

Project Homeless Connect 2017: Brief Summary

Entrance Survey

The Project Homeless Connect (PHC) Rochester Planning Committee estimates over 700 individuals attended Rochester's PHC held on September 14, 2017 at the Blue Cross Arena. Nazareth College students conducted 624 voluntary interviews with PHC participants as they entered the Arena. In 2017, the average age of those completing PHC entrance interviews was 44 (with self-reported ages ranging from 15 to 85); slightly more men (57.1%, n=349) and African American individuals (54.7%, n=341) completed entrance interviews than other demographic groups. Approximately one in ten PHC participants in 2017 was Hispanic or Latino (11.4%, n=71); similarly, approximately one in 10 identified as a veteran (9.9%, n=58).

Approximately one-half of 2017 PHC participants had not slept in their own home the previous night; one-quarter (23.4%, n=146) slept in the homes of relatives or friends, one-fifth (18.1%, n=11) slept in a shelter; 7.1% (n=43) slept outside. Among the 277 PHC participants who slept in their home the prior night, one-fifth (21.7%, n=60) indicated they faced the threat of eviction in the following 21 days.

Only 12% (n=71) of entrance interview participants said they rely on employment for income; one-quarter (24.5%, n=145) said they have no income, one-third (33.6%, n=210) said they receive SSI or SSDI. Approximately one third (36.3%, n=215) reported use of an emergency room or hospital for medical care; one-third (32.4%, n=192) reported access to a private doctor. To obtain or maintain stable housing, approximately one-third (31.1%, n=127) said they need a rental subsidy and another one-third (28.7%, n=117) said they need employment-related services. Top self-reported reasons for attending PHC in 2017 were to obtain identification (37.3%, n=203) and a winter coat or other clothing (19.3%, n=105).

Exit Survey

Each year, PHC participants are also asked to complete a satisfaction survey as they leave the event. Approximately 439 individuals completed this voluntary survey in 2017.

The vast majority (85%, n=375) found participating in PHC *very helpful* and 88% (n=389) stated that the event helped connect them to services they needed. Participants were asked to share examples of what services or resources they found most helpful; most frequently mentioned services/resources included identification (105 responses); coats and clothes (70); volunteer friendliness/helpfulness (67); a variety of services and information (59); emergency shelter or housing information (27); health care or hygiene services (19); food and water (19); dental services (10); employment information (10).

When asked for improvement suggestions, PHC participants shared the following five primary suggestions: eliminate long waiting times and lines; provide more housing resources and supports; provide more security; improve organization and communication; increase the number of services provided. Specific suggestions varied widely and included working to expand PHC (for example, holding PHC more often throughout the year); bringing in landlords and expanding other housing resources; providing bus passes; ensuring all booths remain open until the close of event; providing more and hotter food; having sign language interpreters readily available; providing eye examinations; providing diabetes testing and services; providing vouchers for New York State identification; providing over-the-counter medication; providing more assistance with substance abuse recovery; providing blankets and shoes or boots.

Volunteer Survey

Volunteers are invited to complete an anonymous online survey during the week following PHC. In the 2017 volunteer survey, most of the 53 respondents (79%, n=42) were escorts helping guests find what they needed

during the event. Most volunteers viewed PHC 2017 as having completely (53%, n=28) or somewhat (47%, n=25) achieved its goals. Volunteer survey respondents are asked to identify what they most like about PHC. Most responses focused on the wide variety of services and resources available in one place. An additional common theme was the positive collaboration and team-work evident at the event. Volunteer survey respondents are also asked to provide suggestions for PHC improvement. Suggestions centered primarily on improving training and orientation for volunteers and decreasing lines or waiting time for participants, particularly those seeking Department of Motor Vehicles services and identification. Specific recommendations to improve the services provided by the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) were provided, along with suggestions focusing upon enhanced organization of various resources within the Arena.

Service Providers

Agencies providing resources, services and information during PHC are asked to document the number of individuals they serve during the event. Number of individuals served ranged from the teens (Open Door Mission, PathStone Employment Focused Services, Trillium Health, Willow) to the hundreds (Veterans Administration, Monroe County Office of Mental Health, MC Collaborative, Salvation Army, Eastman Institute of Oral Health). It is important to note that several service providers present at the 2017 PHC did not report these data.

Twenty service providers responded to an online feedback survey sent during the week following the event. Most (95%, n =19) said they view PHC as helpful in serving individuals in need. Recommendations for improvement centered on the need to decrease lines for the DMV and to improve the organization of DMV services at the event. An additional repeated theme focused upon the need to improve the lay-out of service providers' booths more generally and the need to protect participant privacy.

When asked what they most liked about the event, service providers commented on the grouping of similar services in the same area of the Arena, the helpfulness of volunteers, and the collaborative spirit of the event.

2017 PHC Service Providers

The following agencies provided resources or services at the 2017 PHC: Open Door Mission, Volunteers of America (Working Wardrobe), Social Security Administration, The Salvation Army, The Salvation Army-Genesis House, Eastman Institute for Oral Health, Rochester Educational Opportunity Center, Monroe Plan for Medical Care, Monroe-Clinton Collaborative, Willow Domestic Violence Center, St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center, Veterans Administration, DAV Chapter 15, Highland Family Planning, ACCES-VR, Canandaigua Suicide Prevention, Rochester Vet Center, Nazareth College, Recovery Fitness, Monroe County Office of Mental Health, Venture Forth, 2-H Life Line, Asbury First Caring and Dining Center, Empire Justice Center, League of Women Voters, Social Welfare Action Alliance, R Community Bikes, Inc., PathStone Employment Focused Services, Volunteers of America, U or R Street Medicine, Cancer Services Program of Monroe County, Trillium Health.