**NNIP Camp Session 1 Wednesday, October 17, 2018**

**Homeless Counts**

**Leader: Devin Keithley**

**Notes: Olivia Arena**

**Attendees**: Jessie Partridge Guerrero, Mark O’Dell, Jie Wu, Elly Schoen, Gerardo Mares

DK: Overview of Housing Finance Agencies. Office is part of the support office, work on a variety of things. Some of what I do is policy, Office of Housing Policy. Homelessness is one of the policy issues we do. Besides develop affordable housing, we work with other partners to help end homelessness. Homelessness data side, one of the things we are developing is the Ohio Health Services Data Warehouse, data from around the state (8/10 are participating). Working with the state agencies and COCs to connect data to see, “this individual is also in the state’s mental health system.” Trying to connect those records. We are getting that info to students at Ohio State. We’ve had all sorts of issues—data sharing agreements. You have your different types of counts ([Point-in-Time Counts](https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hdx/guides/pit-hic/#general-pit-guides-and-tools)). One of the smallest counts. We believe it’s a drastic undercount—different ways to measure homelessness. HUD collects that information PIT counts from all COCs, only information you can get. Homelessness data and information. There’s the ability to track whether individuals are moving from one COC to another.

JW: The method that our city is point-in-time count. The count is conducted over a three-day period in January. The sheltered count is conducted on one night and based on reports received from providers; while the unsheltered count was conducted through interviews and observations, which could be a significant undercount due to the transient nature of this population. I have concerns about sharing statistics for two suburban counties because of the small numbers and large areas they cover. I’d like to learn from other cities and to see if we could try something else.

JPG: We do quite a bit of work in housing but little on homelessness. It’s a question we get asked all the time. The available data is not that robust. What are strategies that people use to do research, best resources, and major limitations?

MO: Same perspective, Chicago numbers are undercount (PIT), the only other data I’ve seen is based on the number of students in CPS who don’t have a fixed address. Same thing. Where can you get that information?

DK: Student homelessness, slightly different metric.

JPG: We cover 101 municipalities. Curious about the mobile nature of homeless populations and how you avoid duplication.

DK: Unduplicated account. Unsure if they’ve done mobility analysis. Don’t know how much mobility. In Ohio, the various COCs, they are county geographies. I don’t know how easy it is for someone who is homeless to move and know why they are moving.

ES: Echo everyone’s concerns, PIT, solutions that are better. I am here, in addition to NNIP platform, I manage initiative [Homelessness Policy Research Institute](https://socialinnovation.usc.edu/special-initiatives/homelessness-policy-research-institute/). Institute that brings together 30-40 university researchers, research firms, and community partners to conduct homelessness research in Los Angeles. We coordinate with local policymakers on our research agenda to inform on-the-ground work.

DK: Haven’t been on the data cleaning end of this. I was going to say, PIT count in Ohio, the number of people who access services (58,000 7X larger than the PIT count). Unduplicated number of individuals that access services. 20,000 students they identified that were housing insecure or homeless. Maybe that is more of an accurate count.

GM: Working for a police department that had an entire unit devoted to homelessness, had an in-house unit devoted to homelessness. Some overlap with some of the offenses. The same individuals were having multiple encounters with police, missing health data perspective because of HIPPA. Some incidents with officer violence against homelessness. Can be such a challenge even with law enforcement, unfortunately the first line. Anyone worked with police department to gather data?

JW: In Houston, when police officer encounter homeless person, they can refer to HPD’s homeless outreach team under its [mental health division](https://www.houstoncit.org/) or refer to public health system for health concerns. The information might be recorded in the health system. Due to HIPAA, service providers such as coalition for the homeless don’t have access to this type of data.

DK: Match with state level data.

ES: Is that because someone has a unique identifier?

DK: I don’t know. Whoever is working with it matches and cleans it. Just starting to see the results of that. I wanted to touch on, measuring risk of homelessness. I know that HUD has the definition for at-risk of homelessness, multilayered equation for people who are doubled up or overcrowded, extremely low-income. The problem is there is not good enough data to use their definition to come up with any useful number. I tried to use their definition for the [CHAS data](https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/cp.html) (Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy), HUD has data and extrapolate for other data. You can do a lot with it, they have a table to use—clearly not a good measure.

JPG: [PUMS](https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/pums.html) data, I think that might be useful, you may have to join (household record to the person record), you could get number of bedrooms and number of people living in the house. The problem is the geographic scale.

DK: The other problem is the things we are asked. PUMS draws from ACS, how many people are living in situations.

MO: Any repository for this, can get additional factor on ongoing foreclosure and eviction proceedings.

DK: [Eviction Lab](https://evictionlab.org/). I’ve dug through it.

JPG: Not all states’ records come from the same source.

ES: Used private data collectors in some states like California where data isn’t publically available, outcry from social justice advocates.

DK: In Ohio, they can ask if you’re ever been evicted. They can discriminate in this way.

JPG: In NYC, did research and created a methodology for risk of homelessness. NYC has a lot of great data they could access.

OA: Interesting at different geographies.

DK: School system, 13% of Toledo public schools is homeless. This is at minimum. Other school districts may have more. I read [an article in LA Times](http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-murray-city-homelessness-20180116-story.html) about LA homeless counts, described it as a city. I think it’s easy for people to not realize how big the homeless problem is. Like that as a tactic.

ES: Didn’t see this. Very visible here.

DK: Helps if you can get it down to the local level. 9 urban counties and 10 is the balance of state. Student homelessness data can get down to the school district, so that a smaller city can care. We found that when we present on it, state legislators are shocked to find out.

GM: Juvenile homelessness and youth?

JW: In Houston, 3 years ago, [Youth Count 2.0](https://www.uh.edu/socialwork/_docs/Research/FINAL%20REPORT%20YOUTH%20COUNT%202.0.pdf) did a direct count of 420 youth of age range 13-24, and 212 additional youths using data from the homeless management information system. PIs are Dr. Sarah Narendorf from University of Houston, and Dr. Diane Santa Maria from UT School of Public Health. They study used mixed methods to highlight prior system involvement and service needs. Recently the Coalition for the Homeless reported [2017-2018 data on homeless youth](http://www.homelesshouston.org/local-data-and-research/2017-2018-data-students-experiencing-homelessness-in-harris-fort-bend-and-montgomery-counties-texas/). Data includes youth who were identified as literally homeless by school faculty (per HUD definition of homelessness), and youth who were identified by school faculty as being unstably housed according to the Department of Education’s broader definition of homelessness.

GM: Especially LGBTQ.

JW: In the study, one fourth was identified as LGBTQ youth. Some ran away from their families.

GM: Reminded me of project we were looking at runaway youth, LGBT youth in Milwaukee, one variable we acquired was 911 calls for service, call entry to refer to youth runaway. Calls for service data gets categorized based on the call types (e.g. runaway, person missing). Most organizations are required to report youth missing (e.g. schools, shelters, foster homes, etc.). If the youth were staying at a shelter. If the youth weren’t at school they are reported, so we took calls, and all data was mapped for the city in order to help further understand cluster analysis of places with high runaway or missing person calls for service them in the city and looked at services in the area. This spatial analysis helped guide a discussion for allocation of services.

DK: [Study in Dayton](https://ohiohome.org/research/documents/DaybreakReport.pdf), Daybreak was the organization that looked into runaway youth, youth, and youth homelessness. I also know that there are youth coming out of the foster care system, data on that, there’s something called [National Youth in Transition Database](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/research-data-technology/reporting-systems/nytd). The national data is published but the state data has to be requested. Outcomes – how many end up unemployed, incarcerated, unemployed. Interesting data at the state level.

ES: Youth services providers, said our research on adult homelessness isn’t always helpful – they face unique

OA: Youth service providers have different challenges.

JW: More than 40% reported being in foster care system in the past, and one third had been involved with juvenile justice system. In 2011, Harris County passed a bill that allows for the implementation of the Harris County Juvenile Information System, which was put in place in 2015. The effort joined information from three agencies: Harris County CPS, Children’s Assessment Center (sexual abused children) and the juvenile justice system. They are working on integrating information from the Harris Center for Mental Health into the system. Nonprofits working with juveniles are trying to get some information through data-sharing. The inter-agency system also hopes to work with school districts to share that information, group in different age groups.

OA: School district data?

JPG: Massachusetts has robust system of data but hard to work with, and hard to get more detailed data. 101 cities and towns, hard.

DK: Community Research Partners-- [Student mobility study](http://edex.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/publication/pdfs/OSMS%20Full%20Report%2011-8-12_7_0.pdf), major metropolitan school districts. They were able to figure out how often students are moving and the reflections on grades. Go to the state level.

JW: Our Houston Education Research Consortium (HERC) team is working with multiple school districts to develop a systemic student mobility study.

GM: One of the funders was able to get access to the data, where the students lived vs. where they went to school. Only gave limited variables, like street and zip code. All we could do was where they students commuted and lived in funding geography. If you wanted to get into that data, funders could also be advocates.

JPG: Any other resources?

MO: Boston College released study about homelessness.

* Homelessness Policy Research Institute ([HPRI](https://socialinnovation.usc.edu/special-initiatives/homelessness-policy-research-institute/))
* [Washington Post](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2018/10/10/older-black-people-have-been-homeless-some-point-their-life-study-finds/?utm_term=.46ac5767ef91) on Boston College

DK: Different definitions, and may be okay. San Francisco, can live in car as your home.

JPG: Different definitions are important because there are different policy implications.

OA: What does homelessness look like at different geographies?

DK: Local policies, homeless are more visible. In other cities like Columbus, populations aren’t as visible, live in camps in the woods. Hiding in plain sight. If the average citizen did know.

JPG: JPG: Some cities, don’t allow homeless populations to be visible. In Boston, we do have have a visible homeless population, but not to the same degree as some cities like LA. However, in 2014 an island in Massachusetts bay that had a large homeless shelter and detox center, not visible to the general public, was closed off because the bridge leading to the island was deemed unsafe and was closed. This shut down the island and shelters, and the population has become more visible. Also during the same period, the opioid epidemic has taken off in Boston. There are now homeless populations living in tents along major roadways that have never been so visible before. <http://www.wbur.org/cognoscenti/2015/10/08/homelessness-in-boston-alejandro-ramirez>

GM: Not visible in Milwaukee—very seasonable, noticeable in the summer vs. winter. It’s a certain type of displacement. In the winter, less noticeable. In Chicago, independent course on LGBT victimization, same in Milwaukee, the LGBT youth that were homeless had to travel so far to get services, the homeless population was LGBT populations of color, and the services were in a totally different side of the city, usually affluent rich neighborhoods. It was interesting to see how that balances out, only resources are far away, has to do with other resources.

MO: Something else in Chicago, not that large of a population visible in LA, noticeably large population, that sleeps on the L or bus, the city’s public transit, some lines run 24 hours. Can ride from one end to the other, 3-4 hours.

DK: There’s a huge population that lives in the dark in transit systems in NYC. Someone tapped into the electrical lines, could use appliances. NYC had 80,000 people that live underground.