

June 2022



*A newsletter for LVRHAB members and community partners*



## What is the LVRHAB?

The Lehigh Valley Regional Homeless Advisory Board is a collaborative, community-based response to homelessness in our community.

Also known as the LVRHAB or RHAB, we are comprised of representatives from City and County governments, social service agencies, veterans support groups, faith-based and other community organizations, advocates, people who have or are currently experiencing homelessness, representatives from legislators, and other interested parties with the mandate of ending homelessness and housing insecurity in the Lehigh Valley.

The LVRHAB is one of five RHABs across 33 counties that make up the Eastern Pennsylvania Continuum of Care (Eastern PA CoC). If you are interested, the CoC is recruiting for committee membership. Apply [HERE](#).

For more info about the LVRHAB and how you can join, please contact:

Jenna Sentz ([jsentz@thirdstreetalliance.org](mailto:jsentz@thirdstreetalliance.org)) and Chris Cassidy ([ccassidy@newbethanyministries.org](mailto:ccassidy@newbethanyministries.org)).



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## Pandemic Exacerbates Need for Housing for People with Disabilities

*By Gabbreell James, Regional Housing Coordinator, Self-Determination Housing of Pennsylvania (SDHP)*

One in four adults in the U.S. have some type of disability that impacts, but does not stop, their ability to perform life activities. This translates into 61 million Americans. Every state has its share of people with disabilities. PA is an old state with old housing stock, most of it was built before the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). There has never been enough accessible housing for all the people who need it. Now with the COVID-19 pandemic, there will be even more people with disabilities. Many people will lose their jobs or have a decrease in income as the pandemic progresses. Some people will become homeless, counties are already dealing with an increase in evictions.

The American Recovery Act and ESG funds have put a band-aid on the eviction problem, but the funds will expire soon. Those funds were not specifically for home modifications or accessible housing. We have to support our neighbors who have been negatively affected by the pandemic. We must advocate for all citizens that need accessible and affordable housing. We need to think outside the box about housing going forward, the old normal was not good enough.

In Philadelphia, the Mayor's office tracks this [data](#) but every area should have this data.

The Urban Institute's blog recently posted [Three Obstacles Federally Assisted Housing Programs Need to Overcome to Better Serve Residents with Disabilities.](#)

So, what do we do about the increase in both housing instability and need for accessible units?

## Join the Landlord Engagement Team!

The Landlord Engagement Team will be reconvening in early July. This team will engage landlords to join a network of their peers who have agreed to rent to homeless or at-risk households by ensuring guaranteed rent, reimbursement for property damage, missed rent, case management for tenants, and other supports. This will create increased access to safe, affordable units, which will, in turn, reduce homelessness and housing insecurity in the Lehigh Valley. If you are interested in being involved, please reach out to [Michele Albright](#).

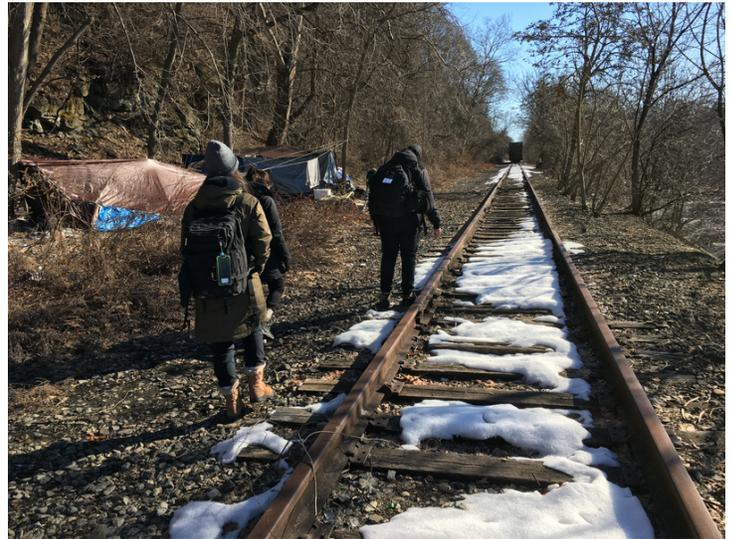
# 2022 PIT Count indicates 36% increase in people experiencing homelessness across Lehigh Valley

By Michelle Wagner, Project Coordinator, Valley Health Partners Street Medicine

The Point-in-Time Count (PIT) is a snapshot of the number of people experiencing homelessness on a given night, including people sleeping in sheltered and unsheltered locations. Sheltered locations can include emergency shelters, domestic violence shelters, motels (if paid for by a non-profit or government entity), and transitional housing. Unsheltered locations include public places not meant for human habitation, including tents, abandoned structures, storage units, sidewalks, cars, parks, under bridges, or barns. While some of these may be non-lethal sleeping accommodations in warm weather months, they can be deadly in January or February.

The PIT Count is mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to take place during the last 10 days of January. Due to the omicron surge, the Count across the Eastern PA Continuum of Care was postponed to February 23, 2022.

This year, 26 volunteers assisted with brief interviews of individuals experiencing homelessness throughout Lehigh and Northampton counties. Staff and students from Valley Youth House, Lehigh Conference of Churches, Moravian College, Valley Health Partners Street Medicine team, Safe Harbor Easton, New Bethany Ministries, and Bethlehem Emergency Shelter kindly administered the 2022 PIT Count.



The 2022 PIT Count in the Lehigh Valley identified 547 households made up of 921 people experiencing homelessness. The 2022 data shows the following trends (there was no unsheltered count in 2021 due to COVID-19, so 2022 numbers were compared to 2020):

- An increase in overall homelessness with 26% increase in households experiencing homelessness and a 36% increase in individuals experiencing homelessness
- A 51% increase in families with children
- A 93% increase for veterans
- A 46% increase in individuals experiencing chronic homelessness
- A 46% increase for households experiencing domestic violence

It is worth noting that the increased number of families with children is due to emergency hotel programs being operated by LVRHAB-member agencies, (for example, New Bethany Ministries, in partnership with Northampton County, was covering the cost of hotel stays for over 80 individuals and families who were experiencing homelessness on the night of the 2022 PIT Count). In previous years, families may not have been counted due to lack of access to them to complete interviews if they were doubled up. What we know is that the Point-in-Time Count does not always show the extent of need that service providers witness daily, so for the data to show such drastic increases is important.

Thank you to all of the PIT Count volunteers and thank you to the 2022 PIT planning team.

Follow this [link](#) to the PA CoC website for a full breakdown of the 2022 PIT count data for Lehigh and Northampton counties and the LVRHAB.

## Save the Dates!

### Advocacy Team Power Mapping Session

Weds., July 13 at 3PM

As part of the Advocacy Team's efforts on eviction expungement education and legislation, Armando Moritz-Chapelliquen will be leading a power mapping session. If you missed Armando's fantastic advocacy training, you can find it [HERE](#). An invitation to the power mapping session will go out via the LVRHAB mailing list and Slack channel a week in advance of the session.

### Housing Futures for South Bethlehem

Weds., August 10 at 3PM

Lehigh professor and professional architect Wesley Hiatt will present his year-long research into South Bethlehem historic architecture and community fabric. Wes's research focuses on the intersection between history and new development, and his work has concentrated on finding solutions to contemporary affordable housing challenges and gentrification concerns by exploring the way our community has historically addressed these very issues. While this work focusses on South Bethlehem, it is applicable Valley-wide. Zoom link [HERE](#).

## Reading Resources

[How Houston Moved 25,000 People From the Streets Into Homes of Their Own](#)

[Rent: Last Week Tonight with John Oliver \(adult content and profanity\)](#)

[Renters of color have to spend \\$294 more on average than white renters to get an apartment](#)

[President Biden Announces New Actions to Ease the Burden of Housing Costs](#)

[Your Positive Rental History Will Now Help You Qualify for a Mortgage](#)

[America's homeless ranks graying as more retire on streets](#)

[Current Appraisal Practices Perpetuate Racial Disparities in Home Values](#)

## Attention Caseworkers:

### One-Time Homeless Prevention Funds Available!



PREVENTION ACTION TEAM  
ROOSTER'S RELIEF FUND

The Rooster Relief Fund proactively prevents homelessness by providing one-time financial assistance to households who do not qualify for government grants or other existing preventive services. Named in honor of retired Allentown School District homeless liaison, Russell "Rooster" Valentini, the program is administered by the LVRHAB's Prevention Action Team.

If you are working with a client you think might qualify, please reach out to [Seth Campbell](#) and [Ben Stephens](#) for more information and a copy of the Standard Operating Procedures.



## LVRHAB Website!

<https://lvrhab.org/>

Check out our recently updated website! You can view minutes of general meetings and past newsletters. You can also register to be a member of the LVRHAB through the Eastern PA Continuum of Care. New features and information are added regularly. An interactive calendar is coming soon!

Interested in joining the Communications Team to help with the newsletters & website? Contact [Chris Cassidy](#).

## Upcoming Meetings

### Attendance Reminder:

For all LVRHAB related meetings, please mark your attendance using this link: [HERE](#)

### LVRHAB Quarterly Meeting Schedule

2nd Tuesday of the Month, 10:00-11:30AM  
September 13 & December 13

[Click Here to Register](#)

### Advocacy & Communications Team

2nd Wednesday of every 2 months, 3-4PM  
Contact [Erin Connelly](#) and [Marc Rittle](#) for more information.

### Affordable Housing Team

July 27, 4-5PM  
[Click Here to Register](#)

### Landlord Engagement Team

Next meeting TBD in early July  
Contact [Michele Albright](#) for more information.

### Prevention Action Team

First Thursday of every month at noon (next meeting is July 7)  
[Click here to join the meeting](#)  
Contact [Seth Campbell](#) and [Ben Stephens](#) for more information.