A Preliminary Look at Participation in the Homeless Continuum of Care System in San Diego City and County

Racial Equality in the San Diego Continuum of Care:

What the data tells us about access and outcomes among CoC Participants

2018

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RACIAL EQUALITY AND THE SAN DIEGO CONTINUUM OF CARE

Context and Purpose

Inequality is often created and maintained by cultural, social, and economic structures without the acknowledgment of the communities in which it exists.[1] Racial disparity and at times overt discrimination in access to housing, however, have long been recognized. [2,3] A 1947 Presidential Committee on Civil Rights declared that "housing clearly illustrates the national failure to treat individuals on the basis of individual merit versus racial myth" and pointed to disparity in "Negro housing". By the turn of the century, legislative and economic policies had been created to try to right the inequity in housing[4]. While significant efforts such as the Fair Housing Act have attempted to remedy previous discrimination and promote equality in access to housing, and testing of Fair Housing practices is evidenced,[5] relatively little testing of potential racial disparity in homeless housing programs is found in peer-reviewed literature.[6]

The purpose of this brief study is to test whether or not there is preliminary evidence of racial inequity in the San Diego City and County Continuum of Care (CoC). This inquiry explores the relative frequency of homelessness of persons in racial and ethnic subgroups in the CoC; compares referrals and outcomes in usage of CoC housing resources among racial and ethnic groups; the racial composition of the CoC Board as representatives of homeless subgroups, and draws conclusions about the likelihood of unequal treatment in CoC systems. The results of this inquiry form the foundation for proposing additional action when warranted by the evidence. Results of the study will be used to answer two mandatory questions in the 2018 CoC Regional Application.

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[1] Rothman, Robert A., 2006. *Inequality & Stratification*: *Race, class, and gender* .Press.—5th ed.
[2] A Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights.1947. *To Secure These Rights.* Quoted in Race Discrimination in Housing. *Yale Law Journal: 57 (426, 1947-1948. retrieved on-line. July 2018.*

[3] P. G. A. and M. C. G. 1959. *University of Pennsylvania Law Review.* 107 (4) p. 515-550

[4] Examples include: The Fair Housing Act of 1968; The Stewart B Mc Kinney Act, 1987 and Mc Kinney-Vento Act.
[5] Yinger, J. 1986, *American Economic Review.* Measuring Racial Discrimination with Fair Housing Audits: Caught in the Act. 76 (5), p 881-893.

[666] Pager, D. and Shepherd, Hana. 2008*. Annual Review of Sociology*. The Sociology of Racial Discrimination: in E mployment, Housing,, Credit, and Consumer Markets. 34. P.181-209. Retrieved
Httpsz://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev.soc.33.040406.131740

Racial and Ethnic Profiles: Inequity and Homelessness

This study uses U.S. Census data[7] to establish expected frequencies for racial and ethnic distribution. Data for the homeless population and participation in various aspects of the CoC housing system are drawn from the CoC Homeless Management of Information System (HMIS) and the Coordinated Entry Systems (CES) managed by the Regional Task Force on the Homeless[8](RTFH).

Table 1: Racial Profile, below, summarizes Census a quick review of the data points to disparities in the racial distribution of persons in homelessness in the regional CoC when compared with the general population of San Diego County.

Table 1: Racial Profile

Primary Race	HMIS Client Count	CoC %	Census %*	Expected count	Disparity Note
American Indian/Alaskan Native & White (HUD)	85	0.2%		0	Not included in Census summary
American Indian or Alaska Native (HUD)	1423	2.6%	1.3%	706	CoC twice Census
Asian (HUD)	1067	2.0%	12.5%	6792	CoC only 15% of Census
Black or African American (HUD)	15023	27.6%	5.5%	2989	CoC 5 times Census
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (HUD)	821	1.5%	0.6%	326	CoC 2.5 times Census
Other	149	0.3%		0	Not included in Census summary
Other Multi-Racial	86	0.2%	4.4%	2391	CoC less than 4% of Census
SD - Middle Eastern Descent	11	0.0%		0	Not included in Census summary
White (HUD)	33650	61.9%	75.6%	41080	CoC only 82% Census
Client doesn't know (HUD)	309	0.6%			Not included in Census summary
Client refused (HUD)	608	1.1%			Not included in Census summary
Data not collected (HUD)	469	0.9%			Not included in Census summary
Missing	638	1.2%			
HMIS TOTAL	**54,339**				2% incidence exceeds the 1/2 % expected occurrence of homeless in an urban area
Census Total Population for San Diego County			**3,095,342**		

Table 2: Ethnic Profile on the following page, displays the self-declared ethnicity of persons included in the HMIS data as compared with the Census. Because the number of cases with unknown ethic data exceeds 1,000 cases across only two categories, the table shows the disparity percentage with and without inclusion of those cases.

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[7] U.S. Census Bureau, Census Quick Facts, 2017, San Diego County, C.A, Dept. of Commerce webpage, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/sandiegocountycalifornia,ca/PST045217
[8] The Regional Task Force on the Homeless is a 501 C (3) non-profit organization that is the HMIS Lead Agency and the CoC Collaborative Applicant responsible for operating the CES system.

Table 2: Ethnic Profile

Ethnicity	Client Count	CoC %	Census %	Adjusted for Unknown	Disparity Notes Total	Disparity Notes Adjusted
Hispanic/Latino (HUD)	15453	28.4%	33.9	29.4%	80.0%	0.87%
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino (HUD)	37069	68.2%	45.5	70.6%	1.5 x	1.55 x
Total Ethnicity Unknown	1180	2.2%				
Known Cases	52522					

Discussion of Racial and Ethnic Profiles

Table 1 data points to circumstances of racial disparity when comparing the racial profile of homeless persons in the CoC with that of the general population of San Diego County. Most notably, homelessness among Black or African Americans represents more than five (5.5) times their proportion of the general population; Native Hawaiian and other Pacific islanders are 2.5 times; American Indian and Native Alaskans are 2 times the proportion of the general census. Each of these three groups is over-represented in the homeless population. Conversely, three other racial groups are under-represented. The Multi-racial, Asian, and White populations occur at 4%, 15%, and 82% of the expected occurrence.

Table 2 points to a substantial disparity for non-Hispanic / Non-Latino persons as well as a measurable difference for Hispanic or Latino persons when compared with census data. Self-identified Hispanic Latino persons comprise 33.9& of the general population in the County while less than 30% are counted in the HMIS group. Non-Hispanic/ Non-Latino persons account for 45.5% of the general population, but make up over 70% of the homeless persons which translates to 1.5 times the expected rate.

Together, tables and 2 evidence inequality in the occurrence of homelessness among racial and ethnic persons. This finding mirrors what is known about homeless populations at the national level.[9]

Also of note, the general incidence of homelessness in the CoC is substantially above the one-half to one percent rate of homelessness historically reported as expected in urban areas across the U.S[10]. The measured rate, however, falls below the more recently reported rates, especially for California where USICH reported a 24% rate of homelessness in 2017.[11] Lack of affordable housing, low vacancy rates, military presence, and mild climates are often cited as factors contributing to the high proportion of

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[9] **National Alliance to End Homelessness.** *Racial Inequalities in Homelessness, by the Numbers, June 4, 2018* **Retrieved on – line:** https://endhomelessness.org/resource/racial-inequalities-homelessness-numbers.

[10] Rates of homelessness in America, 2008-2009   2017 Rates by State – USICH Interactive maps. https://www.usich.gov/tools-for-action/map/#fn[]=1500&fn[]=2900&fn[]=6100&fn[]=10100&fn[]=14100&all_types=true&year=2017&state=CA
[11]

homelessness in Southern California. Although these statements may be accurate, the data in this study does not examine causal factors and can only point to areas for additional study.

Given the disparities in racial profile, exploration of the system response to racial and ethnic subgroups is warranted.[12]

Racial Composition of the CoC Board

The CoC Board has thirty-one (31) seats with members elected to represent various homeless special needs populations and community sectors. The recruitment, nomination, and selection process focuses on the capacity of the potential Board member to bring necessary skills and knowledge to execute the responsibilities of the Board to various funding sources, to the RTFH as a non-profit corporation, and to the community invested in alleviating the negative impacts of homelessness. Board nomination and selection guidelines state:

The nomination and selection of Regional Task Force on the Homeless (RTFH) Governance Board (Board) members is the prerogative of the members of the RTFH through an election process. However, given the responsibilities of the Board, there is a need for the Board to have an appropriate mix of expertise and experience. Policies and procedures must facilitate the election of those people who best meet the needs of the Board. Board members should provide an appropriate mix of skills to provide the necessary breadth and depth of knowledge and experience to meet the Board's responsibilities and objectives.

 The Board also aims for a composition that will appropriately represent the interests of RTFH stakeholders, the local community, and will reflect diversity in its composition by recruiting members with varied geographical, social, economic, environmental, business, and cultural backgrounds. The Board should maintain a reasonable balance with respect to age and gender.[13]

The current racial and ethnic composition of the Board is summarized in this chart:

Primary Race and Ethnicity	# Board Members	% Of Board	% Homeless persons served (HMIS) rounded to nearest%
American Indian/Alaskan Native & White	0	0.0%	3.00%
Asian	2	6.5%	2.00%
Black or African American (HUD)	3	9.7%	28.00%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (HUD)	1	0.0%	2.00%
White	24	77.4%	62.00%
Other	0	0%	2.00%
Ethnicity			
Non- Hispanic	28	90,3%	
Hispanic	3	9.7%	
Total Members	**31**	**100.0%**	**100.00%**

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[12] After removing the single case classified as "other".

[13] RTFHSD.org website, retrieved, July 2018.

Discussion of Board Composition

As the chart above shows, the CoC Board composition is overwhelmingly white (77.4%), non-hispanic (90.3%) with a total of six racially diverse persons(19%). The RTFH client population while containing a white majority (62%),also holds approximately twice the number of racially diverse persons. Although historically decision-making bodies were characterized as dominated by white males, reent public and private sector efforts work to encourage greater diversity.[14]

Racial Equality and Access to Housing Services

Access to permanent housing in the CoC occurs through the Coordinated Entry System (CES) and the primary processes of referral to housing, participant acceptance, and housing placement. A review of data for each of these processes is included in evaluating the potential for racial disparity in the CoC system.

Analysis of Referral Data

Participants are registered in the CES system and are referred to housing opportunities based on the participant characteristics and preferences and the profile of the housing resource. Participants and housing opportunities are matched by these factors and housing referrals are offered to the participant. Referral outcomes are listed in fours classifications: accepted, accepted on wait list, cancelled, and declined. *Table 3: CES Referrals by Racial Group* captures the data for housing referrals segmented by race and *Table 4: CES Referrals by Ethnicity* displays the information by ethnicity. Due to size, these tables are found on separate pages. Discussion of Tables 3 and 4 begins prior to the separate tables pages.

Discussion of CES Referrals by Racial Group

Table 3 contains data concerned with CES referral outcomes within each racial group and aggregate outcomes for all participants referred through the CES system for housing. Referral acceptance rates for all cases (except for one case classified as 'other") ranges between 38.2% and 70.5%. This range includes cases where data is unknown, missing, or refused. In cases where outcome and racial group are known, the acceptance rates range narrows to 58.4% to 70.5%. The acceptance rate in the 29 cases where the participant refused to self –identify race was measured at 44.8% about 14% below the cases where participants' race is known. Native Hawaiian /Pacific Islander, the group with the highest acceptance rate (70.5%) is drawn from 78 cases which is the smallest racial group[15]for this data element. Two other relatively small groups, American Indian / Alaskan Native (N = 127) and Asian (N =98) hold acceptance rates of approximately 52% and 57% respectively. The largest groups, Black / African American and White comprise 35% and 58% of all cases, and hold referral acceptance rates of 57% and 62% respectively. It is noted that the proportion of homeless persons in the CoC for these groups as shown in *Table 1:Racial Profile* are 27.6% and 61.9%. Indications are that the proportion of Black / African Americans who are referred by CES to housing opportunities exceeds their relative contribution to the CoC homeless population, while whites are represented equally.

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[14] Reference from ACLU, Business Journal, Me Too go here.
[15] Again, after removing the single case classified as "other"

Examination of other referral outcomes (cancelled, denied, and wait listed) reveals relatively limited ranges for cases where race and outcome are known. The outcome "cancelled" ranges between 3.85% and 10.2% while the outcomes "denied" and "wait listed" have ranges of 18.37% to 29.92% and .88% and 1.4%. Simple descriptive statistics do not signal an alert for disparity in the less desirable referral outcomes (denied, cancelled).

Race and Housing Placement

A premier goal of the CoC system is to help homeless persons sure permanent housing appropriate to their needs. Examination of this aspect of CoC outcome by racial group are essential to the assessment of potential racial disparity in the system.

Table 5: Exits to Permanent Housing by Racial Group , below, captures a summary of the permanent placement outcomes achieved by each racial group as compared with their proportion of the homeless population as reported in HMIS.

Primary Race	Exit to Permanent Housing	%of Exits to PH	% HMLS Pop	Comparison of Exit Outcome to % HMLS Population
American Indian/Alaskan Native & White (new HUD an prior)	187	2.0%	2.6%	76%
Asian (HUD)	154	1.6%	2.0%	83.4%
Black or African American (HUD)	3198	34.0%	27.6%	123.0%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (HUD)	145	1.5%	1.5%	102.0%
White (HUD)	5557	59.1%	61.9%	95.4%
Other	2	0.0%	0.3%	7.8%
Other Multi-Racial	1	0.0%	0.2%	6.7%
SD - Middle Eastern Descent	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Client doesn't know (HUD)	17	0.2%	0.6%	31.8%
Client refused (HUD)	43	0.5%	1.1%	40.9%
Data not collected (HUD)	60	0.6%	0.9%	73.9%
Missing	41	0.4%	1.2%	37.1%
Total Exits to Permanent Housing	9405	100.0%		

Discussion of Permanent Housing Outcomes

A review of the data in *Table 5: Exits to Permanent Housing by Racial Group* evidences a wide range of permanent housing placement rates, from virtually no exits to permanent housing to 59% of persons in a racial group representing 59% of the successful exits to permanent housing for the CoC. When compared with the relative proportion that each racial group is found within the data set, the disparity

(excluding the categories with two or less persons and cases with data missing), ranges from 76% to 123% of expected values.

In general, the trends seen in other parts of this study continues. Black/African American rates of placement are higher than their inclusion in the homeless population found in the HMIS, Asian and American Indian / Alaskan Native achievement numbers are lower than their incidence in the population, and whites are slightly below but nearly equal to the expectation.

This data suggests that issues of racial discrimination against Blacks reported in prior decades are not present in the current system.

Summary

This study reviewed the descriptive data for the San Diego CoC from the HMIS and CES data repositories, and the U.S. Census report for 2017 for various factors distributed by racial and ethnic groups. Comparisons between the expected racial distribution based on 2017 Census data for San Diego County and the levels of representation of racial groups within the local homeless population coincides with findings of other studies, Blacks / African Americans, Native Americans and Alaskan Natives, and Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders are over-represented in the homeless population when compared with the general population distribution in a given area.

This brief study addresses key structures within the CoC system designed to move homeless persons through referral processes to successful placement in permanent housing. The study focuses on simple descriptive data, such as frequencies and ratios as preliminary indicators of potential racial disparity.

Findings and Recommended Actions

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has asked CoCs to classify their study findings in one of four categories:

People of different races or ethnicities are more or less likely to receive homeless assistance.

People of different races or ethnicities are more or less likely to receive a positive outcome from homeless assistance.

There are no racial disparities in the provision or outcome of homeless assistance

The results are inconclusive for racial disparities in the provision or outcome of homeless assistance.

While none of the choices above fully reflect the San Diego CoC situation, it is accurate that there is an overrepresentation of minorities in the homeless population when compared with the racial distribution from 2017 reports drawn from Census data for the region. Data about clients served by the CoC as represented in HMIS and CES data, however, have relatively proportional access to assistance and similar outcomes after entering the system.

Given the disproportionate representation of racially diverse persons in homelessness, and a CoC Board composition that does not mirror the client population distribution, there is no significant disparity in the access to services or outcomes in the assistance from the CoC . As a result, the CoC classifies our findings in category 4, the results are inconclusive for racial disparities, and notes one clarification: races or ethnicities are more / less likely to be homeless *than their occurrence in the general population.*

HUD asked CoCs to select from eleven strategic options (below) to try to address any racial disparities. The process of conducting this brief study has pricked the interest of leaders in the CoC. Five strategies in italics below have already been initiated or are being planned by CoC members.

The CoC's board and decision-making bodies are representative of the population served in the CoC.

The CoC has identified steps it will take to help the CoC board and decision-making bodies better reflect the population served in the CoC.

The CoC is expanding outreach in geographic areas with higher concentrations of underrepresented groups.

The CoC has communication, such as flyers, websites, or other materials, inclusive of underrepresented groups

The CoC is training staff working in the homeless services sector to better understand racism and the intersection of racism and homelessness.

The CoC is establishing professional development opportunities to identify and invest in emerging leaders of different races and ethnicities in the homelessness sector.

The CoC has staff, committees or other resources charged with analyzing and addressing racial disparities related to homelessness.

The CoC is educating organizations, stakeholders, boards of directors for local and national non-profit organizations working on homelessness on the topic of creating greater racial and ethnic diversity.

The CoC reviewed coordinated entry processes to understand their impact on people of different races and ethnicities experiencing homelessness.

The CoC is collecting data to better understand the pattern of program use for people of different

The CoC is conducting additional research to understand the scope and needs of different races and ethnicities experiencing homelessness.

Closing Statement

While racial and ethnic subgroups are overrepresented I homeless population nationally and

locally, access to care and outcomes of care in the San Diego CoC are relatively proportionate. The study, however is a catalyst for further exploration and action.

Table 3: CES Referrals by Racial group

Race	Accepted	Cancelled	Declined	Wait List	Not collected	Case Total	% Accepted	% Cancelled	% Declined	% wait list
American Indian Alaskan Native (HUD +Original)	66	9	38	0	14	127	51.97%	7.09%	29.92%	0.00%
Asian	56	10	18	0	14	98	57.14%	10.20%	18.37%	0.00%
Black / African American	1107	152	378	17	282	1936	57.18%	7.85%	19.52%	0.88%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	55	3	19	1		78	70.51%	3.85%	24.36%	1.28%
White	1975	252	895	44		3166	62.38%	7.96%	28.27%	1.39%
Other	0	0	1	0	0	1	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Unknown Race	9	3	4	0	6	22	40.91%	13.64%	18.18%	0.00%
Refused Race	13	2	13	1	5	34	38.24%	5.88%	38.24%	2.94%
Not collected	16	0	8	0	3	27	59.26%	0.00%	29.63%	0.00%
TOTAL	**3297**	**431**	**1374**	**63**	**324**	**5489**	**60.07%**	**7.85%**	**25.03%**	**1.15%**

Table 3: CES Referrals by Racial Group, Continued. Known Cases

Race	N without Missing cases	% Accepted Known Cases only	% Cancelled Known Cases only	% Declined Known Cases only	% Wait List Known Cases only
American Indian Alaskan native (HUD +Original)	113	58.4%	8.0%	33.6%	0.0%
Asian	84	66.7%	11.9%	21.4%	0.0%
Black / African American	1654	66.9%	9.2%	22.9%	1.0%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	78	70.5%	3.8%	24.4%	1.3%
White	3166	62.4%	8.0%	28.3%	1.4%
Other	1	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Refused Race	29	44.8%	6.9%	44.8%	3.4%
TOTAL	**5125**	**63.8%**	**8.3%**	**26.6%**	**1.2%**

Table 4: CES Referrals by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Accepted	Cancelled	Declined	Wait List	Not collected	Row Total	% Accepted	% Cancelled	% Declined	% wait list
Hispanic / Latino	917	122	328	22	224	1389	66.02%	8.78%	23.61%	1.58%
Non-Hispanic / Non- Latino	2360	307	1030	41	555	4293	54.97%	7.15%	23.99%	0.96%
Unknown Ethnicity	12	5	17	0	6	40	30.00%	12.50%	42.50%	0.00%
TOTAL	3289	434	1375	63	785	5722	57.48%	7.58%	24.03%	1.10%

Table 4: CES Referrals by Ethnicity, Continued, Known Cases - Outcomes

Ethnicity	N without Missing cases	% Accepted Known Cases only	% Cancelled Known Cases only	% Declined Known Cases only	% Wait List Known Cases only
Hispanic / Latino	1165	78.7%	10.5%	28.2%	1.9%
Non-Hispanic / Non- Latino	3738	63.1%	8.2%	27.6%	1.1%
Unknown Ethnicity	34	35.3%	14.7%	50.0%	0.0%
TOTAL	4937	66.6%	8.8%	27.9%	1.3%