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Annual Point-in-Time Count of Homelessness Shows Modest Gains
State Homeless Service Providers Release New Report

MONTPELIER, VT – On a single night in January, 1,523 Vermonters were identified as homeless. The 2015 Point-In-Time Count, released today by the Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness and the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance, showed a small overall decrease in homelessness by 2.3% compared to the 2014 Point-in-Time Count. However, while Chittenden County saw a substantial decrease by 11.5%, the remainder of the state saw a small increase in homelessness by 2.4%. Of the households counted statewide, 199 had children, or 18.6% of total households counted.

Statewide, significant decreases were seen in chronic homelessness. Under the Department of Housing and Urban Development's definition, a chronically homeless individual is someone who has experienced homelessness for a year or longer, or who has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the last three years and has a disability. The chronically homeless are an extremely vulnerable population. Over the past year there have been many efforts to end chronic homelessness in Vermont such as the 100,000 Homes Campaign and an increase of Permanent Supportive Housing.

Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness Co-Chair Sara Kobylenski of the Upper Valley Haven in White River Junction credits state investments over the last several years in programs to alleviate and prevent homelessness as having helped to keep the increase outside Chittenden relatively small compared to previous years. "The Vermont Rental Subsidy, Emergency Solutions, Family Supportive Housing, and Community Housing programs among others are showing positive results," Kobylenski affirmed.

The report comes from data collected for the Annual Point-in-Time (PIT) Count, an unduplicated count of persons experiencing homelessness on the night of January 27, 2015. The Count and its findings were supported by Vermont's two "Continuums of Care," the Chittenden County and Balance of State Continuums. These networks are composed of homeless and human service organizations, housing agencies, and other partners that strive to eliminate homelessness throughout Vermont, and include the Agency of Human Services, the City of Burlington, the Vermont State Housing Authority, and United Ways of Vermont as well.

The Point-In-Time findings come on the heels of the release of the *Out of Reach* Report. In Vermont, the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment is \$1,075. In order to afford this level of rent and utilities — without paying more than 30% of income on housing — a household must earn \$3,585 monthly or \$43,017 annually. Assuming a 40-hour work week, 52 weeks per year, this level of income translates into an hourly Housing Wage of \$20.68 per hour. A large percentage of renters in Vermont do not earn enough to afford a two-bedroom unit at the average statewide Fair Market Rent. High rents and vacancy rates as low as 1% both continue to be barriers for finding and retaining housing.

"While Chittenden County has seen success in housing the most vulnerable people experiencing chronic homelessness through the community-based 100,000 Homes campaign begun last fall, we need to recognize (as did the remarkably successful effort in Utah) that we need to create more rental

housing stock to truly bend the curve in the right direction – especially with a vacancy rate persistently below 1%. We also need to focus on domestic violence as a leading cause of family homelessness,” said Margaret Bozik, Co-Chair of the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance and Associate Director of Asset Management & Program Development at Champlain Housing Trust.

Key Notes:

- Total found homeless on one night decreased by 2.31% from the 2014 count.
- 166 persons identified as chronically homeless. Chronic homelessness decreased within Chittenden County by 33% and within the Balance of State CoC by 49% from the 2014 count.
- 199 households had children, or 18.6% of total households counted.
- 119 persons identified as veterans, almost equal to last year’s total of 120 persons.
- The number of unsheltered persons, those living outdoors or taking shelter in a place unfit for human habitation, was 159 persons. This is a slight decrease of 2.5% from last year.
- 256 persons reported as victims of domestic violence; that count does NOT include children impacted.
- 561 persons identified as being homeless for the first time, or 36.8% of total persons counted.
- 474 persons identified as having a serious mental illness, or 31.1% of the total persons counted.
- 422 persons identified as having a substance abuse disorder, or 27.7% of the total persons counted.
- 336 persons identified as having a physical disability and 94 persons identified as having a developmental disability, or 22% and 6.2% of the total persons counted respectively.

Every year, the Point-in-Time Count provides a snapshot of how many people are homeless on a single night. The PIT Count allows local communities and state policy makers to understand current problems of homelessness, target limited funding to appropriate housing and services, and track progress.

For additional information, visit: <http://helpingtohousevt.org/point-in-time-counts/>.

The Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness (VCEH), acts as the primary decision-making body of the Vermont Balance of State Continuum of Care, with the mission to end homelessness in Vermont through sharing information, developing resources, and providing a forum for decision making and to promote decent, safe, fair, affordable housing for all.

The Chittenden County Homeless Alliance is a coalition of individuals, organizations, and government who support our vision of a safe, decent, affordable, stable home for every person and family in Chittenden County. Our mission is to end homelessness in Chittenden County by being a forum for gathering information, building consensus, coordinating efforts, and advocating the end of homelessness through prevention, early intervention, and remediation.