

MI-506 – CoC Application 2019 Racial Disparity Assessment Summary

Over the past year, the CoC has been engaged in a collective impact process with KConnect, a local collaborative of public, nonprofit, and private organizations focused on improving community performance with respect to education, employment, and basic needs outcomes. The purpose of this work is to align system-level interventions that address homelessness and increase access to housing in Kent County, with a specific focus on designing strategies that are targeted to people of color and which address racial disparities in the housing system. The process is a cross-sectoral collaboration divided into work groups comprised of local housing providers, people who have experienced homelessness, social service agencies, data professionals, and other stakeholders.

As part of this collective impact process, the CoC's Data Analysis Committee and KConnect conducted an analysis of racial demographics in overall homelessness and shelter access utilizing HMIS data. This analysis found that non-white populations are disproportionately more likely to experience homelessness, including sheltered and unsheltered homelessness, and are therefore more likely to receive homeless assistance. HMIS data showed that despite comprising just 19 percent of the population in Kent County (according to American Community Survey data), non-white individuals account for 68 percent of those who come into contact with the housing system. Black individuals represent 65 percent of this population, which translates to one in nine black residents being homeless (compared with one in 153 of white residents). These numbers were confirmed by the CoC Racial Equity Analysis Tool, which showed that 58 percent of sheltered homeless individuals are non-white, with black individuals accounting for 51 percent of the total. These numbers clearly demonstrate disparities among people experiencing housing instability in Kent County.

The collective impact process will conclude in December 2019, at which time participating agencies will hold a housing forum open to CoC members and community stakeholders to reveal key findings and determine next steps to address racial disparities in the housing system. This will include an analysis of the causes of racial disparities, strategies to reduce them, and resources available to achieve this goal. The results of this collaborative work will inform the CoC's next strategic plan, which is currently in development for implementation in 2020.

In addition to the community-wide collective impact process, the CoC's Data Analysis Committee is in the process of implementing new procedures to better analyze disparities in homelessness and housing assistance. This will consist of disaggregating data on system performance measures and outcomes to identify trends and disparities among racial/ethnic groups and priority subpopulations, rather than simply analyzing aggregate data. One of the committee's next steps is to examine data at the provider level to determine if disparities are present compared with overall system data.

The CoC also recognizes that there is a need to develop strategies which address the root causes of homelessness and the disparities that lead to it. Toward this end, CoC members have increased their advocacy efforts with landlords, private businesses, and public officials to increase awareness of policies and practices which lead to racial disparities in housing and homelessness.