the poor avoid or leave their doubled up housing situations, but also prevent them from becoming doubled up in the first place. Expanded housing assistance programs (i.e., housing vouchers and public housing) will contribute to solving the issue of crowded housing among the poor as well as lower the rent burden of the poor.

According to our analysis there were 11,799 children living under the poverty level that were living doubled up in Cuyahoga County. Two key characteristics distinguished doubled up children. First, most of the doubled up children lived with their grandparent(s), and second, they tended not to live with their parent(s), while nearly all (93.7%) non-doubled up poor children lived with their mother. This was the most significant difference between children who were and were not doubled up. Living with grandparents and living without parents may have substantial implications regarding current social policy for doubled up children. Although the doubled up housing situation has some negative effects with regard to housing stability, it might play a protective role in taking care of doubled up children. It may be that children are able to stay with family or friends while adults in their families go to shelters or other places that might or might not be safe or appropriate for children. Kinship care might be an important consideration in approaching the issues concerning doubled up children and in assessing appropriate services and programs as well as general housing and public assistance programs.

In total, 7,747 poor adults in Cuyahoga County lived in someone else's home in 2006--7% of poor adults in the county. Age and employment status seem to be the most significant demographic characteristics of poor doubled up adults. Most poor doubled up adults were fairly young and unemployed as compared with those who were not doubled up. Doubled up adults may lack human capital (First et al., 1994, Marin & Vacha, 1994, Wright et al., 1998). In the process of approaching doubled up adults, programs might benefit by seeking to improve the human capital (i.e., education or employment program) in addition to general housing programs. Additionally, the geographic distribution might have implications for community-based intervention for doubled up people. In general, high poverty areas had a high portion of doubled up people and not surprisingly these areas were concentrated in the City of Cleveland. Community development might consider the doubled up issue as one of the most serious housing problems the community faces.

Finally, although the expansion of the definition of doubled up can provide information about the extent to which people in our community might be vulnerable to homelessness, it also yields unintended consequences (NAEH, 2007c). For example, if doubled up families come to be defined as homeless they can be stigmatized in spite of

the fact that they are not literally homeless (NAEH, 2007c). Additionally, if doubled up families and the “literally” homeless must share the limited available funds fewer of already scarce resources would be available for those who perhaps need it most (e.g., the literal homeless) (NAEH, 2007c). It is probably wise to consider doubled up housing as a risk factor, but clearly, more must be learned about the doubled up before adding the doubled up to the definition of homelessness.

Strengths and Limitations. Because we used the ACS to estimate the numbers or people doubled up in the county, and the ACS is a large, representative sample of persons living in Cuyahoga County, we feel confident that the estimate is accurate. Having a representative sample also allows us to make some limited generalizations about the county as a whole.

There are a number of limitations in our estimation as well, however. These limitations can be broadly divided into three categories: the definition of the doubled up population, the ACS datasets, and statistical analysis. These limitations should be considered in future studies on doubled up housing. As mentioned earlier, because there is no consensus in defining the doubled up situation, and the definition in this study fails to capture the reasons why these people live together, i.e., for economic, cultural, or other reasons. The federal poverty threshold may not be an adequate proxy for economic reasons for doubling up. An additional limitation is that the usefulness of the federal poverty threshold is controversial, and there are various types of poverty thresholds (e.g., absolute vs. relative, income based vs. expenditure based) (Citro & Michael, 1995). Among the various poverty thresholds, the rent-based poverty threshold might be most appropriate in examining doubled up housing, and rent burden, which we examined here, is the basic component of the rent-based poverty threshold.

An additional limitation is the fact that the estimation of individuals living in doubled up housing situations is determined solely on a measure of relationship between the householder and others living in his/her household. Such a measure assumes the traditional, nuclear family as a model for “normal” living situations, and those relationships that exist outside such a model are being considered outside the norm and thus perhaps at risk. Such a nuclear family model fails to take into account the many, varied, and changing relationships between individuals living with one another, within and outside the nuclear family model. Related to this, the function of doubled up housing should be revisited. Specifically, is becoming doubled up a prelude to homelessness for most families or protective of homelessness? It might be that becoming doubled up serves different functions for children and parents. Finally, the ACS dataset has limitations of its own. The intent of the ACS is to describe the basic demographic, social, and economic aspects of general population—it is not designed to examine or address doubled up housing situations specifically. Although the ACS dataset is a nationally representative data set, the PUMA areas do not allow for thorough examination of more specific areas within Cuyahoga County. If we want to know more about the geographic distribution of doubled up housing situations, other ways of collecting the data might be preferable. For example, a new survey for doubled up people and homelessness is one approach, and other data may be available to explore the characteristics of the doubled up population. For example, because most doubled up people received public assistance, the administrative dataset of welfare

system might be not only an appropriate resource for tracking doubled up persons, but also for examining their service usage in the community and perhaps designing programs to help them avoid homelessness altogether.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this report described people living in doubled up housing situations in Cuyahoga County, but being doubled up does not cause homelessness; rather it is likely that living doubled up combines with other risk factors as a precursor to family homelessness. Indeed, doubling up may be a coping strategy that is successful under some circumstances but breaks down when other stressors are present. More research is needed to more fully understand the linkages. This section of this report examined those who are doubled up and perhaps at risk for homelessness, though we know most that are doubled up will not become homeless. The next section will describe the characteristics of those whom we know are already homeless: those families in and individuals in families who have entered the county's homeless shelter system.

Part III. Sheltered Homeless Families in Cuyahoga County: An Examination of the Homeless Management Information System Data

The focus of this section is on an analysis of county data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). General patterns of shelter use among families and individuals in families will be discussed and characteristics of families and individuals living in those families will be examined.

Data Source and Background

The HMIS was created by HUD in an effort to standardize the collection of homeless shelter data across the United States. HUD requires that specific data elements are collected on the HMIS and the local agencies can add variables of interest. Questions focus on characteristics of individuals and families, including basic demographic information, previous living situations, lengths of stay in shelter and previous living situations, as well as relationships between individuals in a household, among others (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2003).

The HMIS has been implemented nationally to collect information on homeless service systems, with the hopes of estimating the number of sheltered homeless persons in the country, and allowing local, and state entities to use the data for planning and policy purposes. HUD requires homeless programs that receive McKinney Vento funding to participate in the HMIS. States are now using their HMIS data to inform the public and influence policy regarding homelessness. Michigan's Campaign to End Homelessness, for example, has compiled its HMIS data statewide and produced a brochure presenting their HMIS data in an accessible format and comparing individuals and families. Although HMIS data systems were begun in 2001, implementation has been somewhat slow, and the data have only recently been analyzed on a national level. The Second Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, March 2008) compiled six months' worth of HMIS data (January-June of 2006) from a representative sample of communities across the nation, including Cleveland. The 2007 AHAR was recently released, and it was the first analysis of an entire year's worth of data nationally (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, July 2008). The AHAR considers people homeless if they used emergency shelter or transitional housing programs October 2006-September 2007.

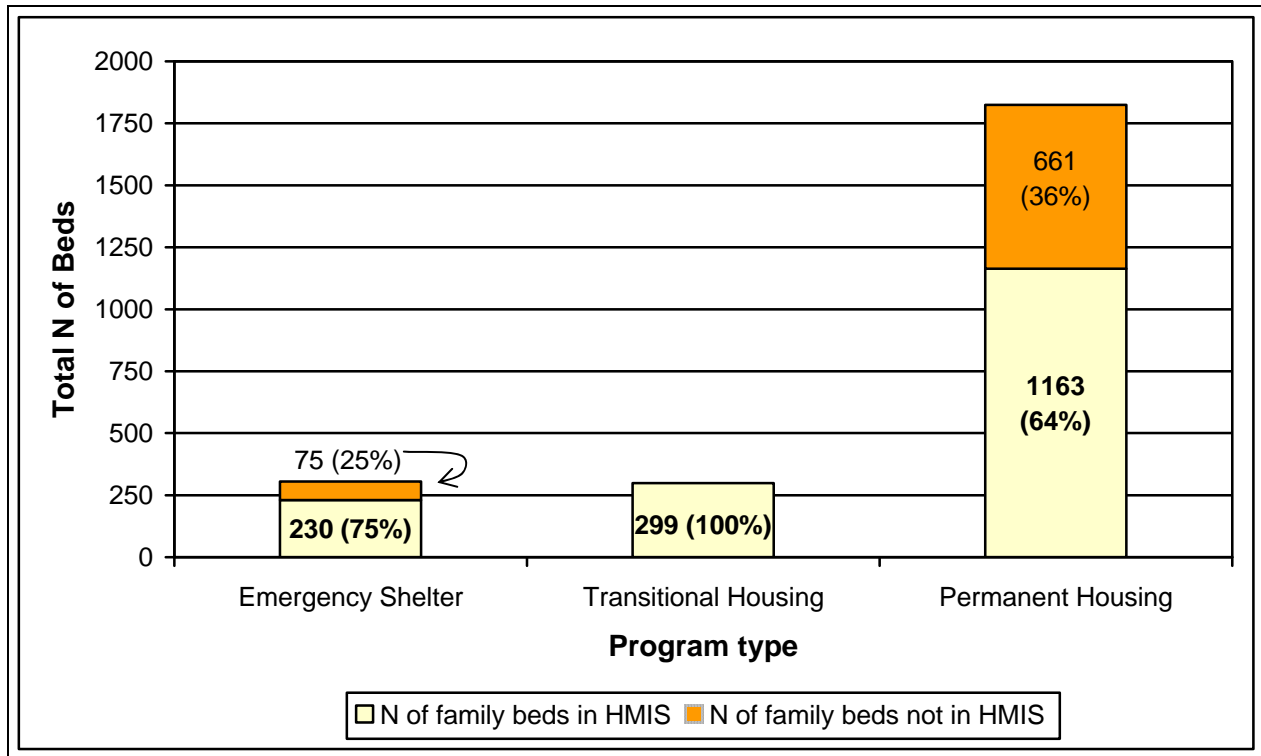
The 2007 AHAR estimated that there were 131,000 homeless families in shelters across the United States during the one-year period examined. A total of 473,500 persons living in these families accounted for 30% of the total sheltered population. The report also indicates that families end up homeless in part after staying with others (i.e., living "doubled up"). Other findings from the 2007 AHAR will be reported alongside our discussion of the data analysis for Cuyahoga County where appropriate.

The Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services provided the local HMIS data sets and the data accounts for persons entering homeless programs since 2005¹⁵. Figure 3-1 displays the proportion of family shelter beds that are tracked in HMIS

¹⁵ Though HMIS data began being collected in 2003, for a variety of reasons, data were not consistently collected or managed until well into 2004.

according to the type of program.¹⁶ We will examine the characteristics of families and individuals living in families who entered a county residential homeless program since 2005. These data will provide a baseline indicator of the situation for the sheltered homeless in the area against which efforts to end homelessness can be measured. Table B-2 in Appendix B details the county's programs, availability of shelter beds, and numbers of persons entering the programs per year.

Figure 3-1 Family Bed and Client Coverage in HMIS by Program Type



Definitions

A person or family is considered homeless if they have entered an emergency shelter or transitional housing program¹⁷ in the county since 2005. A family or household is defined as persons who are related to one another entering shelter together, and individuals living in families are made up of adults and children under the age of 18 living in a household.

Data Analysis

Below, we report service usage for persons in families and families using family residential homeless programs in Cuyahoga County from 2005-July of 2008. This paper will report usage trends for families in emergency shelter, transitional housing, and

¹⁶ Table B-1 in Appendix B details bed coverage for the Cuyahoga Continuum of Care.

¹⁷ Does not include domestic violence shelters; there is a prohibition against using domestic violence data in HMIS reports because of the Violence Against Women Act, so these data underestimate persons who are homeless due to domestic violence situations.

permanent supportive housing programs. Because permanent supportive housing is a fundamentally different type of program, inasmuch as it is considered housing for the formerly homeless, and because the HMIS data account for only a small portion of those available beds¹⁸, we will focus the bulk of our analyses and discussion on emergency shelter and transitional housing facilities. This approach is consistent with that of the 2007 AHAR and will facilitate direct comparison with those data.

We will begin our discussion of the findings by outlining general trends across the reporting time frame 2005-2008 based on available data. The analysis of specific family and individual characteristics focuses on 2007 only (the most recent year of complete data), separated by program type (emergency shelter, transitional housing) unless otherwise noted. In this section we have de-duplicated¹⁹ the counts across years of the study so as to approximate a count of the number of families who were ever in the HMIS system during the study period. This type of count is useful for planning prevention programs, because it suggests that numbers of families who tend to have these homeless shelter experiences. A detailed discussion of HMIS data issues and the procedures we followed in obtaining our analytic dataset is available in Appendix B.

Findings

Trends for Families and Individuals in Families 2005-2008²⁰

In Cuyahoga County, 3,748 unique individuals²¹ living in 1,211 families have entered into the HMIS since 2005 (see Table 3-3). The number of families utilizing homeless programs in the county increased between 2005 and 2007. Across all homeless service programs, the numbers of individuals living in families entering emergency shelter, transitional housing, or permanent supportive housing increased by 14% between 2005 and 2006, but then dropped between 2006 and 2007. In total between 2005 and 2007, there was an increase in numbers of families entering the programs of more than 7%. The drop in numbers of families was seen mostly in transitional housing and permanent supportive housing services; the numbers using emergency shelter increased by 8% between 2005 and 2006, and 5% between 2005 and 2007. Though the 2008 numbers might reflect a continued decline in shelter use, the 2007 closure of the Eastside Catholic Shelter might be one reason, though their cases have likely been absorbed by other area shelters.

¹⁸ Among the programs that participate in HMIS, these analyses report on 94% of the emergency shelter beds, more than two-thirds of the total number of ES beds, all of the transitional housing beds, and only just over one-fifth of permanent supportive housing beds (or 18.8% of all PSH beds in the county). See Appendix B for more information.

¹⁹ See Appendix B for a detailed discussion of the de-duplication process.

²⁰ Calculations are made examining year of entry into program.

²¹ The de-duplication process begins with sorting client records by date of entry into shelter and head of household, so only the first entry into a program would be counted in this number.

Table 3-3 Numbers of Individuals in Families with Children and Families Entering Programs 2005-2008¹

	2005	2006	2007	2008 ²	Total
Emergency shelter					
Total individuals	1150	1200	1086	350	3786
Adults in families	408	431	386	123	1348
Children in families	742	769	700	227	2438
Families (across years)	252	272	265	89	878
Transitional housing					
Total individuals	220	300	258	162	940
Adults in families	84	106	100	56	346
Children in families	136	194	158	106	594
Families	65	82	84	52	283
Permanent supportive housing					
Total individuals	68	152	29	2	251
Adults in families	21	42	8	1	72
Children in families	47	110	21	1	179
Families	17	33	9	1	60
Total Individuals	1438	1652	1373	514	4977
Total Adults in Families	513	579	494	180	1766
Total Children in Families	925	1073	879	334	3211
Total Families	334	387	358	142	1221

Notes: ¹These numbers reflect unique individuals living in families across the 3 ½ year period (and thus they are only counted once in the year of their first entry into a program).

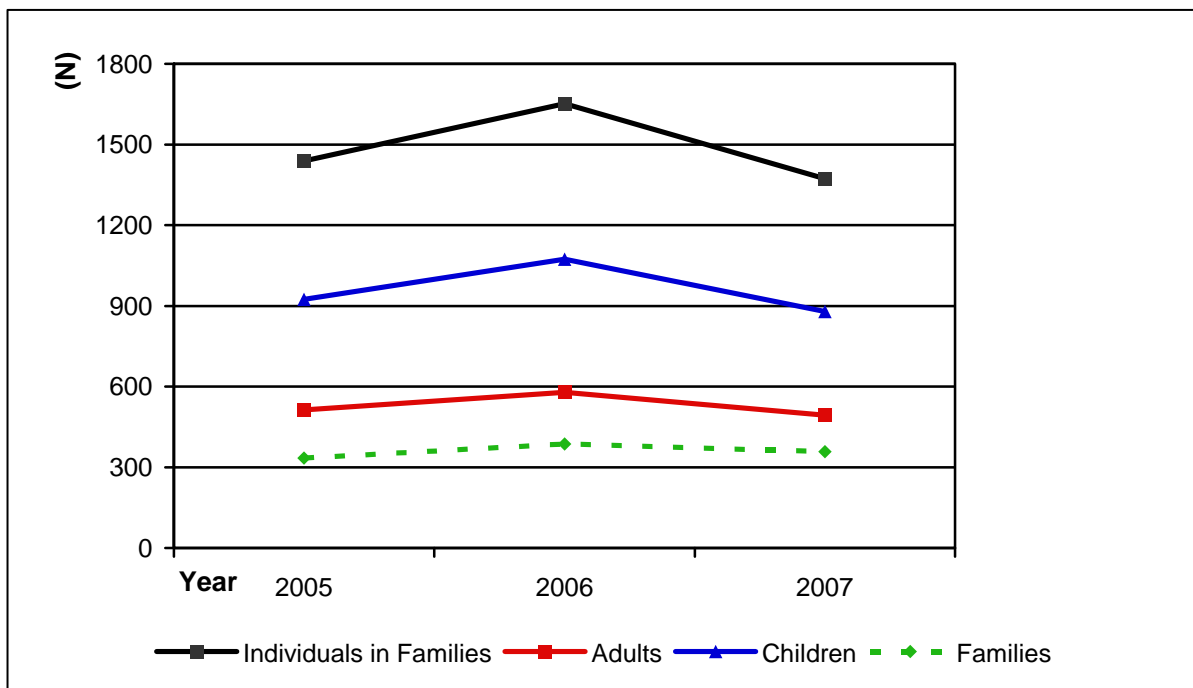
²2008 numbers are current to 7/16/2008.

Figure 3-1 displays the trends of adults living in families, children, and families using homeless programs in the county from 2005-2007. This graph seems to show that homelessness has been decreasing over the past few years among individuals, while there was an increase and plateau among families. While it might be the case that demand is decreasing, there are a few notes of caution. First, these data are accounting for unique individuals—that is, the data count persons only once across all years, so persons who used programs more than once are not included after their first entry into shelter. It is likely that these persons are taking places in the shelter system, making it appear that demand is decreasing. Second, data entry accuracy is presumably improving over time as providers become more familiar with the system, so there could be true decreases or simply that the data are getting better as (unintended) duplication decreases. Also, the East Side Catholic Shelter, which served a large number of individuals living in families over the three-year period, closed at the end of 2007, so there might be an even greater perceived decrease when actually services were curtailed.

Specific Trends by Service Type. Over the four-year period, most (81%) of persons in families using county homeless programs used emergency shelter facilities, 16% used transitional housing, and 3% used permanent supportive housing programs. (The number using transitional housing is lower than the number (one-third of

individuals in families) reported on the 2007 AHAR). The years 2005 and 2006 showed the highest numbers entering permanent supportive housing programs. Given the longer-term nature of this housing option, we might expect fewer individuals living in families and families entering these programs. The numbers of persons using the programs decreased between 2005 and 2008 overall. With regard to emergency shelter and transitional housing programs, the proportion of persons using appears to have dropped between 2005 (83% for emergency shelter, 13% for transitional housing) and 2006 (77.5% for emergency shelter and 17% for transitional housing) and then rebounds in 2007 (83% for emergency shelter and 16% for transitional housing). This pattern is similar for children. A greater proportion of persons appear to be using transitional housing facilities in 2008, with nearly a quarter of individuals in families using these programs. Since the data from 2008 are incomplete, a complete set of data will be required to draw firmer conclusions on this pattern.

Figure 3-2 Sheltered Homeless Trends: Individuals Living in Families, 2005-2007



Source: HMIS data provided by the Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services. Data include all three service types: emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing and are an unduplicated count.

Though the numbers of persons in families entering county programs has decreased slightly, the proportion of children under the age of 18 served has stayed static, at 65% of all individuals living in families². In permanent supportive housing programs, the proportion of children served increased from 65.6% in 2005 to 68% in 2007 and 68.4% thus far in 2008. Caution should be used in drawing inferences based on these data because of the small numbers of persons in the permanent supportive housing programs, and the low HMIS bed coverage in these programs.

The average family size across all programs and years was three people: two children with one adult, typically their mother, consistent with estimates at the national level; only 6% of the families had more than one adult present. More than three quarters of individuals living in families (85%) were Black/African American, 12% White and 3% another race. African Americans are overrepresented in these data compared to their numbers in the county's poverty population as well as compared to the national homeless numbers. According to the 2007 ACS, nationally, 23% of those in poverty identify as Black or African American. The 2007 AHAR based on national homeless numbers, found that just over half of sheltered family members identify as Black or African American (55%). Cuyahoga County's poverty population is similar to this number, with 56.5% identifying as Black or African American.

Characteristics of Shelter Stays. The average length of stay²² for individuals in families using emergency shelter was 51 days (SD=81.3), with a median of 21 days. This is shorter than the median of one month for families in the national data, but longer than the 14-15 day stay of individuals who are not in families (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2008). Over a third of individuals in families stayed less than one week, and more than half staying between one week and one month. Only a small fraction (just over 2%) stayed longer than nine months. For those families in permanent supportive housing, the mean was 216 days (SD=142.5), with a median stay of 183 days. More than three quarters (86%) stayed between three and nine months, with 10% staying more than nine months. Individuals in families using transitional housing programs stayed an average of 193 days (SD=201.3), with a median stay of 113 days. This is again, shorter than the median of 151 days reported for the national data (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2008). Most individuals living in families stayed relatively long term; more than half (59%) stayed in the program between three and nine months, with 19% staying more than nine months, and a small number (7%) staying less than one month.

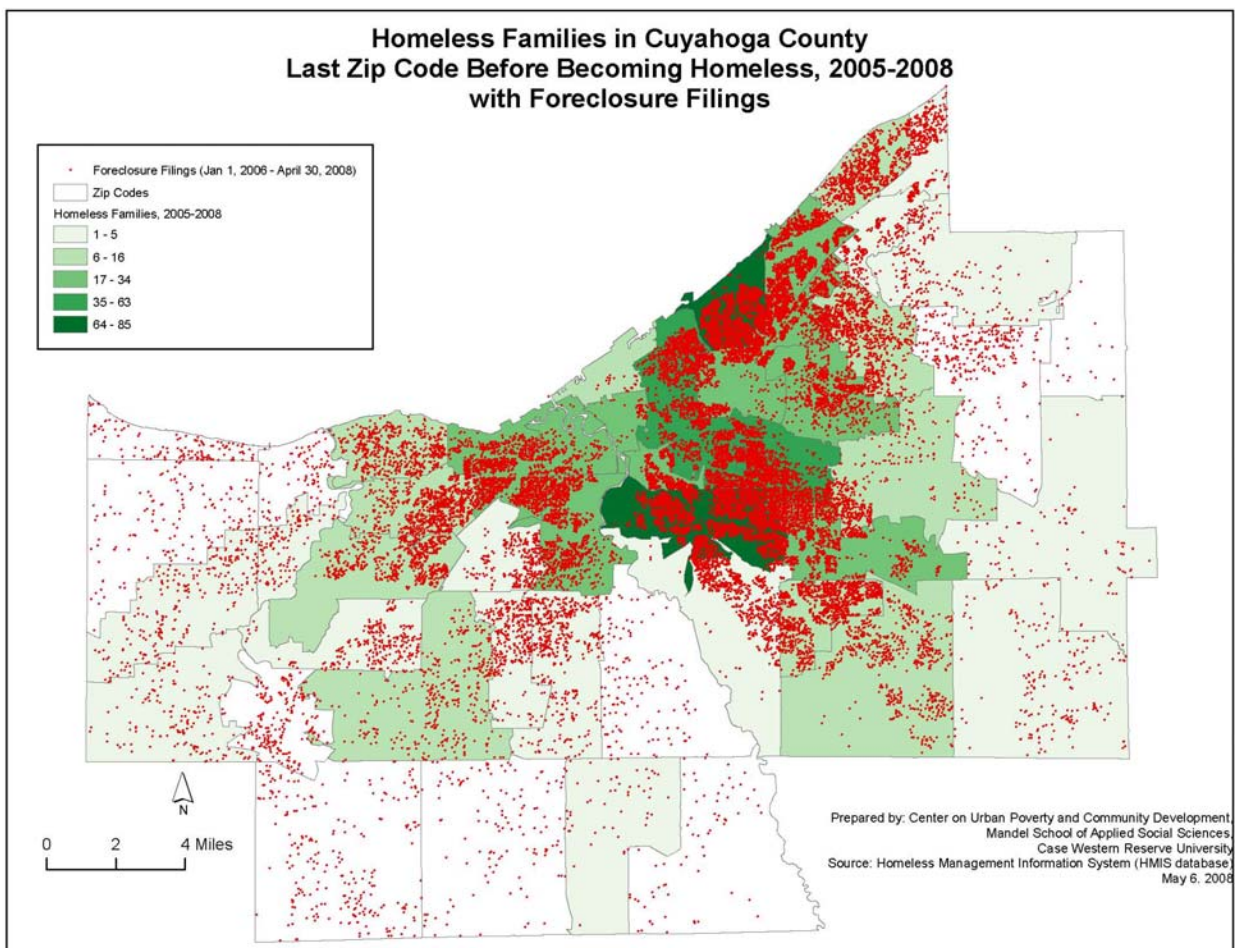
Multiple Stays in Shelter. Although most (75%) individuals in families in the county have used shelter only once, 942 have stayed more than once across the four-year period, an average of 269 persons per year. Most multiple-users of the homeless programs were in the emergency shelter system. Nearly all (94.5%) have stayed once or twice, 152 individuals in families stayed three times, and a total of 55 clients stayed four or more times (with one person staying a maximum of six times). Among those staying more than once, 78% stayed twice, 16% stayed three times, and 6% stayed more than four times. With regard to program type, individuals in families with many stays tended to stay in emergency shelter, while those with fewer stays tended to begin in emergency shelter and then move into transitional housing with subsequent stays.

Geographic Location of Last Permanent Address. HMIS gives limited information on the geographic area from which homeless families come; only the zip code of their last address before entering shelter is available. A map of the general area together

²² Length of stay is calculated using entry and exit dates. If exit dates are unavailable, as they are for 14% of the cases, length of stay cannot be calculated, and another 14 cases had a negative value (i.e., the exit date came before the entry date, a data entry error).

with foreclosure filings gives us a sense for the overlap between areas affected by home foreclosures and those from which the greatest numbers of homeless families are coming (see Figure 3-2). The darker the colorings on the map indicate the highest numbers of home foreclosures (in red), and larger numbers of homeless persons coming from the areas (in green). With regard to specific areas, many families entering homeless shelters came from zip codes in Cleveland 44105 and 44108, two of the areas hit hardest by home foreclosures. Without having exact addresses of homeless client's previous addresses, we are currently unable to directly link foreclosures to family homelessness using the HMIS data. Nevertheless, these areas can be considered at high risk for problems with affordable housing.

Figure 3-3. Foreclosure Filings and Areas Where Homeless Families Lived Prior to Becoming Homeless.



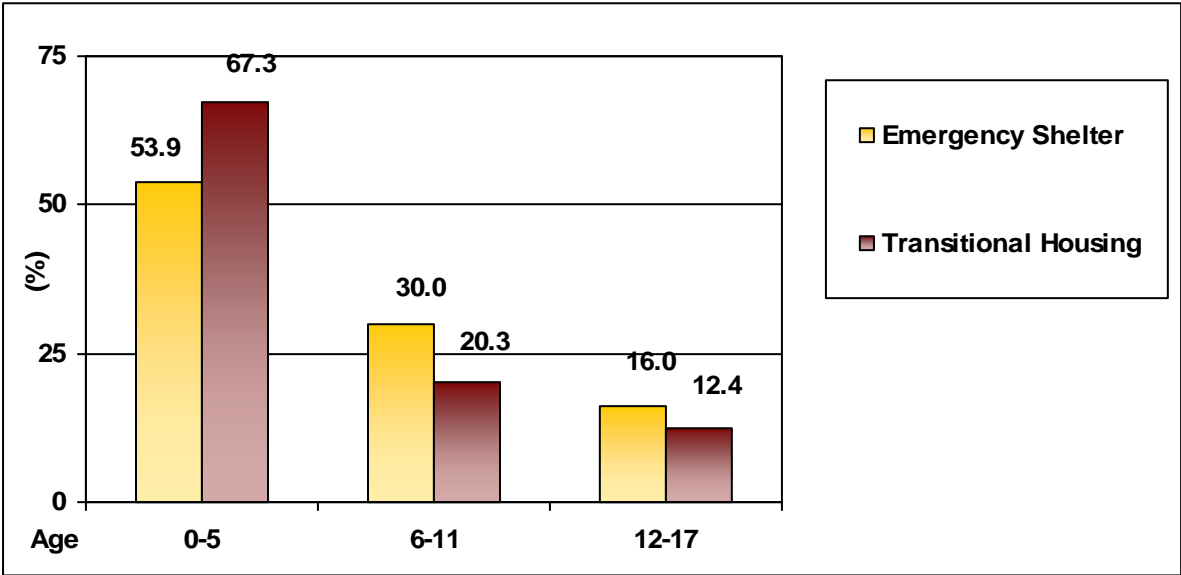
Sources: Zip code data from the HMIS data provided by the Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services. Foreclosure data provided by the CUPCD.

Characteristics of Families and Individuals Living in Families Entering Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing Programs in 2007²³

The discussion below refers to those living in families in 2007, the most recent complete year for which data are available. Data are unduplicated by client identification number and entry date into shelter. Thus, the data include multiple entries into shelter by the same individuals living in families.

Demographic Characteristics of Adults and Children Living in Families.²⁴ Among adults living in families, 94% were female (95% of heads of households were female), reflecting the national picture of a homeless family being headed by a single woman. The proportion was slightly higher for transitional housing programs (96%) compared to emergency shelter (93%). On average, adults living in families using emergency shelter were 30 years old (SD=8.2) when entering shelter, and adults living in families using transitional housing were 28 years old (SD=8.3), older than adults living in families in the national HMIS data. Among children, 50% were female overall, and children in transitional housing were somewhat younger. The mean age of children in emergency shelter clients was six years old at shelter entry (SD=4.7), and five years old for transitional housing clients (SD=5.4). Figure 3-3 displays the age groups of children; the greatest proportion is under the age of six. Characteristics of individuals in families using shelter in 2007 were about the same with regard to race and family size as for the data representing all years.

Figure 3-4 Age Groups of Homeless Children in HMIS



Source: HMIS data provided by the Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services.

²³ Persons can be counted more than once in these numbers to reflect multiple and across-program stays in shelter, i.e., multiple shelter entries are considered.

²⁴ Additional tables containing information about adults and children are in Appendix B.

*Primary Reason for Becoming Homeless.*²⁵ One of the HMIS questions asks the primary reason for becoming homeless. Among the items specified,²⁶ the four most often mentioned (with at least 10% responding) reasons for entering shelter were unemployment, inability to pay rent or mortgage, being evicted in the past week, and domestic violence. Reasons for becoming homeless differed for emergency shelter and transitional housing users. Although unemployment was the most frequently listed reason families became homeless overall, this was true for a much greater proportion of transitional housing users. Furthermore, together, unemployment and being unable to pay for their rent or mortgage accounted for 76% of the reasons transitional housing users became homeless, but just over a quarter of emergency shelter users. Having been evicted in the past week and domestic violence were more common for emergency shelter users, a finding that is consistent with the emergency nature of both of those two events.

Domestic Violence, Military Veteran, and Disability Status. Although the primary reason for entering homeless programs was more often reported to be domestic violence for users of emergency shelter, a greater proportion of families in transitional housing programs reported being a victim of domestic violence as compared with those in emergency shelter. This is probably due to the distinctions between the two questions—the primary reason for becoming homeless refers to the immediate situation, and families in transitional housing have probably been homeless for a longer period of time. So, while a client might have been a domestic violence victim, her immediate homelessness episode might not be the direct result of domestic violence as it might be for those in emergency shelter. Less than 15% of all clients in the two programs reported being a victim, and this is very likely an underestimate, especially because clients entering domestic violence programs and any client whose names were not entered into HMIS (as is common when trying to protect victims of domestic violence) are not included in these analyses²⁷. Only a small number of adults in families were military veterans (a little over one percent), but more than 15% had a disability of long duration. A larger proportion of heads of transitional housing families had disabilities than those of emergency shelter families.

Families' Prior Living Situations and Lengths of Stay in Prior Situation. Overall, homeless families most often (44%, about 6% more than reported on the 2007 AHAR) reported that they lived with family members or friends (i.e., “doubled up”) the night before they entered their homeless program. This was most frequently mentioned for emergency shelter families, with half reporting having come from a doubled up situation (as compared with less than one fifth of transitional housing families). The overall second most common previous living situation was emergency shelter; more than half of transitional housing reported coming from emergency shelter the night before entering their program, while close to one in five emergency shelter families came from another emergency shelter. The third most common prior living situation was living in

²⁵ 33% of the observations are missing; effective sample size=323

²⁶ More than a third of the data (36.5%) fell into an unspecified “Other” category.

²⁷ An earlier analysis (that could not reliably unduplicated cases due to missing data) suggested that including domestic violence cases could put the estimate of domestic violence victims near 30%

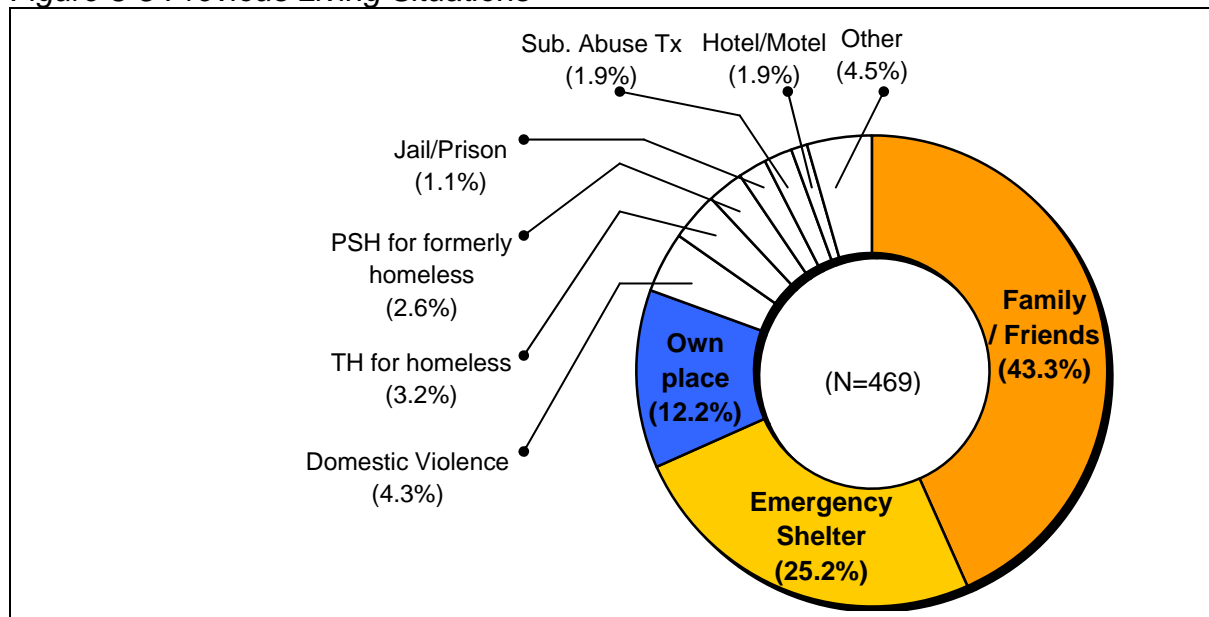
the family's own place, and this was more frequently mentioned by families in emergency shelter than those in transitional housing.

Overall, families' stays in previous living situations tended to be short; almost half stayed less than one month (this is consistent with the 2007 AHAR estimates), and almost 80% stayed less than three months. How long families had stayed in their previous living situations varied according to their shelter type—a third (the biggest proportion) of emergency shelter clients had stayed only a week, while most (almost half of) transitional housing clients reported staying one to three months. Very few families in either group stayed in their previous situation longer than one year reflecting the relative instability in their living situations.

Examining previous living situation and length of stay in that living situation together, we found that for the most part, emergency shelter families' previous living situations were temporary, with most staying less than three months. When families in emergency shelter stayed with friends and family before entering shelter (60%), about half stayed less than one month, and 80% stayed less than three months. This finding is consistent with Choi and Snyder (1999) found that stays with family or friends tended to be short, in part because of limited resources, but also because living situations were unacceptable due to the presence of drugs, lacking or having very limited social support systems, and feeling that they were burdening their family or friends. Of families that were in another emergency shelter before entering emergency shelter (16%), more than 56% stayed less than one month, and 85% stayed less than three months. Even among those families who stayed in their own place prior to entering emergency shelter, 75% reported being there less than three months, 58% less than one month, and a third reported living there for less than one week.

Transitional housing families' patterns were longer term than emergency shelter families', with most staying in their prior living situation for more than a month, and up to a year. This is in line with the longer-term nature of transitional housing programs. Specifically, most (44%) transitional housing families reported having been in emergency shelter prior to entering their programs. When they had been in emergency shelter, half reported having been there for between one to three months, and 85% had been in emergency shelter between one month and one year. Even those transitional housing families who had been living with family and friends tended to stay longer in those living situations—90% reported living doubled up with family or friends for between one month and one year. About 16% of transitional housing families had been in another transitional housing facility prior to entering the current program, and 71% had been in that program for between one month and one year.

Figure 3-5 Previous Living Situations



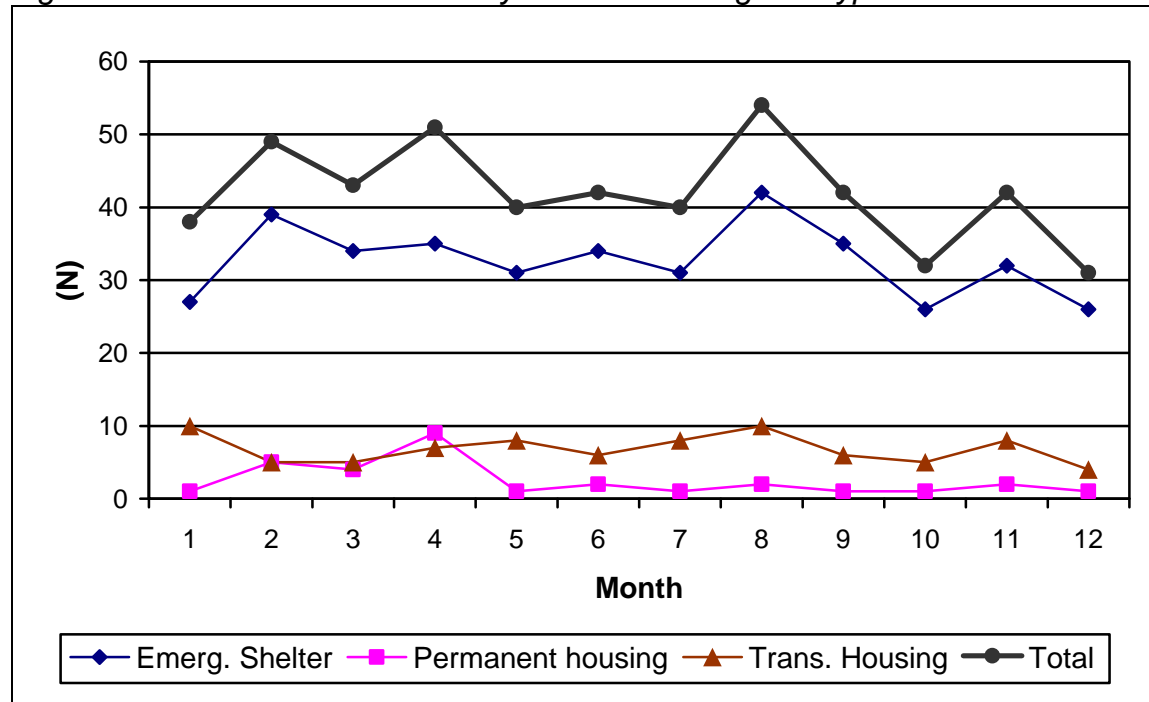
Source: HMIS data provided by the Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services.

Reason for Leaving Program and Destination. The most frequently mentioned reason for leaving programs differed for emergency shelter and transitional housing clients. Those who left emergency shelter most often left for a housing opportunity, while more than half of transitional housing clients left because they had completed the program. The next most frequently mentioned reason for leaving was disappearing or leaving for an unknown reason for almost a fifth of emergency shelter families, but this reason was not reported at all for transitional housing families, perhaps because the programs are longer and this gives more opportunities for building relationships among staff and clients. The second most common reason for leaving among transitional housing families after completing the program was non-compliance with the program or disagreeing with rules or people (23%). This reason was listed for 13% for emergency shelter clients. Only a small number of families were listed as leaving because their needs could not be met.

A rental room, house, or apartment was the most common destination for transitional housing families but for less than a sixth of emergency shelter families. The second most common reason for transitional housing families and the first for emergency shelter families was staying in a friend or family member's room or apartment. Almost a third (27%) of all families selected this as a destination, but this was more common for emergency shelter families (28%) than for those in transitional housing programs (21%). The second most common destination for almost a quarter of emergency shelter clients was an unknown place, a destination infrequently listed for transitional housing families. Finally, emergency shelter families were more likely than transitional housing families to enter transitional or permanent housing for the formerly homeless, but both were similarly likely to enter an emergency shelter (these families account for a small portion (7.5%) of the data). Figure 3-6 displays the pattern of shelter exits in 2007. There is a spike in exits in August, possibly due to the beginning of the

school year for school aged children, with drops in exits during the colder winter months.

Figure 3-6 Total Number of Exits by Month and Program Type in 2007



Discussion

The HMIS data overall reveal a picture of the general patterns of use of county programs, and some of the general characteristics of persons in families using the system over the last several years. Overall, individuals in families using county emergency shelter seem to be more unstable than those in transitional housing or other programs; they enter the programs with more difficulties, stay shorter times, and seem to have less optimistic prospects when they leave shelter. Emergency shelter is of course, the most often used program, and although meant to be a short-term solution, these data reveal that homeless families tend to repeatedly use emergency shelter facilities. The reasons for this continued use are unclear, but we see this trend as one of the most concerning in these data. Why are families continuing to return to emergency shelter over time? Perhaps qualitative data in the form of interviews would inform the numbers and explain the extent to which these families' needs are being met and what could be done differently.

These data seem to underestimate the numbers of homeless families experiencing domestic violence. Though the exclusion of cases served by domestic violence providers certainly contributed to this underestimate, one might wonder why the numbers were still so low. Previous research has found that as many as two-thirds of homeless women are victims of domestic violence (Rog et al., 2007). Whether the low reports have to do with the way the question is asked, the comfort level of the

clients with intake workers, data entry issues/missing data or the actual situation should be investigated in future research.

The fact that the greatest proportion of children in homeless families is under the age of six suggests that there might be an unmet need in the community. Whether families with children under the age of six have other children, how many, and what configurations families in shelter have might be worth examining. Given that children of school age have opportunities to be assessed and assisted through educational programs and other resources available through the school system, it might be that families with very young children are less able access such resources.

Though the HMIS data do not show the large increases in shelter rates that might be expected to coincide with increased numbers of home foreclosures, our data suggest that families entering the HMIS system are coming from the same areas that the foreclosure crisis has hit most severely. It may be that families whose homes are undergoing foreclosure or who are evicted because their rental is foreclosed upon are accessing other resources, including doubling up with others in increasing numbers before entering homeless shelters (Shinn et al., 2005). Thus, we might see increased demand on the shelter system over the coming months and/or years, making it more important to detect and reach these families before they become homeless and potentially overwhelm the current homeless shelter system. Though home foreclosures should not be expected to directly cause a family's homelessness, experiencing a home foreclosure or eviction due to foreclosure might be a crisis that pushes a family with high levels of stress due to job and/or housing instability, especially given current and worsening economic conditions and few resources into homelessness. Such housing instability and economic might include family separations, a predictor of homelessness. Future research should examine the extent to which families are separated before becoming homeless and how that influences both program usage and the outcome of their stay—e.g., where they go upon exiting the program(s).

Strengths. The HMIS data are a rich source of information on the situation of Cuyahoga County's homeless families. The data are longitudinal and will eventually allow a comprehensive assessment of the patterns of service usage among the county's families. The data are also essential in crafting locally relevant solutions to homelessness and eventually helping to end homelessness in Cuyahoga County. This study is one of the first examinations of the HMIS data for homeless families in the Cleveland area. These data are critical for better understanding the unique characteristics of homeless individuals living in families and families in the area, for examining whether these families are being effectively served, and how scarce community resources are being used. Having accurate data on these issues on the community level will aid the county as strategic planning on ending homelessness continues. At the state level, there is potential for linking the HMIS data to that of other areas and the rest of the state to come up with an assessment of family homelessness in all of Ohio. Such an analysis would enable comparisons with other states, as well as measuring progress within the state when new programs and policies are implemented. The national data via the AHAR currently covers up to maximum of one year, and does not examine trends over time. As the system progresses and improves, more and better comparisons can be made.

Limitations. A general limitation of examining only those who have entered shelter is that, because families tend to access other resources, including becoming doubled up with others before entering shelter as a last resort (Shinn et al., 2005), examining only those who are sheltered underestimates the number of homeless. Thus, the knowledge we are gaining about people who use the homeless shelter system is just the tip of the iceberg—there are still many more homeless not being covered by the homeless system about whom we have little information. People who are marginally or precariously housed living below the poverty level and those who live in doubled up situations or on the street are difficult to detect. Those in shelter, however, are primarily the ones that place demands on the system and therefore are important to study and the HMIS has great potential for assessing and comparing persons using shelters locally, statewide, and nationally (Metraux et al., 2001).

Family separations are also considered an important risk factor for homelessness (Rog et al., 2007), and examining data on families alone limits our understanding of family separations. If parents enter shelter without their children, for example, they are counted as single individuals, and not part of a family. Furthermore, because many shelters will not shelter boys as young as eleven, the extent to which particular members of the family are separated from one another and what housing they obtain (e.g., becoming doubled up with family) is unknown. Other shelters require a family to separate once a young boy becomes a certain age (for some shelters as young as 11) he enters the homeless male population. To determine whether and to what extent families are separated, the single individual data and family data might be examined together to identify persons who enter shelter alone at one point in different configurations (i.e., with or without individual members of a family).

Although the HMIS was developed by HUD to allow community-based organizations the opportunity to access the data on homeless services and conduct needs analyses, there are a number of data collection and analytic challenges that currently limit its usefulness. First, because the HMIS system is closed, providers cannot currently know whether a client they are serving has been in the system before, and this limits their ability to effectively tailor services and interventions. Second, because of various data issues (discussed in more detail in Appendix B), accurate, unduplicated counts²⁸ require considerable effort. Also, because not all area homeless providers currently report their information to the HMIS the numbers of sheltered homeless are a definite underestimate. We detail the most critical issues in Appendix B and outline our recommendations below. Given that the HMIS is an important local source of information, there is great potential for improving the data collection system and resolving these issues.

Recommendations and Directions for Future Research

HMIS Data Collection Improvements. To better understand the situations, patterns of service use, and characteristics of those who use the homeless system in Cuyahoga County, an important area of focus should be on improving the data. These

²⁸ Incomplete records, misspellings of client names, different client identification numbers for the same individuals, and a general lack of system linkage are some of the issues. See Appendix B for more information.

efforts are already underway by the Cuyahoga County's Office of Homeless Services. The Office works closely with the community shelter providers in terms of training, obtaining data, and encouraging provider participation. The HMIS system is still relatively new, however and with high turnover rates among providers, training is a constant and ongoing challenge. The HMIS system has wonderful potential, and as the data continue to be analyzed, more can be learned about how to most effectively serve Cuyahoga County's homeless families.

Recommendation #1. We strongly recommend that the system be fully or at least partially opened to better coordinate the shelter system and/or linked with other community data. As it currently exists, the closed nature of the HMIS data system keeps clients from being linked across different agencies within the system and can result in unnecessary duplication of records.²⁹ While homeless service providers are often understandably concerned that their clients' privacy be protected,³⁰ a closed system is potentially dangerous for clients because they can fall through cracks in the system and experience chronic homelessness. Having either an open system and/or data coordinated with other agencies can help avoid this problem. A number of software solutions might be explored to address privacy concerns while also opening the system.³¹

Recommendation #2. Data accuracy should be emphasized at shelter intake and exit. Providers should have clients check that their personal information has been recorded and/or entered correctly, including the spellings of names and accuracy of dates of birth. These are critical pieces of information. In some cases, clients' names are different from one entry date to the next. In such cases, there should be room for such a change on his or her record. Data inaccuracy limits the ability to achieve an accurate count of the homeless and successfully identify those who are using the most system resources as well as those who are chronically homeless.

Recommendation #3. Data should be as complete as possible. While we recognize the need for shelter providers to protect their clients' privacy, and thus do not provide social security numbers, it also makes it difficult to link client data and to accurately count and track clients. One of the more desirable benefits of having data on homelessness is being able to link the homeless data with other social service data to better understand how to most effectively help people. One possible alternative that some local providers are using is to provide only the last four numbers of the social security number rather than the entire number. With regard to other variables of interest, effort should be made to fill all fields of data; there are large numbers of missing cases on different variables of interest in the HMIS data, limiting our understanding of some of the patterns and needs of homeless families.

²⁹ The same client might have multiple identification numbers,

³⁰ This insight came from a discussion with the County Office of Homeless Services.

³¹ One possible solution to this situation is, for clients who have used the system more than once, to allow providers to view only portions of a client's previous records—i.e., their names and background information, but not, perhaps where they were in shelter, when, and for what reasons.

Directions for Further Research and Analysis of HMIS Data

Shelter Stay Trajectories and Patterns of Program Use

Future work on the HMIS data might focus on illuminating information about the dynamic nature of shelter stays. Data about the trajectory of stays in shelter would be useful in better understanding patterns of shelter use. Questions might ask: how many individuals living in families use only emergency shelter versus a combination of different program types? What characterizes those who individuals living in families who are able to move on to more long-term and permanent housing solutions? On average, how much time do most clients have in between leaving one shelter and entering another? How many clients have used emergency shelter and transitional housing over the course of their coverage in HMIS, and how many have used all three housing types, and in what order? These issues might be important to examine in more detail to determine whether there are particular characteristics of individuals living in families and families that predict multiple stays in shelter, the path they take with regard to those stays (e.g., to what extent and in what order do these families move from emergency shelter to transitional housing, to permanent supportive housing, as well as whether particular factors predict those paths). Additional questions include what are the characteristics of those individuals living in families who stay in shelter for particularly long periods of time? For example, are persons of particular ethnic groups or families with particular characteristics more or less likely to use shelter multiple times, for long periods of time, and/or are they more likely to use particular types of programs?

Data on Permanent Supportive Housing Programs

To better understand the patterns of permanent supportive housing programs, more data on those beds are also needed. HMIS currently accounts just over 20% of the permanent housing beds that are available in the county, making it difficult to follow families from shelter or transitional housing to permanent housing. These data are critical to being able to report on the area's progress in moving previously homeless families into permanent housing, and to evaluating the area's progress in achieving an end to family homelessness.

Exploring the Costs of Homelessness

Cost studies, while labor-intensive and time consuming, can be extremely useful in estimating both the financial as well as human costs of homelessness for the community. Dennis Culhane's pioneering work in this area enabled New York City to determine the costs of homelessness by those with intensive service needs, finding that supportive housing is much more cost-effective than shelter (Culhane, Metraux, & Hadley, 2002). With such data in hand, moving forward with strategic plans that demonstrates cost reductions would be important. Cuyahoga County should consider conducting such studies, especially considering the high numbers of multiple users in the system.

Understanding Differences between Sheltered and Unsheltered Homeless Families

To get a complete picture of the homeless in families, we must consider that those families who enter shelter are different from those who do not. Of course, the

unsheltered homeless are a much more difficult population to locate and study, but they are essential to a full understanding of the homeless picture in the county. Without this information, we must continue to limit our conclusions to those who use shelter. Examining persons in shelter also leave out those families precariously housed and those below poverty level that might be a relevant comparison group. One way to locate such unsheltered families is through the community and governmental services they might access.

Part IV. Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusions

The ACS data indicate that several thousands of families in our area in poverty live doubled up, and the characteristics of the households in which they are doubled up suggest that those households are in precarious housing situations as well, perhaps increasing the risk that both those living doubled up and those housing the doubled up will become homeless. Such precarious living situations increase the concern that in difficult economic times such as those we are now experiencing, increasing numbers of families will find themselves needing to access homeless services, potentially overwhelming the current system.

Given that so many families who become homeless report that they were doubled up prior to entering a homeless shelter, gaining a more thorough understanding of the phenomenon of being doubled up is important, both for research and practice. It might be that being doubled up is just one of a constellation of risk factors for homelessness. Nevertheless, it is clear that point-in-time estimates are inadequate indications of the dynamic nature of living situations, particularly being doubled up, which tends to be a short-term arrangement for those entering shelter. Intensive, life history research and/or longitudinal studies are potential tools for better understanding doubled up living situations. Being doubled up is just one way of measuring people's risk of homelessness, and must be considered as part of a number of other risk factors. In practice, the fact that so many clients are doubled up prior to entering shelter suggests that these families, if detected, are prime targets for interventions to avoid homelessness.

We also see a need for gaining a better understanding of the causes and consequences of family separations, and their prevalence among families in our area. We noted that children who are doubled up are often living with grandparents. It would be worthwhile to examine where parents are and why they live apart from their children—are they in homeless shelters, in corrections facilities, or substance abuse treatment? The fact, however, that among impoverished doubled up families, so few parents live with their children is a troubling and perhaps an indicator of past, current, or future homelessness. Future research should seek to better understand the situations faced by doubled up children, especially when they live with their mothers—the person with whom children most frequently enter shelter.

Taken together, the data from the ACS and HMIS point to some interesting differences between families at risk for homelessness (i.e., doubled up) and those who are already homeless in our community. For example, though we found that a large proportion of White families were doubled up, African Americans were overrepresented in the homeless shelter system. It might be that being doubled up is somehow

protective from homelessness for White families, but the mechanism that drives this is unclear. Overall, it appears that African Americans living in precarious housing situations, including being doubled up, are particularly at risk for becoming homeless in Cuyahoga County. Though race alone is not necessarily predictive, in combination with the difficult economic situation in the county and nationwide, and other risk factors, it might be that African American clients are at particularly high risk. Further research should explore how and what combinations of characteristics of African American families place them at particular risk for homelessness in the Cleveland area. Predictive modeling might be an especially useful analytic tool, especially given the longitudinal nature of the HMIS data.

Strategies for Future Research

To better understand the characteristics and needs of doubled up families, the households within which they live, and how family configurations and living situations change over time, especially family separations, several areas of research should be examined. First, a more precise measurement of being doubled up is needed. It is essential that the reason(s) a family becomes doubled up are considered; being below the poverty line is an inadequate proxy for involuntarily living with others due to financial need. Second, the factors that keep doubled up families housed and which ones lead into literal/sheltered homelessness should be further explored and identified.

Service use patterns. It would be useful to explore families' contacts with a variety of social service systems. It is likely that because of their connection with the social service system, most on welfare won't become homeless, but research could confirm this. Research on people leaving the welfare rolls in Cuyahoga County found that 43% experienced a severe rent burden and only 30% were receiving housing subsidies, and many continued to utilize food stamps and Medicaid (Coulton, Lickfelt, Lalich, & Cook, 2005).

There are several ways to further examine homeless families' service use patterns. First, data from local non-profit organizations and social service systems that assist families in poverty and/or precariously housed will enable us to gain a more complete understanding of local patterns of service utilization by those at risk of becoming homeless. Also, the county Office of Homeless Services collects other service utilization data in the HMIS that can be combined and matched with homeless shelter data to better understand homeless-specific service patterns as well. Also, matching the single adult data with the family HMIS data would enable an analysis of shelter patterns that include children at some points and exclude them at others. Such an analysis would not reveal, however, whether adults in the single adult shelter system are parents who are separated from their children because of homelessness; such data could be collected by adding a question about whether a person is a parent to the other questions already asked in the HMIS.

An integrated, cohesive data system can provide communities with significantly more information about the plight of the poor. Rather than answering basic, isolated questions about homelessness, a phenomenon that does not occur in a vacuum, an integrated data system would allow the community to better understand what public services are homeless families using, the relationship between and timing of social

service system use and homelessness. One key area of focus should be examining other systems with which sheltered families have interacted to identify points of possible contact and intervention. Families who have entered the shelter population have likely already been touched by a number of different community and governmental organizations. Identifying these points of contact when their housing situation is precarious or unstable rather than a crisis would be potentially fruitful in terms of pinpointing opportunities for early intervention in cases in which families are at risk for becoming homeless.

One possible area of connection is in the school system, which already has a method for identifying and serving homeless and doubled up children. Being able to connect the school system and HMIS data has the potential for both understanding and reaching children and families at risk. For example, do frequent moves indicate precarious housing situations, and is this one sign of impending homelessness? What do homeless or doubled up children's attendance records look like; that is, to what extent do doubled up children have chronic absences? Shinn et al., (2005) have found that such integrated data systems help with identifying and assisting youth that age out of foster care, for example.

Shelter stay patterns. Dennis Culhane's work on a family homelessness typology in New York City revealed that there tends to be three main categories of shelter stays. The first, transitional, is characterized by only one stay, or slightly more than one, with fairly small number of days, the second, intermediate-stay is characterized by about one shelter stay with an with a longer length of stay, and the third, the episodic type is characterized by multiple and long stays (Culhane, Metraux, Park, Schretzman, & Valente, 2007). One study suggested that risk factors for repeated or extended shelter stays include being Black, having more kids, being older, having been homeless at some time, having more adults in family, the level of a mother's education, and her work experience. Those at lower risk of extended shelter stays include having those who received a housing subsidy, being pregnant, and experiencing domestic violence (Wong 1997). Examining the stay patterns among Cuyahoga County's homeless families should allow comparisons with other cities and enable the implementation of similar successful strategies where appropriate.

Preventing and Ending Homelessness

The literature is clear that providing increased funding for housing subsidies to enable families to remain housed is a cost-effective and efficient key to ending homelessness. The funding available for such assistance is currently inadequate, however, for the need. Legislation that prevents and/or delays eviction on foreclosed homes has already been introduced to keep families at risk housed (including renters), and it is essential that such policies continue to be given attention. We must also be sure that interventions are addressing and supporting families' needs. Different families have different needs for support services and a one-size-fits-all approach often does not work for all families. For example, though it is essential that families remain housed when that it an appropriate option for them, it's not an appropriate option for all families—especially those who might be unable to maintain a household, whether they

are teenage parents, those with mental health issues, substance abusers, or persons with physical or other limitations.

Promising Research Tools. While we know that particular factors place families at risk for homelessness, we also know that no one factor alone has been shown to predict who will become homeless. It might be that a variable that can take into account a number of factors together will be useful in predicting family homelessness. Such a tool could examine a continuum of risk, and has the potential to fine-tune assessment efforts and aid in decisions about the most appropriate course of action for a family. Recent innovative assessment tools such as the Vulnerability Index developed by James O'Connell (O'Connell, 2008) in his work on predicting mortality with the chronically homeless and persons living on the streets could also be modified for use with homeless families. The self-sufficiency matrix is also a potentially useful tool for case managers to use with families. This tool includes a number of domains including income, employment, housing, food, childcare, children's education, adult education, legal status, health care, life skills, mental health, substance abuse, family relations, mobility, community involvement, safety, and parenting skills. The assessment tool has been shown to have good reliability (Culhane, Parker, Poppe, Gross, & Sykes, 2007). Such tools have the potential for identifying which individuals living in families and families are at particular levels of self-sufficiency, and conversely, risk, enabling service providers to select among and tailor services and interventions to each family's needs.

Increasing Income. It is clear too, that one key to increasing families' abilities to pay for housing involves increasing their income. Schweitzer & Redick (2007) argue that the best way to increase incomes for low-income residents of Cleveland would be to increase the skill sets of adults already in the workforce so their earnings could increase, and eventually improve educational outcomes for children. Increased investment in educational and training opportunities would be one strategy for spurring increased income over the long terms.

Systems Change. System collaboration and communication would be critical to such an effort. Such collaboration could serve to reduce the fragmentation of services as they currently exist. Models in which a central access point serves as the initial point of contact are impressive and promising, and there is a growing evidence base that provides support for such models as important components in reducing family homelessness. Some research suggests that a total realignment of the system might be necessary before true collaboration can be achieved (Culhane & Metraux, 2008). Such a strategy might include reallocating funds to address primary prevention rather than secondary or tertiary prevention and more effectively focus on root causes of homelessness (Culhane & Metraux, 2008). Specifically, Culhane & Metraux (2008) argue that keeping people housed, offering them services through community-based programs should be the focus of most programs. Other research presents models for system change, collaboration, focusing on system change and system integration (Burt & Spellman, 2007).

Burt & Spellman (2007) argue that systems change resulting in coordinated community responses are essential to ending homelessness. Such a model takes into

account the local and state context and resources, the level of commitment of stakeholders, how much change is desired in the community, identifying a change process, and examining the kinds of management systems are in place for guiding changes. Martha Burt's work has identified innovative and effective community systems that can serve as models for other areas. Hennepin County, Minnesota, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Montgomery County, Maryland, and Columbus, Ohio are among some of the programs) such as homeless assistance networks that include single points of entry into the homeless service system, sophisticated and coordinated data and evaluation systems, and system changes that have been successful and/or promising (Burt, Pearson, & Montgomery, 2007; Burt & Spellman, 2007). Models such as these have great potential for creating lasting change for other communities.

Having a better understanding of the link between the foreclosure crisis and homelessness is an important next step to foster a better understanding the connection between overall neighborhoods and homelessness. Though this report was able to examine general trends in general areas of Cuyahoga County, we need more information about specific areas to focus resources in particular areas of risk. The geographic area covered by the HMIS is too broad; zip code is an inadequate indicator of neighborhoods at risk, as is the PUMA code in the ACS data. In their investigation into prior addresses of persons who entered public homeless shelters in New York City and Philadelphia, Culhane and his colleagues (1996) found that those entering shelter tended to come from areas with dense population, a high concentration of poverty, high rates of unemployment, more single mothers, more African American households with young children, high rates of crowding, high vacancy rates, as well as a high rent-to-income ratios (Culhane, Lee, & Watcher, 1996). All of these issues are familiar to Cuyahoga County residents, and it would be helpful to have more specific neighborhood-level information, both to better understand the situations faced by families as well as for targeting assistance to areas that are at particular risk (Shinn et al., 2005).

Keeping Families Housed. Ending family homelessness will require a community-wide effort. With a more coordinated data system, the characteristics of and service use of families at risk for homelessness and those who have been served by the homeless system can be better understood. Local Cuyahoga County should also consider the feasibility of implementing centralized intake systems such as those used in other areas with in-depth assessments to both simplify the process of admitting families into shelter, designing a comprehensive service plan, as well doing everything possible to keep families housed.

Improved screenings at social service agencies that prioritize housing as a cornerstone of a family's overall stability would be an important goal, along with integrating systems in the goal of best reaching and serving at-risk families. Screening tools such as those developed by Beyond Shelter, a homeless assistance agency in Los Angeles (Beyond Shelter, 2008), allow service providers to quickly and concisely identify families at risk based on the intensity of their service needs (low, moderate, and high-intensity), and then to target services accordingly. Opportunities for reaching families through other service systems would include education, health care, welfare (public assistance, child welfare, public housing, food banks, other community

organizations would be the chief goal of such collaboration. The U.S. Department of Education includes being doubled up in their definition of homelessness, while HUD does not. This difference allows programs such as Project Act, the local homelessness liaison system, to reach families with children in the public school system, offer them services, and especially for those who are living in doubled up housing situations, to offer support that might help keep them housed.

Additionally, given that so few homeless families in the county use shelters more than once, those who use services more than once should be targeted for swift intervention to decrease their numbers. Families who are coming to shelter from their own homes or apartments should be another focus; whether through subsidies or various other means, every attempt should be made to keep them housed.

Conclusions

This report helps establish a local base of information for Cuyahoga County by providing one of the first comprehensive assessments of the local situation for homeless families. Using multiple sources of data, we have examined family homelessness in Cuyahoga from different angles, using different sources of data. While the Census data we have presented contribute to our understanding of families at risk for becoming homeless in Cuyahoga County due to being doubled up, there are no universal definitions of being doubled up, the reasons for being doubled up are not often clear, and being doubled up, though a common occurrence for persons who will later become homeless, is far from a perfect predictor of homelessness. The HMIS data focused more specifically on local homelessness data and revealed the characteristics of the area's homeless families.

By examining both risk for homelessness and the characteristics of those covered by the shelter system, this study has estimated the size of the problem on the local level. While these estimates are highly variable due to the differences and methodological challenges of both homeless research and the nature of our data sources, we have been able to establish some baseline numbers. The HMIS data in particular will be a crucial tool as local efforts to reduce and eventually end homelessness move forward. The continued collection and analysis of HMIS data during every stage of program planning and implementation will allow Cuyahoga County to better understand how effectively homeless programs in the community are serving families, keep families from falling through the system's cracks, and eventually, demonstrate the success of local interventions and systems changes over time. These efforts will ultimately strengthen the system overall as well as improve services for needy families.

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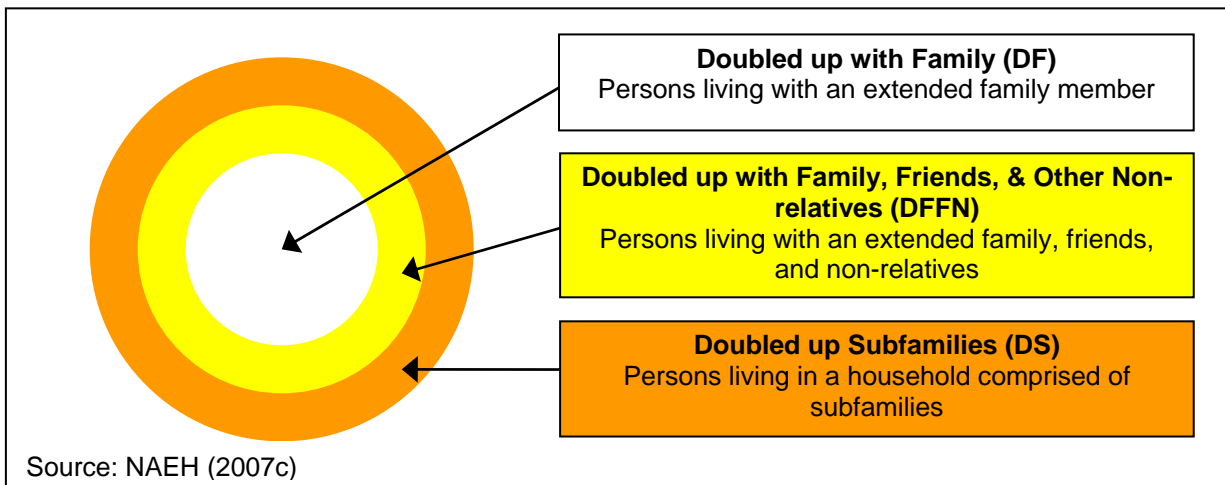
APPENDIX

Appendix A: Doubled up Living Situations

Constructing the Definition of Doubled Up Living Situations

The NAEH constructed three categories of living doubled up were (NAEH, 2007c). In the first, if the people listed as living with the householder were members of his or her extended family the person living with him or her would be counted as being doubled up with family (DF)³² (NAEH, 2007c). The second category of being doubled up simply expanded on the first, including those living with members of his or her extended family, friends, and non-relatives (DFFN) (NAEH, 2007c). The third category of living in a doubled up housing situation was referred to as Doubled up Subfamilies (DS) (NAEH, 2007c). Subfamilies were defined as unrelated people living together. This definition included not only people in the previous definitions, but also the people who lived with doubled up people—that is, the householder and his or her family would be counted as one subfamily, a second, unrelated person would be a second subfamily, and a third unrelated person would be considered a third subfamily. The subfamily definition does not include those living in group quarters, but does include caregivers, unmarried partners, and people living with others in a service role, such as a caregiver for an elderly person. The numbers in the subfamily category, then, tend to be much larger than those in the other categories. The NAEH (2007c) regarded the second category, DFFN, as perhaps the best representative of a doubled up housing situation—that is, neither undercounting people by considering the DF only definition nor over-counting them using the subfamily definition (NAEH, 2007c).

Figure A-1. Doubled up Categorizations

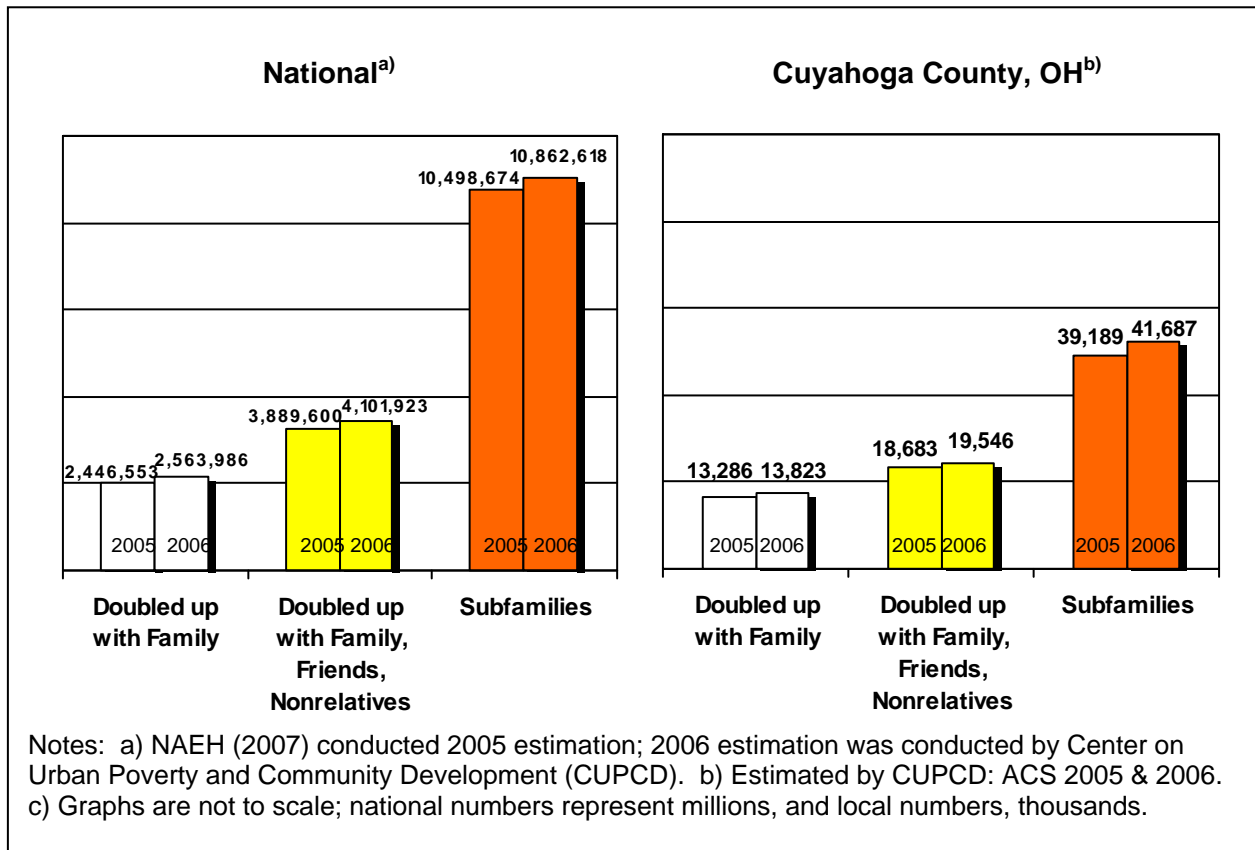


³² Family is defined as individuals who are related by blood, adoption, or marriage.

Findings: Estimates for all Doubled up Categories

The national estimate of doubled up people (using the DFFN definition) was between 2.5 million to 4 million in 2005 and 2006 (NAEH, 2007c), and approximately 10 million people in subfamilies. We estimated that of those living in poverty, 18,683 people in 2005 and 19,546 people in 2006 lived in doubled up housing situations in Cuyahoga County. Compared to 2005, the number of people estimated to be doubled up in Cuyahoga County in 2006 increased slightly. In other words, about 10 % of poor people living in Cuyahoga County resided in the homes of other family members, friends, or non-relatives. Using the subfamilies definition increases the estimate of those living doubled up considerably; approximately 40,000 people or about 22% of poor people lived in subfamilies in 2005 and 2006.

Figure A-2. National and Local Estimates of People Living in Doubled up Housing Situations



Appendix B: Additional HMIS Data Information

Table B-1 reflects the number of beds covered by the Cuyahoga County HMIS.

Table B-1 Bed and Client Coverage by Program Type

	N Family Beds in HMIS	N Family Beds not in HMIS	Total N Beds	% of Beds covered by HMIS
Emergency Shelter	230	75	305	75%
Transitional Housing	299	0	299	100%
Permanent Housing	1163	661	502	43%

Source: Housing Inventory Charts provided by the Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services.

Table B-2 lists all county programs, availability of shelter beds, and numbers of persons entering the programs per year. Where appropriate, if a program has “sub-programs” (or the program went by a different name), the umbrella program or organization has a row referred to as “total” and the sub-program is listed underneath. Some programs, for example, do not participate in HMIS, and others do participate but their data were not available for our analysis (e.g., the Community Women’s Shelter). The Salvation Army is the largest provider of family beds in the county, and the City Mission family shelter Laura’s Home is the second largest family shelter provider, but does not currently contribute its homeless data to the HMIS system³³.

Table B-2 Total Numbers of Individuals Living in Families Served by Year and Provider 2005-2008

	N family beds	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total
Emergency shelter						
<i>City Mission/Laura’s Home</i> ^c	75	--	--	--	--	--
Continue Life-Continue Inn	10	33	49	31	22	135
Domestic Violence Center	35	9	15	169	153	346
East Side Catholic Center ^a	30	581	552	369	--	1502
Interfaith Hospitality Network	28	0	10	56	4	70
Community Women’s Shelter ^b	18	--	--	--	--	--
Salvation Army Zelma George (Total)	85	525	610	623	246	2004
Salv. Army Zelma George		(9) ^d	(0)	(0)	(0)	(9)
SA2 Link		(489)	(610)	(623)	(246)	(1968)
SA Emergency 21 Day Program		(27)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(27)
West Side Catholic Shelter (Total)	24	140	154	138	50	482
Aftercare		(36)	(50)	(46)	(18)	(150)
HEP		(6)	(48)	(68)	(22)	(144)
Shelter		(98)	(56)	(24)	(10)	(188)
Total Emergency Shelter Beds	305	1288	1390	1386	475	4539
% beds HMIS participating		94				
% total beds accounted for in this report		69.5				

³³ The County Office of Homeless Services is conducting ongoing discussions to encourage participation among those programs that do not currently participate.

Transitional housing						
Cle Housing Network Trans. Housing	18	10	6	10	5	31
Continue Life-Hope & Glory	32	35	52	77	29	193
Family Transitional Housing ^c	106	--	--	--	--	--
Hitchcock Center for Women (Total)	21	38	33	49	20	140
Hitchcock Center for Women (20)	(5)	(22)	(20)	(26)	(11)	(79)
Hitchcock Center for Women (6)	(16)	(12)	(12)	(23)	(9)	(56)
Hitchcock Center for Women (unspec.)		(4)	(1)	(0)	(0)	(5)
New Life Community	46	97	110	101	64	372
Transitional Housing Inc	9	64	86	65	31	246
University Settlement	67	10	59	12	3	84
Total Transitional Housing Beds	299	254	346	314	152	1066
% beds HMIS participating	100%					
% total beds accounted for in this report	100%					
Permanent supportive housing						
Cleveland Housing Network (Total)		114	159	104	19	372
9 units Perm. Supportive Housing	187	(9)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(9)
6 units Perm. Supportive Housing	(39)	(28)	(4)	(0)	(0)	(32)
8 units Perm. Supportive Housing	(22)	(0)	(24)	(10)	(4)	(38)
5 units Perm. Supportive Housing	(32)	(0)	(14)	(7)	(0)	(21)
<i>Direct Housing Program</i> ^c	(16)	(--)	(--)	(--)	(--)	(--)
SAFA	(78)	(53)	(117)	(87)	(0)	(257)
Cleveland Housing Network (unspec.)		(0)	(0)	(0)	(15)	(15)
Shelter Plus Care ^c	363	--	--	--	--	--
Eden Inc. (Total) ^b	30	--	--	--	--	--
PSH Persons w/Chemical Dep. 2001	(12)	--	--	--	--	--
PSH Persons w/Chemical Dep. 2003	(12)	--	--	--	--	--
PSH Duplex Scattered Sites	(6)	--	--	--	--	--
Total Permanent Supportive Housing Beds	502	90	159	104	19	372
% beds HMIS participating	21.7					
% total beds accounted for in this report	18.8					

Notes. Data were provided by the Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services.

^a Closed in 2007.

^b -- indicates data were not available.

^c Programs in italics do not participate in HMIS.

^d Figures in parentheses are sub-programs of a more general category of program, and are used in calculating the total numbers for each provider. Counts are unduplicated by client identification number and date of entry into program, so multiple stays by the same clients on different dates are included in the numbers. 2008 numbers are current to 7/16/2008.

Record Duplication and De-duplication. There are numerous ways to report HMIS usage for families and individuals living in those families. Analyses can be broken down by year or across years, by program type, whether a client has used multiple times or only once, as well as by status as an adult, child, or an entire family unit.

Given that the HMIS data are entered by many different service providers at different agencies data entry errors are inevitable. The HMIS data also contain numerous duplications. Some of these are simple duplications of records that are easily addressed while other duplications are more complicated. Specifically, among other issues, clients are sometimes entered twice by the same provider, downloaded more than once onto the central system, or entered different ways on different dates by

different providers. Other issues include the same clients being assigned different household and/or client identification numbers, clients whose names were spelled differently or whose names changed on different entries into shelter, and errors in the entry of dates of birth and other data. Such issues are common to administrative data sets and not unique to the HMIS data.

We began the process of identifying duplicate cases by following HUD's technical guidelines for de-duplicating HMIS data (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2005). Where a client's name and social security number were omitted from the data, there was no way of determining whether that record was a duplicate of any other record, and so it was deleted from our data set³⁴. A total of 317 cases were discarded from our analysis for this reason. Of these, 253 cases were domestic violence clients (data from domestic violence providers cannot be used in HMIS reporting). An additional 356 cases of adults who were alone in their households were also discarded because they could not be determined to be living in families.

To be sure that the same clients were given the same identification number (and therefore to ensure we had a complete count of unique individuals rather than multiple counts of the same individuals which would represent an inflated estimate), a probabilistic matching procedure³⁵ was conducted using Statistical Analysis Software (SAS) and new client and household identification numbers were assigned to ensure each client and household had a unique identification number. Once this was completed, the records could be effectively unduplicated.

The de-duplication process for these data is multifaceted. We used a more conservative method of de-duplicating (general de-duplication) in determining service use across years, and a less conservative method (de-duplication by particular variables) for determining service use in a single year. Both of these are described in more detail below. The more conservative estimate retains only the first entry into any program during the time frame, while the less conservative method ensures multiple entries are counted within the time frame, while removing entries that occur on the same day³⁶. A duplicate record for the purposes of these analyses was considered one that contained the same client identification number (after matching was performed to that identified and eliminated cases for which the same person had multiple identification numbers) and shelter entry date. Such an analysis allowed for an examination of multiple stays in shelter.

De-duplicating data

General de-duplication. This method de-duplicates cases that are "true" duplicates; that is, if every value for variable on an entire record has all the exact same data as that of another record. This is the most conservative estimate, and it is unusual to have exact duplicates on every entry.

De-duplication by particular variables. This method de-duplicates cases based on particular, key variables of interest. For example, if two records have the same client

³⁴ The characteristics of the 317 individuals in families who were discarded from the dataset are detailed in Appendix A.

³⁵ Nina Lulich, Analyst/Programmer at the Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development oversaw the creation and implementation of these programs.

³⁶ Please see Appendix A for a detailed discussion of the different de-duplication methods.

identification number and the same date of entry into shelter, one record would be deleted. This method is less conservative than the general de-duplication strategy, and is able to retain information about multiple entry dates into shelter. This is the strategy used in our report on 2007 data as well as for the information on multiple shelter stays.

Within-year de-duplication. Data are de-duplicated by year. This method would count multiple users across but not within years. Said differently, if a person enters shelter more than once in a year, they are counted only once in that year, but if they use again in another year, they are counted again.

Across-years de-duplication. Data can also be de-duplicated across the data collection time frame, meaning that the same family is counted only once across several years. This process is complicated by the fact that people tend to move in and out of programs, and might enter one program at one point, such as emergency shelter, and eventually switch into a longer-term solution. This method is used in our reporting for the 2005-2008 data.

Within-program type de-duplication. This method of de-duplicating would count a person/family only once based on the type of program they used; thus, a person might be counted once when they enter emergency shelter at least once, but would be counted a second, time, and separately once they enter another type of program, such as transitional housing.

Mixed de-deduplication. This strategy would mix any of the basic strategies above. Specifically, data might be de-duplicated on the basis of program type and year, rather than either alone.

HMIS Data Issues and Limitations

The HMIS data on which this report has been based covers data collected since 2005, and therefore conclusions drawn are based on clients' single and multiple shelter entries since then. There are currently no questions on the HMIS that ask whether the individuals have been homeless before or when, thus the lifetime of homelessness is unknown. Thus, a homeless person's "first entry" into shelter, might or might not be their "true" first time in shelter, but rather the first time they have been captured by the HMIS. Additionally, conclusions about the data should be drawn cautiously and tentatively, keeping in mind that not all shelters participate in HMIS and not all the data were available from those programs that do participate. Even among shelters that are, overall, entering data fairly completely and consistently, program-specific (i.e., non-universal) data elements such as income and sources of income, non-cash benefits, employment, education level, general health status, pregnancy status, and children's education information are not entered into HMIS by all programs, and therefore somewhat limits our understanding of the characteristics of individuals living in families who are using these services.

HMIS as an administrative dataset has a number of additional common limitations, including that it lacks the rigor and controls employed for research-specific data (Metraux et al., 2001). Shelter staff members enter the data into a system that the county maintains at a central site. During the development of the HMIS, homeless shelter staff expressed concern about systematized efforts to collect data on the homeless population (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2003). Specifically, as advocates, they tended to be concerned about client privacy and

adequate safeguarding of identifying information. Anecdotal evidence suggests local providers share these concerns. It is possible that such concerns might lead to the omission of essential data for accurately assessing the numbers homeless in our community. Additionally, shelters often have limited resources combined with high demands for services, high staff turnover, and HMIS data entry might seem like a burden and of low priority. The accuracy and quality of data often depend upon the motivation of those entering the data, the availability of adequate data tracking tools, including up-to-date computer hardware and software, as well as reliable methods of collecting the data.

Additional Information—adults and children in 2007.

Table B-3 Characteristics of sheltered children in families (2007).

	Emergency Shelter		Transitional Housing		Total	
Race						
Black	581	(83.4%)	142	(89.9%)	723	(84.6%)
White	81	(11.6%)	6	(3.8%)	87	(10.2%)
Multiple races	16	(2.3%)	10	(6.3%)	26	(3.0%)
Other	19	(2.7%)	0	(0.0%)	19	(2.2%)
Gender						
Female	360	(51.5%)	75	(47.5%)	435	(50.8%)
Male	339	(48.5%)	83	(52.5%)	422	(49.2%)
Length of stay in shelter						
Below 1 week	193	(42.8%)	4	(4.5%)	197	(36.5%)
1 week – 1month	128	(28.4%)	7	(8.0%)	135	(25.0%)
3 – 9 months	128	(28.4%)	68	(77.3%)	196	(36.4%)
9 months -1year	0	(0.0%)	5	(5.7%)	5	(0.9%)
More than one year	2	(0.4%)	4	(4.5%)	6	(1.1%)
Relationship						
Child	675	(97.0%)	154	(98.1%)	829	(97.2%)
Sibling	9	(1.3%)	0	(0.0%)	9	(1.1%)
Other	2	(0.3%)	3	(1.9%)	5	(0.6%)
Unknown	10	(1.4%)	0	(0.0%)	10	(1.2%)

Note: HMIS data provided by Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services.

Table B-4 Characteristics of sheltered adults in families (2007).

	Emergency Shelter		Transitional Housing		Total	
Race						
Black	321	(83.2%)	87	(87.0%)	408	(84.0%)
White	49	(12.7%)	11	(11.0%)	60	(12.3%)
Multiple races	7	(1.8%)	1	(1.0%)	8	(1.6%)
Other	9	(2.3%)	1	(1.0%)	10	(2.1%)
Gender						
Female	359	(93.0%)	96	(96.0%)	455	(93.6%)
Male	27	(7.0%)	4	(4.0%)	31	(6.4%)
Length of stay in shelter						
Below 1 week	117	(45.0%)	2	(4.3%)	119	(38.9%)
1 week – 1month	84	(32.3%)	3	(6.5%)	87	(28.4%)
3 - 9 months	57	(21.9%)	38	(82.6%)	95	(31.0%)
9 months -1year	0	(0.0%)	2	(4.3%)	2	(0.7%)
Above 1year	2	(0.8%)	1	(2.2%)	3	(1.0%)
Relationship						
Self	347	(90.4%)	95	(96.9%)	442	(91.7%)
Spouse	20	(5.2%)	2	(2.0%)	22	(4.6%)
Child	4	(1.0%)	0	(0.0%)	4	(0.8%)
Other	2	(0.5%)	1	(1.0%)	3	(0.6%)
Unknown	11	(2.9%)	0	(0.0%)	11	(2.3%)

Note: HMIS data provided by Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services. Data unduplicated by client id and shelter entry date.

Table B-5 Mean and median shelter stays for adults and children living in families (2007).

	Emergency Shelter	Transitional Housing	Permanent Supportive Housing
Children			
Mean length of stay (# days) (SD)	53.2 (83.7)	195 (204.9)	221.2 (155.4)
Median stay (# days)	22	113	183
Adults			
Mean length of stay (# days) (SD)	47.5 (76.8)	189.6 (195.5)	214.1 (137.5)
Median stay (# days)	20	113	183
Total (Adults and children together)			
Mean length of stay (# days) (SD)	51.1 (81.3)	193 (201.3)	216.1 (142.5)
Median stay (# days)	21	113	183

Note: HMIS data provided by Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services. Data unduplicated by client id and shelter entry date.

Figure B-1 Average age of shelter entry for adults and children in families.

