

# Measuring Racial, Ethnic, Gender, and Age Disparities in System and Project Level Performance

Greg Barchuk, Data Manager

Montgomery County, PA | [gbarchuk@montcopa.org](mailto:gbarchuk@montcopa.org)

He | Him | His



Increasing Capacity &  
Building Connections:  
Bridging to the Future



# Agenda

- Brief overview of Montgomery County and its racial equity work
- Importance of measuring equity
- External data
- Internal data
  - **Process mapping:** Find the landmarks in your homeless system
  - **Enrollments:** Which groups get particular interventions?
  - **Length of time between service interventions:** Who has to wait longer for help?
  - **Exits to permanent housing:** Check both exit percentages and LOS before exit
  - **Program-specific considerations**
- Moving beyond HMIS

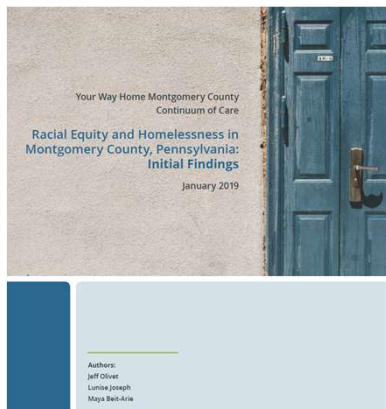


## Who we are: Montgomery County, PA

- Population: 825,000
- Third-largest county in Pennsylvania
- 2019 PIT Count: 246
- Your Way Home public/private partnership, est. 2014
- Coordinated Entry in HMIS, 2015
- 24/7 Street Outreach, 2017
- Approx. 160 hh per year rehoused via RRH



# Your Way Home's recent work in understanding racial equity in our homeless crisis response system



## *Racial Equity and Homelessness, 2019*

- Partners:
  - SPARC team / Center for Social Innovation
  - Healthspark Foundation
- Research methods combined quantitative (HMIS) with qualitative (interviews, focus groups) analyses
- Reviewed policies and procedures
- Recommendations for improvement



## Why bother measuring for inequity in the homeless system?

- Structural inequity is *everywhere* in our social systems: healthcare, law enforcement, child welfare, education, zoning laws...
- Data should always be used to accurately define a problem, identify what works and what doesn't, and who is impacted (positively and negatively) by our decisions
- Our role is not to be expert data scientists, but expert ***translators*** – this is what our teams need



## The hardest parts of measuring equity have little to do with HMIS or data analysis skills

- Most important for this work:
  - **Courage** to look
  - **Humility** to own it
  - **Will** to do something about it
- Analysis is the easier part
  - Knowledge of statistics is helpful but not always necessary
  - Just need an actionable plan and tools to help answer questions



# External Data



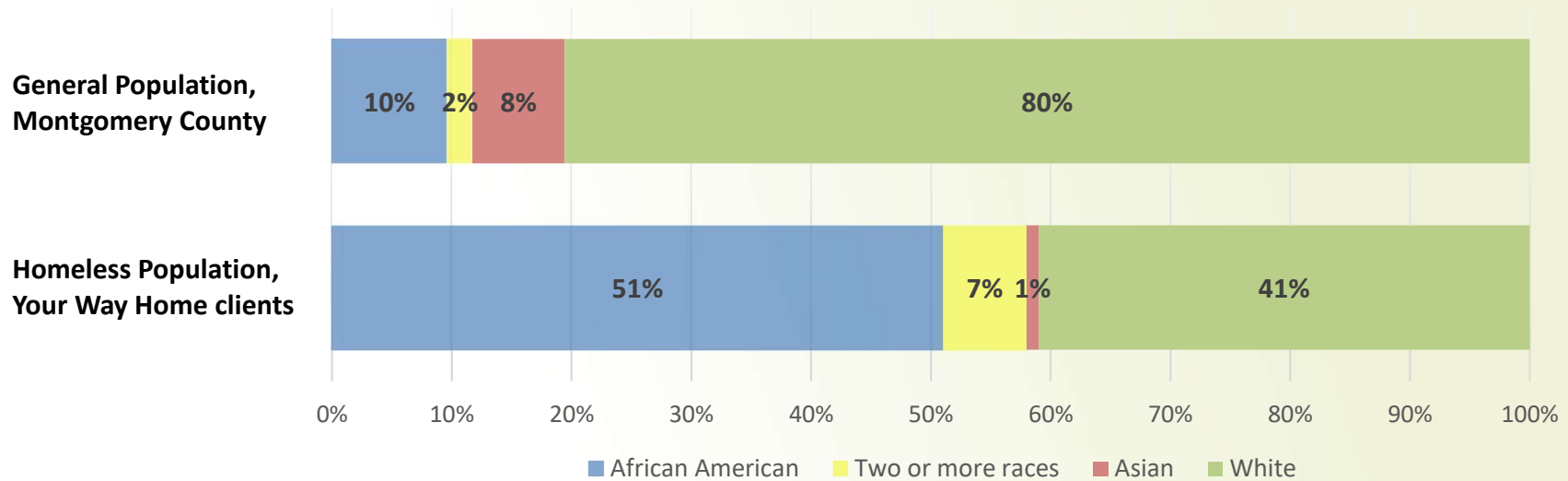
## **Get to know your community and the people who experience homelessness within it**

- Compare the demographic profile of your community with that of the people your homeless system serves
- Then: Dive into key intersections
  - Race & Gender
  - Age & Race
  - Household Type
- Be mindful of subpopulation sizes when attempting to generalize





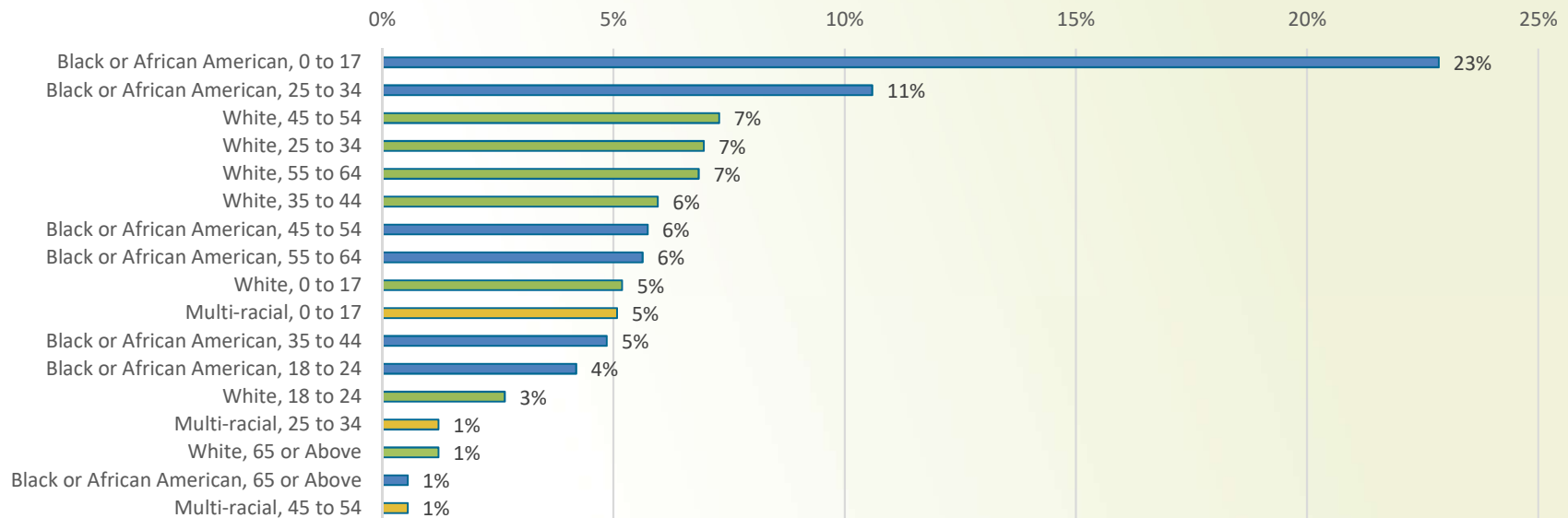
## People of color are overrepresented in the homelessness system





## Black or African American children account for almost 25% of all people experiencing homelessness in Montgomery County

Total Homeless by Age and Race, 2017





## What does this tell us?

- Factors that drive people into homelessness are worse for people of color
  - **“The disproportionality of black folks in homelessness is bad everywhere. It’s particularly bad in Montgomery County.”** – *Jeff Olivet, Center for Social Innovation*
- This *especially* impacts children and families
  - Invest in prevention projects that specifically target disproportionately-represented groups
  - In Montgomery County: court-based eviction prevention program; school-based housing stability program; and informed prioritization for PH interventions



# Internal Data



## **Investigate inequities within the homeless crisis response system your community has built**

- So far, we have measured pre-front door: folks driven into homelessness in your community and seeking support
- Next, look at inequities within the homeless service system itself
- NOTE: Most examples focus on race, but we can and should run these metrics for all groups



## Consider the paths that people take through the homelessness system

- This will look different depending on your community's resources and decisions
- Look for major landmarks in your system
  - Onset of homelessness
  - Contacting coordinated entry, triage, prioritization
  - Shelter enrollment
  - Housing provider enrollment (RRH, PSH, etc.)
  - Housing move-in
  - Exit
  - Return (if applicable)

Get your program folks  
and data folks together  
to draw some process  
flow maps!



## Opportunities for measurement both **AT** these landmarks and **BETWEEN** them

- **AT**
  - Enrollment distribution and rates
  - Exit rates
  - Number of move-ins
  - Amount of rental assistance provided
- **BETWEEN**
  - Lengths of stay on the street (esp. *after* contacting coordinated entry)
  - Lengths of stay in shelter
  - Length of time before moving into permanent housing
  - Length of time before returning to homelessness

# Calculate enrollment percentages across all projects within each type and compare them to each other

- Source: Annual Performance Report (across all projects and then within each type)

**Total (SO, ES, TH, RRH, PSH)**

Race	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
American Indian or Alaska Native	5	5	7	5	3
Asian	8	10	16	9	4
Black or African American	771	767	920	836	614
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0	3	1	1
White	574	628	704	694	524
Multiple Races	102	117	115	119	85
<b>Total</b>	<b>1502</b>	<b>1545</b>	<b>1789</b>	<b>1683</b>	<b>1263</b>

**Percentages (SO, ES, TH, RRH, PSH)**

Race	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%	0.2%
Asian	0.5%	0.6%	0.9%	0.5%	0.3%
Black or African American	51.3%	49.6%	51.4%	49.7%	48.6%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
White	38.2%	40.6%	39.4%	41.2%	41.5%
Multiple Races	6.8%	7.6%	6.4%	7.1%	6.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1502</b>	<b>1545</b>	<b>1789</b>	<b>1683</b>	<b>1263</b>





**Street Outreach**

Race	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.3%	0.0%
Asian	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.9%	0.6%
Black or African American	33.3%	37.5%	47.2%	46.4%	44.1%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	0.1%	0.2%
White	66.7%	62.5%	46.4%	46.8%	48.0%
Multiple Races	0.0%	0.0%	4.1%	3.7%	4.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>679</b>	<b>469</b>

**Emergency Shelter**

Race	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%	0.3%
Asian	0.4%	0.7%	0.8%	0.4%	0.0%
Black or African American	52.0%	50.7%	52.7%	54.8%	55.5%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%
White	36.8%	39.5%	38.8%	37.5%	37.3%
Multiple Races	8.0%	8.3%	6.6%	7.0%	6.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>968</b>	<b>866</b>	<b>747</b>	<b>683</b>	<b>335</b>

**Transitional Housing**

Race	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Asian	0.9%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Black or African American	54.5%	49.3%	53.4%	59.2%	60.0%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
White	33.8%	37.0%	31.6%	26.7%	27.5%
Multiple Races	10.3%	12.3%	14.6%	14.2%	2.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>40</b>

**Rapid Re-Housing**

Race	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.1%	0.2%	0.4%	0.1%	0.2%
Asian	0.1%	0.2%	0.7%	0.4%	0.0%
Black or African American	55.5%	53.0%	54.2%	50.6%	49.9%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%
White	34.0%	37.2%	35.5%	38.2%	36.7%
Multiple Races	6.9%	7.5%	7.4%	9.7%	10.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>861</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>984</b>	<b>635</b>

**Permanent Supportive Housing**

Race	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.3%	1.1%	1.1%	0.8%	0.9%
Asian	1.3%	1.7%	1.1%	0.4%	0.4%
Black or African American	45.5%	41.4%	44.4%	44.6%	48.1%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
White	51.3%	54.6%	52.2%	52.1%	46.8%
Multiple Races	0.6%	1.1%	1.1%	2.1%	3.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>235</b>



**Street Outreach**

Race	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.3%	0.0%
Asian	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.6%
Black or African American	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
White	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Multiple Races	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Total</b>					

**Emergency**

Race
American Indian or Alaska Native
Asian
Black or African American
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
White
Multiple Races
<b>Total</b>

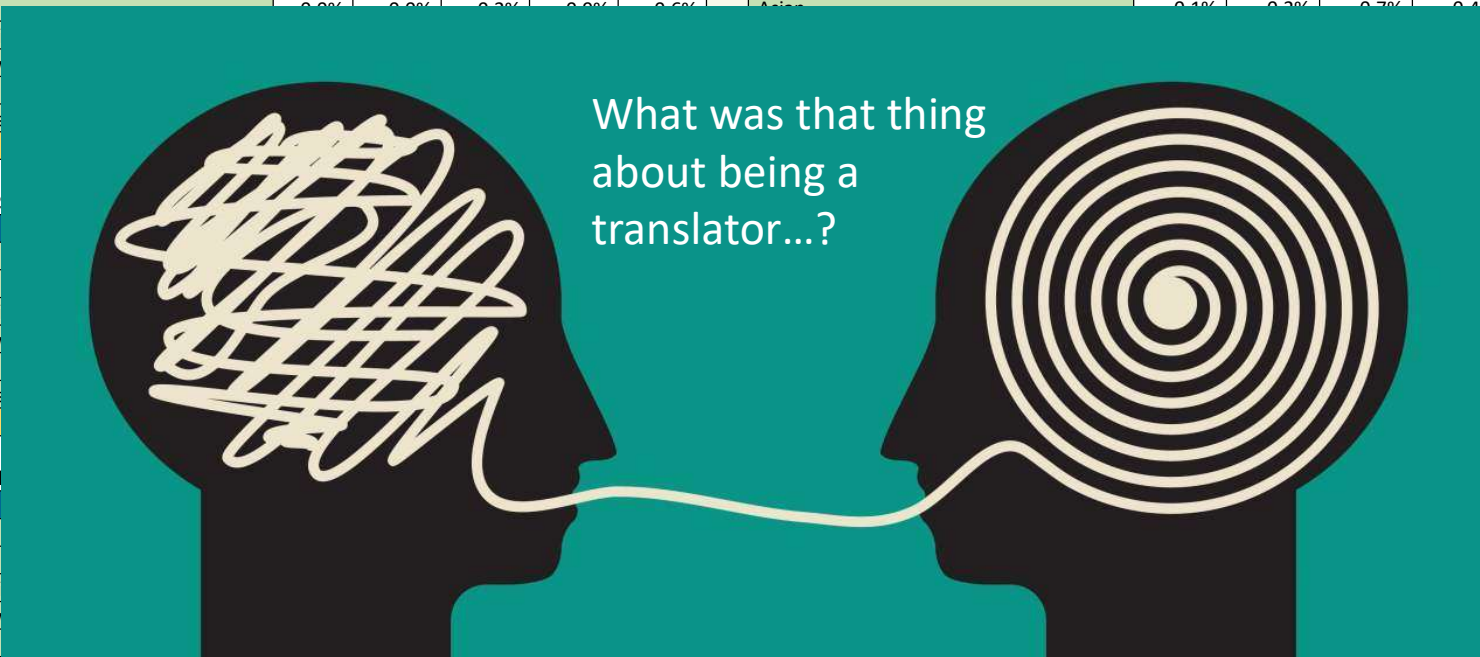
**Transitional**

Race	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
American Indian or Alaska Native					
Asian					
Black or African American					
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander					
White					
Multiple Races	10.3%	12.3%	14.6%	14.2%	2.5%
<b>Total</b>	213	227	206	120	40

**Rapid Re-Housing**

Race	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.1%	0.2%	0.4%	0.1%	0.2%
Asian	0.1%	0.2%	0.7%	0.4%	0.0%
Black or African American					49.9%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander					0.2%
White					36.7%
Multiple Races					10.6%
<b>Total</b>					635

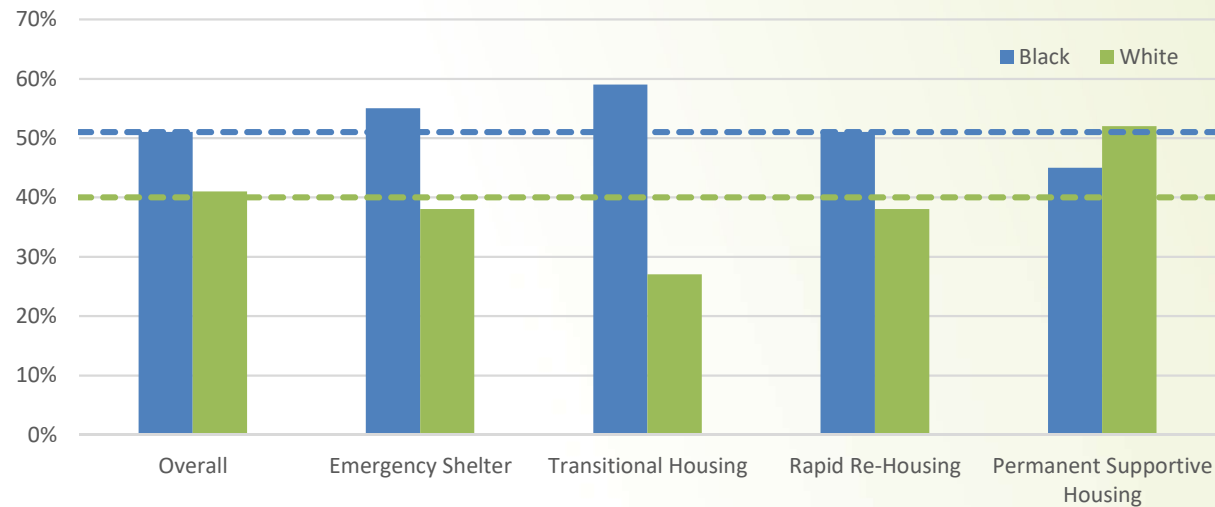
2018
0.9%
0.4%
48.1%
0.0%
46.8%
3.8%
<b>235</b>





## Look for disparities in the extent to which groups receive particular interventions

YWH enrollment percentages by race, 2017



The ratio of black/white enrollments is roughly equivalent in most project types *except in Permanent Supportive Housing projects*

## Compare rates and length of time between two events (e.g. street outreach to shelter enrollment)

Race	Total	Not in ES	Percent Enrolled
Black or African American	411	255	38%
White	373	264	29%
Multiple Races	60	40	33%
(blank)	10	9	10%
Data Not Collected	9	9	0%
Client doesn't Know	7	7	0%
Client Refused	5	5	0%
Asian	4	3	25%
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	1	50%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	1	0%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>882</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>33%</b>

Gender	Total	Not in ES	Percent Enrolled
Female	449	299	33%
Male	433	295	32%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>882</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>33%</b>

Avg Days, SO to ES
26.97
24.97
39.05
6.00
6
3.00

### In Montgomery County:

**Date range:** October 2017 (start date of current Street Outreach team) through June 2018.

**Time:** All groups tend to enroll in shelter within **25-28 days**. As expected, the outliers tend to be those groups for which there are fewer members (client who identify as multiple races, seniors).

**Rate:** Overall enrollment rate is about **33%**. Somewhat lower than average for 18-24 year old youth (23%), clients of Latinx ethnicity (22%), and white clients (29%, vs 38% for black clients).



Age Tier	Total	Not in ES	Percent Enrolled
0 to 17	287	177	38%
18 to 24	61	47	23%
25 to 34	167	106	37%
35 to 44	124	88	29%
45 to 54	140	102	27%
55 to 64	91	64	30%
65 or Above	11	9	18%
Undefined	1	1	0%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>882</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>33%</b>

Ethnicity	Total	Not in ES	Percent Enrolled
Client doesn't know	4	4	0%
Client refused	1	1	0%
Data not collected	9	9	0%
Hispanic/Latino	60	47	22%
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	802	527	34%
(blank)	6	6	0%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>882</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>33%</b>

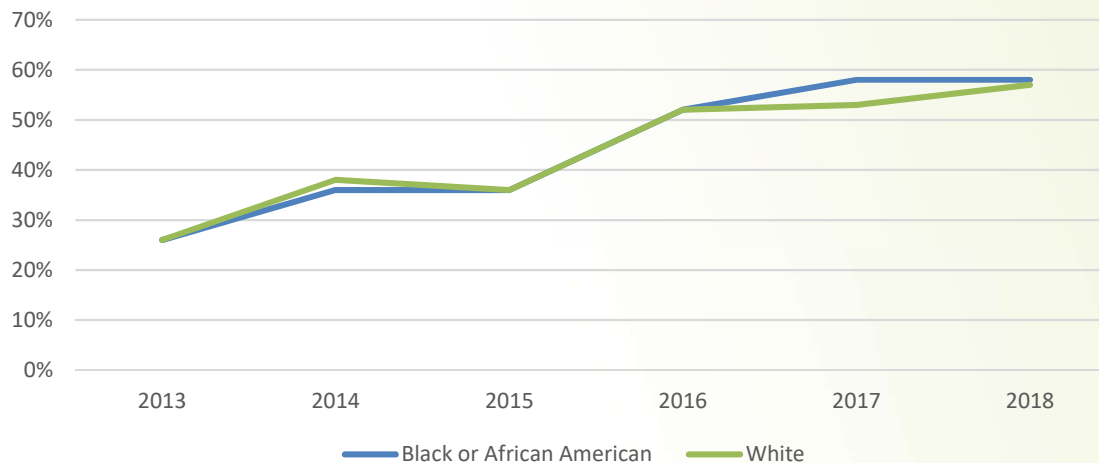
Avg Days from SO to ES
29.66
19.50
25.93
24.78
24.61
24.00
83.00

Avg Days from SO to ES
27.00
26.82

For unsheltered seniors during this timeframe, both the rate and the length of time were much worse than other groups. The total is too small to generalize, but this is worth continued monitoring

## Examine exit rates from shelter to permanent housing for all demographic groups

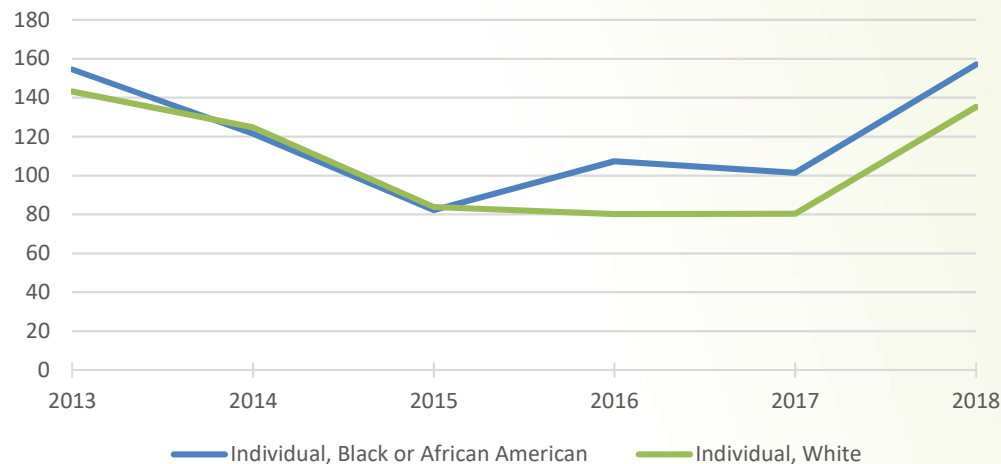
Percent Exit Shelter to Permanent Housing, by Race



- No apparent racial inequity in exits from Montgomery County's shelters to permanent housing
- BUT! Look next at length of stay...

## Lengths of stay in emergency shelter before exiting to permanent housing (single adults)

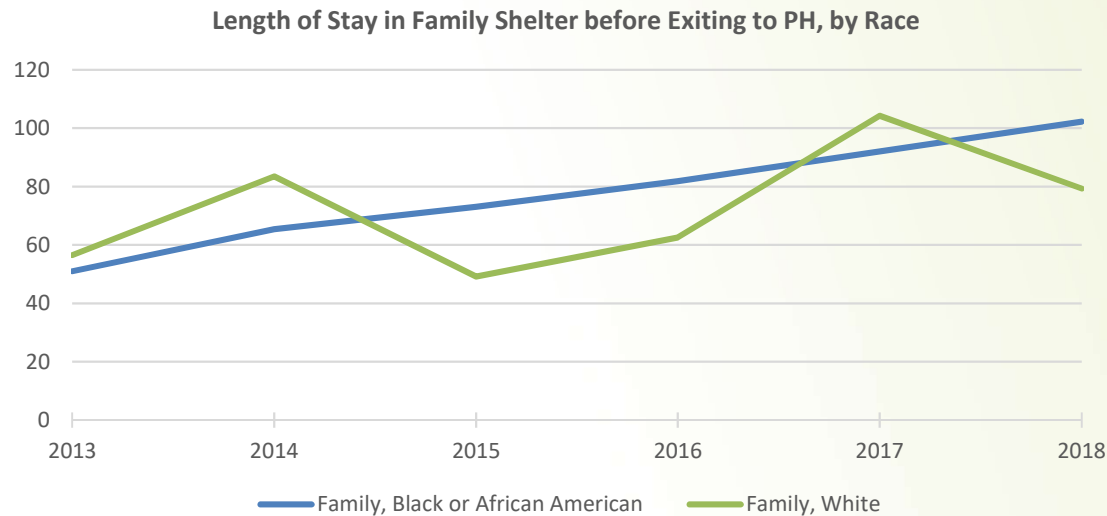
Length of Stay in Single Adult Shelter before Exiting to PH, by Race



In general, white clients tend to successfully exit shelter much faster than clients who are black.

In the last 3 years, black single adult shelter residents waited an average of **20 days longer** before exiting to permanent housing.

## Lengths of stay in emergency shelter before exiting to permanent housing (families)



Over the past 5 years, the length of time before exiting to permanent housing has been consistently increasing for black residents in family shelters.

As we know, this is also the largest group in our system. This is perhaps the clearest problematic pattern in the CoC's performance data uncovered to date.



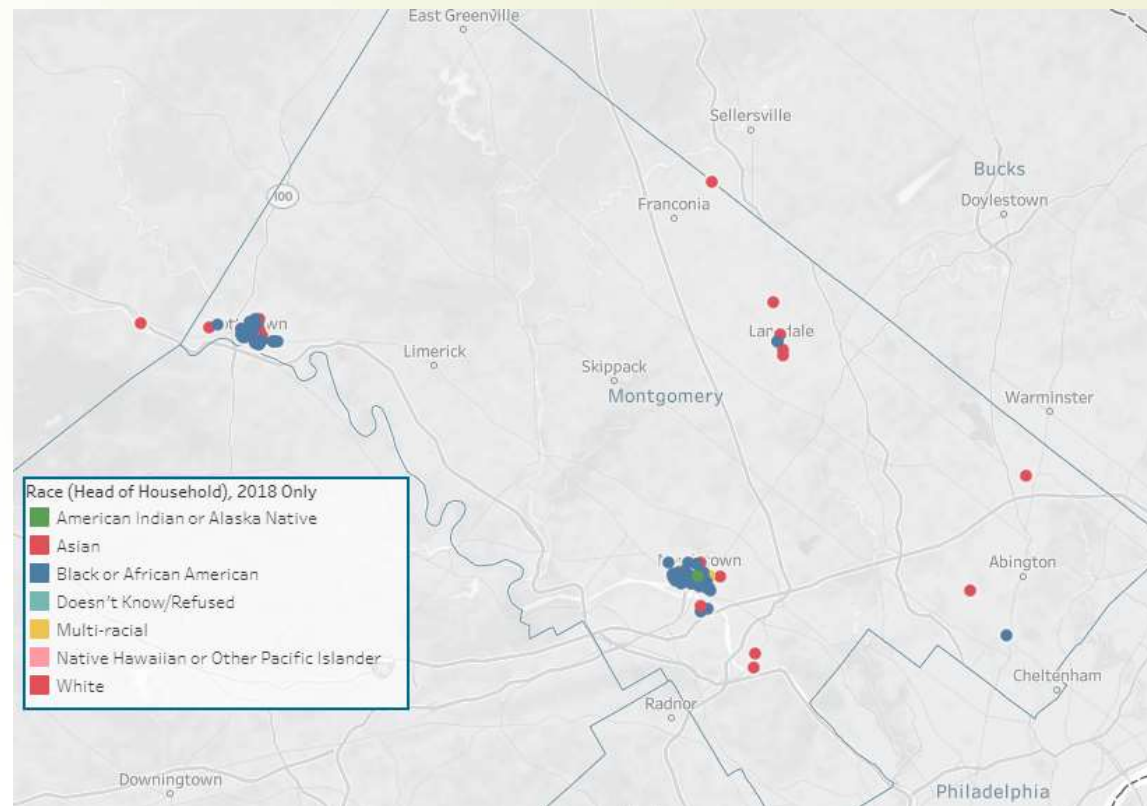


## Rapid re-housing performance

- RRH projects should be measured by
  - Enrollment rates
  - Move-in rates
  - Length of time before moving into permanent housing
  - Location of move-in (if tracking addresses in HMIS)
  - Amount (\$) and length (months) of rental assistance provided
  - Exits to permanent housing
  - Returns to homelessness

In Montgomery County, most RRH move-ins tend to be in or near two communities: Norristown and Pottstown

- Highest concentrations of poverty, homelessness, more affordable rents
- Occasionally, people do find housing through RRH in other areas of the county, but this is *very rarely* the case for people of color





# Moving Beyond HMIS



## Gather data from other sources

- Talk to your DV provider(s)
- Talk to people experiencing homelessness!
  - Perceptions of inequity are problems themselves, even if data doesn't support these perceptions
  - Client perceptions lead to other questions that HMIS may or may not be able to address
    - Do white folks really "jump the line"?
    - If so, how is this happening
    - If not, why does it appear so?

### Case managers told SPARC team:

"We treat them all the same. We have a nice mixed group. They're all going to get the same fair treatment...you don't see color. You're going to do the same thing for them either way."

### People of color in shelter said:

"White families get moved, get helped, get out of shelter quicker. White case managers help their clients faster."



## What other groups are not engaging with your homeless system?

- In Montgomery County, the percentage of homeless service recipients of **Latinx ethnicity** matches general county population, but is far lower than the percentage in communities where we find highest concentrations of poverty and homelessness
- Since 2014, HMIS shows **only 5 transgender individuals** served by the entire homeless system, and no more than 2 in any year
- True? Bad data? Are our programs unwelcoming to these groups?
- BUT! Don't assume you already know what the important issues are for these groups



## **Our demographic profiles influence how the world treats us, and frame which questions we think to ask**

- If all the folks who look at data in your community are white men and women over age 35, how does that influence the kinds of analytical pathways they pursue?
- If all the decision makers in your community match that same profile, how does that influence the populations they prioritize or the interventions they propose?



## Questions?

Email: [gbarchuk@montcopa.org](mailto:gbarchuk@montcopa.org)

Twitter: @gregbarchuk

<https://yourwayhome.org>

## Thank you!