



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**OMAHA METRO SEES RISE IN HOMELESSNESS
AND DECLINE IN CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS**

The new community-wide point in time count of homeless residents in Omaha metro area indicates a five percent increase. During the bi-annual point in time count conducted August 6, 2009, Metro Area Continuum of Care for the Homeless (MACCH) counted 1,322 people experiencing homelessness, compared to 1,258 people counted January 29, 2009 and 1,263 people counted August 7, 2008. On August 6, 2009, 1,117 people in Douglas and Sarpy counties and 205 people in Pottawattamie County slept in emergency shelters, transitional housing or on the streets.

Ninety-three percent of the data contributing to this count was provided by the continuum of homeless service provider's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), a community-wide data network for homeless service providers.

Findings of the August 6, 2009 count demonstrate::

- An increasing trend in the percentage of people in families, while the percentage of individuals within the overall homeless population is decreasing. People in families represent 26 percent of people counted August 6, 2009 compared to 24 percent of people counted January 29, 2009. This trend mirrors national data documented in HUD's Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress (AHAR).
- An increased number of individuals who are homeless. This increase is notable considering individuals who are homeless are more likely to seek temporary housing options in winter months as opposed to summer months. MACCH counted 975 people in August 2009, compared to 958 people in January 2009.
- People experiencing chronic homelessness within the overall population has declined. On August 7, 2008, 31 percent of people counted were chronically homeless, compared to 20 percent of people counted August 6, 2009. HUD defines chronic homelessness as a single individual who has a disability and has been homeless for one year continuously or four times in three years. The trend is recognized with caution due to the difficulty in gaining information about people who are chronically homeless. Currently, HUD excludes counting people who are chronically homeless within families.

The rise in homelessness over the last two years as documented by counts in January and August 2008 and January and August 2009 demonstrate incremental increases in homelessness from January 2008. These increases are in alignment with national trends described in the AHAR. "While I do believe the economic downturn has an impact on people who are homeless or on the verge of homelessness, the numbers generated by recent one-night counts do not reveal the degree of impact," states Erin Porterfield, Executive Director of MACCH. "We know that increasing numbers of people are seeking help to avoid homelessness."

The most recent August count is a result of a partnership between MACCH and Dr. Russell Smith from the Center for Public Affairs Research at University of Nebraska at Omaha. Dr. Smith assisted with technologies and methods to enumerate

people who are sleeping on the street, as people who are homeless and not using the shelter system are especially difficult to locate and gain information. Future counts should generate a more detailed picture of homelessness as a result of this partnership. “The point in time count is important to measure the impact needed to end homelessness for families and individuals in Douglas, Sarpy and Pottawatomie counties,” said Porterfield.

The new Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP) available through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act starts in October 2009 and will provide almost \$4 million over three years targeted to decrease the number of people entering homelessness and shorten periods of homelessness. Lead agencies for this HPRP program include Family Housing Advisory Services for the Prevention Program and Heartland Family Services for the Rapid Re-housing Program. The lead agency in Pottawattamie County will be announced.

The mission of MACCH is to lead a collaborative network to prevent and eliminate homelessness. Located in Omaha, Nebraska, the organization collaborates with service providers committed to providing exits out of homelessness for individuals and families in Douglas, Sarpy and Pottawattamie counties. MACCH is a continuum of providers, advocates, funders, government agencies and elected officials interested in issues related to homelessness, and accomplishes these goals through convening organizations and individuals toward greater solutions. For more information on MACCH, visit www.macchomeless.org.

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