



City of Boston 32nd Annual Homeless Census

Emergency Shelter Commission – December 12, 2011



On the night of December 12, 2011 Mayor Thomas M. Menino, city and community leaders, and more than 330 volunteers undertook Boston's 32nd annual homeless Census. On the night of the census there were **6,647** homeless men, women and children in the City of Boston. This is a **decrease of 2.4 percent** from the **6,809** men, women and children counted the previous year. Key findings and summary table follow below:

Executive Summary of Findings:

- The number of homeless people living on the streets was **181**, one fewer than the figure of **182** the previous year. This is the **lowest number since 1997**.
- The number of individual homeless adults **decreased 2.2%** from **3,488** last year to **3,412** this year.
- The number of adults in emergency shelter was **down 5.9%** from **1,365 last year** to **1,285** this year. This is the 9th time in ten years that this category has shown a decrease.
- The number of homeless persons in families in Boston **decreased 2.6%** from **3,321** persons last year to **3,235** this year. The number of households **decreased from 1,158 to 1,082 households** this year. The average household size of a homeless family in Boston is **2.99 people per family**.
- **The number of homeless children decreased by 4.2% from 2,013 to 1,928 this year.**

Highlights of the 2011-2012 Census include the following:

- Boston continues to see **low numbers of homeless adults living on the streets** compared to most major cities. The total of **181 men and women** is the **lowest figure for a street count since 1997**.
- The number of **adults in emergency shelter decreased by 5.9%** from **1,365** to **1,285**. Successful city-wide partnerships such as *Home to Stay*, placing long-term shelter residents into permanent housing, and the SAMHSA-funded *Linking Treatment to Housing* program contributed to this reduction.
- The number of **homeless Veterans in Boston decreased 16.7%** from **426** to **355 adults**. This reflects the impact of the HUD/Veterans Administration Supportive Housing (VASH) program which to date has placed over 300 Veterans in housing with support services. Two transitional housing programs that help homeless veterans move more rapidly into permanent housing opened in Boston last year.
- **New shelter for Homeless Youth and Young Adults:** Bridge Over Troubled Waters opened a much-needed 14-bed emergency shelter for unaccompanied homeless youth and young adults. The new beds in this facility account for the increase under the Homeless Youth and Young Adult category.

Challenges

- **Families sheltered outside of their home community:** On the night of the census, 282 Boston families with 788 men, women and children were placed in shelters or motels outside the City of Boston. An even higher number, 331 families and 874 men, women and children from other Massachusetts cities and towns resided in Boston shelters or motels that night. Transportation costs for these children to attend school in their home districts were \$750,000 during the most recent school year.

City of Boston Annual Homeless Census - December 2011 compared to December 2010

| CATEGORY | December 12, 2011 | | December 6, 2010 | | % Change |
|--|---------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| City of Boston Grand Total All Homeless | 6,647 | | 6,809 | | -2.4% |
| Total Homeless Individual Adult (Street, Shelters, Transitional, Treatment) | 3,412 | | 3,488 | | -2.2% |
| Adult Homeless Breakdown | | # of Adults | | # of Adults | % Change |
| Unsheltered Homeless/Street Count | | 181 | | 182 | -0.5% |
| Emergency Shelter | | 1,285 | | 1,365 | -5.9% |
| Transitional Housing Programs | | 761 | | 791 | -3.8% |
| Detox/Substance Abuse Program | | 653 | | 655 | -0.3% |
| Hospitals and Medical Respite | | 216 | | 207 | +4.3% |
| Mental Health Facilities | | 273 | | 259 | +5.4% |
| Domestic Violence Shelter | | 16 | | 15 | +6.6% |
| Homeless/Runaway Youth | | 27 | | 12 | +125% ¹ |
| Total Individual Homeless Adults | | 3,412 | | 3,488 | -2.2% |
| | Number of Families | Persons in Families | Number of Families | Persons in Families | % Change # Pp in Families |
| Total All Homeless Families | 1,082 | 3,235 | 1,158 | 3,321 | -2.6%² |
| Family Homeless Breakdown | Number of Families | Persons in Families | Number of Families | Persons in Families | % Change # of Pp in Families |
| Congregate Shelter | 254 | 569 | 281 | 630 | -9.7% |
| Scattered Site Shelter | 502 | 1,851 | 520 | 1,825 | -1.4% |
| Transitional Housing Programs ³ | 93 | 259 | 137 | 330 | -21.5% |
| Families in Motels in Boston | 135 | 339 | 120 | 312 | +8.7% |
| Domestic Violence Programs | 61 | 147 | 77 | 179 | -17.9% |
| Homeless Youth with children | 7 | 15 | 5 | 10 | +50.0% |
| Families in Hospitals | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | +33.3% |
| Detox/Other Substance Abuse | 26 | 51 | 15 | 32 | +59.4% ⁴ |
| Total All Homeless Families | 1,082 | 3,235 | 1,158 | 3,321 | -2.6% |

For more information on Boston's annual homeless census findings please contact the Emergency Shelter Commission as data from our more detailed annual Point-In-Time surveys continues to be analyzed. The ESC can be contacted at: www.bphc.org/shelter

¹ This large percent increase represents a small numerical increase measured against a small base number of homeless youth beds. It reflects the the opening of a new 14 bed emergency shelter by Bridge Over Troubled Waters, the basic service center for Boston's homeless/runaway youth.

² Given variability in household makeup, the percent changes are calculated from the total number of persons in families, rather than the number of homeless households.

³ The decrease in households in family transitional housing is due to the recent placement of clients into permanent housing by two programs, the Traveler's Aid Family Services of Boston Housing Access Collaborative and the Victory Program's Revision House.

⁴ Like homeless youth, this large percent increase in families in substance abuse beds reflects a relatively small denominator of existing beds.