



# COUNTY OF MARIN

## NEWS RELEASE

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### Marin announces Preliminary Point in Time Homeless Count Results

**San Rafael, CA** - The preliminary count results of the number of persons experiencing homelessness in Marin showed a decrease in the number of homeless – this is largely attributable to federal stimulus funds directed to preventing homelessness and rapidly moving those experiencing homelessness into permanent housing. Equally striking is a 35% increase in the number defined as “precariously housed” reflecting the impact of the lack of affordable housing, presence of poverty, and continuing pressures on safety net services in Marin County.

The fourth biennial Point in Time Homeless Count was conducted on January 27<sup>th</sup> by Marin County Health & Human Services, in collaboration with various community agencies and homeless service providers. This county-wide, one day census is a snapshot of persons experiencing homelessness and those who are at risk of losing their housing. The count is required in order for the County to continue to receive federal support for homeless services and provides an opportunity to gather information on the extent and nature of homelessness in our community.

Preliminary count results identified **1,220** people who are experiencing homelessness and **4,103** precariously housed. These preliminary figures will be finalized and detailed in a full report to be released in the coming weeks.

As in previous counts, Marin includes the following homeless populations:

- **Unsheltered:** any person that resides in a place not meant for human habitation, such as a car, park, sidewalk, open space or on the street.
- **Sheltered:** refers to any person residing in an emergency shelter or transitional housing program for homeless persons who originally came from the streets or emergency shelter.
- **Other Homeless Populations:** people in jail or staying in a hospital but were homeless prior to entry; people living temporarily with friends or family due to loss of housing; people living in hotel or motel; people living in a boat or structure without plumbing and/or electricity.

- **Precariously Housed:** includes people who are facing eviction, living in severely overcrowded housing and have no other housing options, as well as people who are experiencing housing instability as evidenced by frequent moves, couch surfing or living in doubled up situations due to economic hardships.

Preliminary count results reveal a decrease in the number of people in sheltered, unsheltered and other homeless populations from 1,770 in 2009, to 1,220 in 2011. However, preliminary figures indicate the number of people precariously housed increased 35% from 3,028 in 2009 to 4,103 in 2011. Note that the number identified as homeless has risen from 1,017 in 2005, the first year of the count.

Among the 1,220 individuals experiencing homelessness, the preliminary count reflects the following breakdown -

- 1220 total (adults and children)
  - 533 Sheltered;
  - 687 Unsheltered and other homeless populations
- 248 Children (17 years and under)
  - 134 Sheltered
  - 114 Unsheltered and other homeless populations
- 972 adults
  - 399 Sheltered
  - 573 Unsheltered and other homeless populations

Other Preliminary Count Findings:

- Nearly half (47%) of adults counted have been homeless for one year or more. 10% have been homeless for 10 years or more.
- 32% of adults were counted as chronically homeless (continuously homeless for one year or more and have a disabling condition)
- According to the survey, respondents indicated the primary reasons for homelessness were job loss, lack of affordable housing and lack of income.

The decrease in Marin's homeless population may be attributed to the infusion of one-time federal stimulus funds, starting in October 2009, of over \$2 million. The monies provided for assistance targeted those currently homeless and at imminent risk of homelessness. Much of these funds were directed to households with children. Collective efforts to reduce the number of homeless through various initiatives and housing assistance programs included:

- Fireside permanent housing project opened providing permanent housing to 10 homeless families and 8 seniors;
- 35 Chronically homeless veterans permanently housed through VASH;
- 658 homeless adults and children rapidly housed with one-time HPRP stimulus and Emergency Contingency funds;
- 1,522 adults and children provided with assistance to prevent homelessness through HPRP and ECF stimulus programs.

Marin has experienced some success through stimulus funded housing and other assistance programs. However, the preliminary count indicates a 35% increase in the number of people precariously housed. This, along with other factors - expected cuts to state funded safety net programs including SSI, CalWORKS and others, along with the expiration of stimulus assistance funding – could pose obstacles to continuing to reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness in Marin.

Larry Meredith, Director of Health & Human Services noted, “The continuing depressed economic conditions combined with budget uncertainties will continue to place too many at risk of homelessness.”

Meredith continued, “The success of the stimulus funded efforts moving people experiencing homelessness rapidly into permanent housing points to a way forward that is congruent with new federal research and policy direction. As we and our community partners continue this journey that so powerfully affects people’s lives, it is critical that we chart our future course based on the best and most current learnings from this highly complex field.”

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