

2008 Lewiston Auburn Homelessness Needs Assessment Report



**For: Lewiston/Auburn
Alliance for Services
to the Homeless**

**By: Sarah Curran and
Frank O'Hara
Planning Decisions, Inc.
P.O. Box 168
Hallowell, ME 04347-0168**

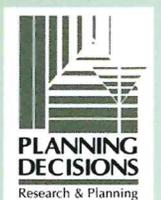


Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| I. Introduction | 1 |
| II. Scope of the Challenge | 2 |
| III. Homeless Youth..... | 5 |
| IV. Homeless Families..... | 14 |
| V. Homeless Domestic Violence Survivors | 20 |
| VI. Homeless New Americans | 24 |
| VII. Homeless Single Adults | 29 |
| VIII. The Cost of Heat..... | 37 |
| IX. Challenges..... | 39 |

I. Introduction

This report is the first step in a collaborative effort by the cities of Lewiston and Auburn to develop a 10-year plan to end homelessness. It is an assessment of need, based on the first-hand accounts of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Lewiston Auburn as well as service providers.

From June through September 2008, Planning Decisions, with assistance from the Committee, conducted 6 focus groups and numerous interviews as part of the needs assessment. The focus groups were attended by 48 participants: 14 youth, 9 New Americans, 4 domestic violence survivors, 1 family, 8 single adults, and 12 service providers. Interviews were conducted with the Lewiston Auburn housing authorities, general assistance offices, police, and school departments, and with 11 service providers/agencies responsible for homeless services: St. Martin De Porres, Hope Haven, Abused Women's Advocacy Project, New Beginnings, Aspiring for Careers and Education (ACE), Tedford Housing, United Way of Androscoggin County, Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Community Concepts, Catholic Charities of Maine St. Francis Recovery Center, and the Togus Veterans Administration Medical Center.

Planning Decisions would like to thank those who took the time to be interviewed for this report. In addition, we would like to thank the following people for arranging the focus groups: Bob Rowe, Reine Mynahan, Jim Lysen, Gure Ali, Sue Charron, Jim Andrews, Craig Phillips, and Larry Marcoux, and Catherine Lekberg and Patty Fecteau for taking notes.

II. Scope of the Challenge

On January 30, 2008, all of the homeless shelters in Maine took part in the annual “point in time” survey. On that night, the survey found 48 people in shelters in Lewiston Auburn.

Considering that the U.S. Census estimates that the population of Androscoggin County in 2006 is around 105,000, this would indicate that the homelessness problem only affects less than one-tenth of one percent of the regional population.

But the problem is greater. One shelter, Hope Haven, reports that it is consistently over capacity, turning away 2 families for every one it accepts, and one single person for every one it accepts. When these additional people are factored in, the nightly homeless count increases to between 94 and 114 people.

And this is just one night. Over the course of the year, many different individuals and families experience homelessness. The Maine Housing Authority counted 610 unique individuals served in 2007 by Lewiston Auburn shelters; Planning Decisions estimates suggest up to 685 homeless were sheltered, and another 348 to 523 turned away. Now we arrive at a range of between 1,033 and 1,318¹ people experiencing homelessness in Lewiston Auburn each year, or one percent of the county’s population – and two percent of Lewiston and Auburn’s combined population.

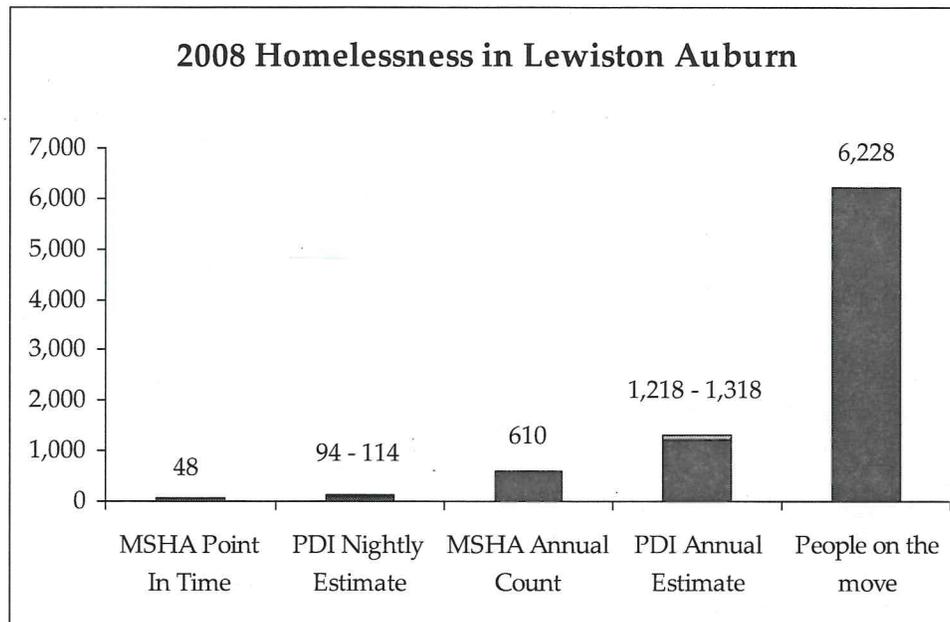
Focus group research conducted for this study indicates that these individuals, in turn, are part of a larger at-risk population within the area – people with low incomes who move around from apartment to apartment, and from couch to couch. U.S. Census estimates that in 2006 there are more than 6,000 people in Lewiston Auburn with incomes below the poverty level who live in a different place than they did a year ago. Many of these people have moved many times. They experience a rate of mobility three times that of the population with incomes over the poverty level: one in three of the more than 17,000 people living

¹ Range estimated based on two methodologies: 1, MSHA data and shelter “turned away” data; 2, PDI data and shelter “turned away” data

in poverty in Androscoggin County move every year, while most of the rest of the population (90%) stays put.

So now the scale of the issue becomes clearer.

Figure S1: Homelessness in Lewiston Auburn



There is a cycle in the Lewiston-Auburn housing market like musical chairs, in which hundreds of people are on the move every night, and a hundred or so get left out, and end up at the shelter door.

There are distinct groups of homeless people, who encounter homelessness for different reasons. Once there, however, the experience is the same: disorientation, anxiety, loss of stable supports, and difficulty in regrouping.

The groups described in this needs assessment report include recent immigrants, survivors of family violence, youth, adult individuals, and families. Table S1 below presents a summary of the numbers found in the report, including both those who are homeless and those who are at risk.

Table S1: Estimated Homeless and At-Risk Population in Androscoggin County

| | All | At risk* | Annually | Nightly | Transition |
|---------------------------------------|---------|----------|----------|---------|------------|
| Recent Lewiston immigrants | 2,461 | 1,484 | n/a | n/a | |
| Family violence** | 27,302 | 434 | 170 | 12 | 2 |
| Youth (16 to 20 yrs old)*** | 6,428 | 1,554 | 204 | 7 | 2 |
| Adult individuals**** | 19,484 | 3,692 | 550 | 43 | |
| In Families (# of people)***** | 79,234 | 10,221 | 394 | 33 | |
| Total population***** | 104,480 | 17,152 | 1,318 | 94 | |
| | | | | | |
| Total households | 42,886 | 7,214 | 975 | 67 | |
| Total family households | 27,302 | 3,522 | 136 | 11 | |

*At risk is <poverty except family violence is crimes

**MSHA survey for annual; same proportion for nightly

***School data for annual; MSHA for nightly count

****Total MSHA count less youth;

*****Total MSHA count less family violence

*****Except for all and at risk, sum of all rows

III. Homeless Youth

A) Problem Description

A homeless youth is a person 21 years of age or younger who is unaccompanied by a parent or guardian and is without shelter where appropriate care and supervision are available, whose parent or legal guardian are unable or unwilling to provide shelter and care, or who lacks a fixed regular, and adequate nighttime residence.² Causes of youth homelessness can include family problems, such as abuse, strained relationships, addiction of a family member, and parental neglect; economic problems, such as the family suffering a financial crisis, and the youth becomes separated from the family; and residential instability, for example a history of foster care has been found to correlate with homelessness among youth.³ In a June 2008 focus group with homeless youth in Lewiston Auburn, family disputes, neglect, and abuse were identified as the primary reasons for youth leaving home.

Homeless youth often “couch-surf,” or stay with friends and/or family members. The youth participating in the focus group reported that problems with “couch-surfing” include uncertainty, because the person the youth is staying with can ask them to leave at any time, and vulnerability to exploitation, because the youth may be asked for any amount of money or goods (such as food or food stamps) in exchange being given for a place to stay.

The youth said they have difficulty renting apartments for a number of reasons. Money is the biggest obstacle: most don't have a job, and even for those that do, saving up enough money for first and last months' rent as well as a security deposit is a challenge. They said there is a lack of affordable apartments in Lewiston Auburn, noting that a 1-bedroom apartment costs between \$400 and \$800 per month, and those on the lower end are not in good condition. They also felt that landlords often don't want to rent to youth based on assumptions about age and irresponsibility, and few of them have rented before, so they have no

² This is the definition currently used by the Homeless Youth Providers Association and was provided by New Beginnings Community Services.

³ National Coalition for the Homeless. (2007, August). *Homeless Youth Fact Sheet*. Washington DC. *2008 Lewiston Auburn Homelessness Needs Report*

previous landlords to list as references. Finally, to rent an apartment, you need to be 18, which many of the youth are not.

According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, homeless youth often suffer from severe anxiety and depression, poor health and nutrition, and low self-esteem. They face difficulties attending school because of legal guardianship requirements, residency requirements, improper records, and lack of transportation. Thus, homeless youth face challenges obtaining an education and supporting themselves emotionally and financially.⁴

In interviews, homeless youth service providers in Lewiston Auburn stated that many homeless youth in the community have mental health and substance abuse issues, as well as age-appropriate development and behavioral disabilities. Many are survivors of abuse, neglect, and violence. More than half are high-school dropouts. Often, they lack life and social skills necessary to, for example, take care of themselves well, maintain personal relationships, hold a job, and keep an apartment.

B) Numbers

The Lewiston and Auburn School Departments identified approximately 215 unaccompanied youth (youth under the age of 18 who lack parental, foster, or institutional care) during the 2007-2008 school year (Table

| Table Y1: Homeless Youth Grades 9-12 Identified by Lewiston and Auburn Schools, 2007-2008 | |
|--|------------|
| Homeless Youth Enrolled in Lewiston, Grades 9-12 | 132 |
| Homeless Youth Enrolled In Auburn, Grades 9-12 | 31 |
| Homeless Youth Not Enrolled in School, Involved in Ace program, Ages 14-21 | 52 |
| Total | 215 |
| Source: Lewiston and Auburn School Departments | |

Y1). Each school department has a homeless liaison responsible for identifying homeless youth and assisting them with school supplies, clothing, and transportation as needed to help them stay in school. The ACE Program in

⁴National Coalition for the Homeless. (2007, August). *Homeless Youth Fact Sheet*. Washington DC. *2008 Lewiston Auburn Homelessness Needs Report*

Lewiston (Aspiring for CAREERS and EDUCATION), funded through the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Act, tutors homeless students who have dropped out of school to help them get their GED.

The McKinney-Vento definition of homeless youth and children includes those who “lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence,” not only unaccompanied youth but also those who are doubling up with extended family, or living in cars, campgrounds, or substandard housing.⁵ For the purposes of this report, homeless youth younger than age 14 and those experiencing homelessness with their families are discussed in the section on homeless families; this section focuses on unaccompanied youth and homeless youth over age 18.

In addition to the 215 homeless youth identified by the Lewiston and Auburn School Departments, in 2007, the two primary homeless youth housing providers in the area, New Beginnings and Volunteers of America, served 423 youth with emergency shelter, housing and outreach services (Table Y2). While some of these may be a duplicate count of the same youth, the total number of homeless youth is very likely significantly higher than 215. Youth service providers estimate that the actual number of homeless youth in Lewiston Auburn on any given night may actually be as high as several hundred.

| | Emergency Shelter | Transitional Living Program | Outreach Program |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| New Beginnings | 142 | 52 | 348 |
| Volunteers of America | | | 75 |
| Totals | 142 | 52 | 423 |

Source: New Beginnings; Volunteers of America, <http://www.voanne.org/>

While many of the homeless youth in Lewiston Auburn are from the two cities, others are originally from nearby communities. This reflects in part the cities' roles as service communities for the region and the fact that New Beginnings'

⁵ *The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Reauthorized January 2002.* (n.d.). Retrieved September 5, 2008, from <http://www.serve.org/nche/definition.php>

youth shelter is a statewide program. The ACE program estimates that almost 2/3 of the youth it serves are originally from surrounding communities. The Lewiston School Department found that while most of the elementary and middle school homeless youth are from Lewiston, at the high school level more are from other towns. This is most likely a result of the number of youth who come from New Beginnings Shelter and who attend the ACE program. Among the youth served by New Beginnings in 2007, 53% of those who stayed at the emergency shelter were from Androscoggin County (14% were from Oxford County, and 12% from Cumberland County); 52% of those who participated in the Transitional Living Program were from Androscoggin County; and 95% of youth served by the Outreach Program live in Lewiston and Auburn.

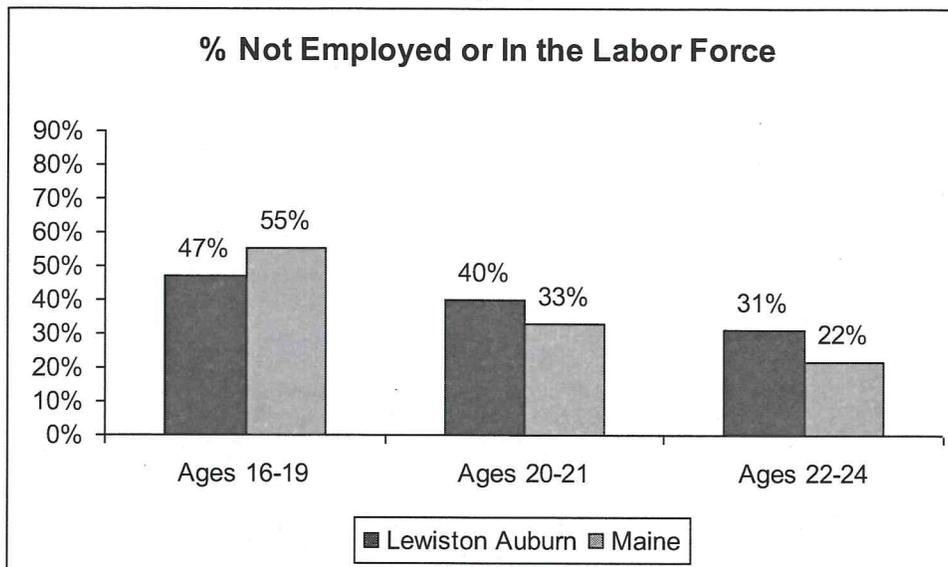
C) Population At Risk

The number of youth at risk of homelessness can be estimated. Citing a 2004 *Kids Count* statistic that in 2002 18% of Maine's youth ages 18-24 were not in school, were not working, and had no degree beyond a high school diploma, the Maine Department of Labor has stated that, "Lack of education and employment experience will limit the future prospects of these young people and deny Maine employers access to a needed labor pool."⁶ Census data reveal that compared to the State of Maine as a whole, the percentage of youth ages 20-24 who are unemployed or not in the labor force is higher in Lewiston Auburn, as is the percentage of youth ages 15-17 who are not in school (Figures Y1 and Y2, next page). Healthy Androscoggin's 2007 *County Profile* identifies homelessness as a primary concern among youth ages 18-25.⁷

⁶Maine Department of Labor. (2005). *Trends and Implications for the Maine Workforce*.

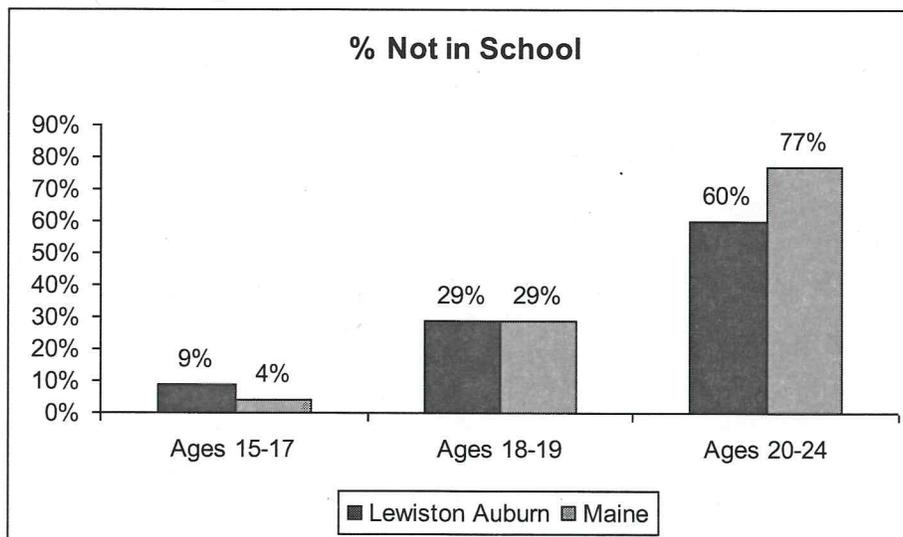
⁷Healthy Androscoggin. (2007, May) *Androscoggin County Profile*.

Figure Y1: Percent Youth Unemployed or Not in the Labor Force



Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Figure Y2: Percent Youth Not in School



Source: 2000 U.S. Census

D) Services

This section considers services for homeless youth chronologically: first in the period of prevention, then in the period of crisis, and finally in the period of

transition out of homelessness.

Prevention

New Beginnings' Community Services is an outreach program and drop-in center for youth ages 14-21 who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The drop-in center, open Monday-Friday in the afternoon, provides meals, laundry facilities, and supplies and clothing. For youth on a tight budget, these services can help them save money to put toward rent. Other services include group activities, case management, assistance finding housing, and referrals to other community resources, for example mental health care providers and job centers. Staff can sometimes help youth access financial assistance for rent to prevent eviction or for a security deposit to secure housing.

New Beginnings Shelter provides family mediation free of charge for all youth coming to the shelter and their families. The purpose of the program is to prevent youth who have runaway or who are homeless from leaving home whenever possible. Shelter staff work with families and youth to create a plan to return home and provide aftercare when requested.

Crisis

Emergency shelter for homeless youth in Lewiston and Auburn is provided by New Beginnings. The shelter, which serves youth ages 12-19, has 12 beds, and the maximum length of stay is 3 weeks. It is low barrier, meaning that although youth cannot be under the influence of drugs or alcohol while at the shelter, use of these substances while not at the facility does not prevent them from being able to stay. The shelter operates 24 hours a day, and offers programs and supervision during the day hours.

As required by law, Lewiston and Auburn School Departments both have homeless liaisons to identify homeless students and provide transportation, school supplies, and clothing as needed to support their continued enrollment.

Transition

New Beginnings' Transitional Living Program (TLP) provides housing and supportive services to help youth develop skills to live independently. The Supervised Apartment Program (serving youth ages 16-20) is located in Lewiston and has 24-hour on-site staff supervision. Youth have to be in school or working

toward their GED to stay in the TLP. Youth are eligible to continue to receive services from TLP for up to a year after leaving the program. The Community Living Program (serving youth ages 18-20) provides housing and case management services in Lewiston, Augusta, and the Farmington area.

Volunteers of America's Lewiston-Auburn Homeless Youth Program is an outreach program providing case management services to connect youth with safe housing and resources. As with New Beginnings' TLP, youth have to be enrolled in school or working toward their GED. VOA recently received a TLP grant and plans to provide scattered site apartment transitional living in the future.

E) Service Gaps and Issues

Many people are unaware that homeless youth exist. According to service providers, systems that serve homeless youth sometimes inadvertently erect barriers that keep them from accessing those services. Qualifying homeless youth for subsidized housing can be difficult, for example, because a stay in a shelter is required, and the HUD definition of homelessness doesn't include "couch-surfing," which is what many youth do. Subsidized housing regulations that limit guests to 2 week stays can leave youth living with a parent with nowhere to stay when they turn 18. Many homeless youth are high school drop-outs, and school policies that suspend students after 3 absences assume that they have a home in which to wake up and get ready for school. Homeless youth often don't have access to transportation, which can make getting to service appointments challenging when service providers are stationary and don't provide transportation.

Perhaps the biggest challenge in providing homeless youth services is that no single program can meet the needs of all. According to service providers, programs targeted toward specific groups of homeless youth are best able to provide the depth of service necessary for them to succeed; however, funding for the multiple programs to serve targeted sub-populations is uncoordinated and difficult, and there are sub-groups of homeless youth whose needs are not currently being met.

One such subset is young single mothers. Almost 1/3 of the female youth who use New Beginnings outreach services are pregnant or have small children. Neither New Beginnings emergency shelter nor TLP can serve these youth, because they can't serve children in licensed residential settings; local adult homeless shelters are not necessarily appropriate either.

A second sub-set is homeless youth with mental health issues. Well over 60% of youth using New Beginnings Outreach Services have a mental health diagnosis. Traditional mental health services delivery models do not work well for homeless youth and appropriate services for this population are difficult to get.

Another challenge is that funding for homeless youth services is fragmented, which makes it difficult to treat an individual's needs holistically. Funding for mental health, for example, can't be used to fund housing, but the issues are inseparable. Some services don't fit into any funding model. For example, there is currently no funding source for the mediation services New Beginnings provides to try and help homeless youth return home successfully, but the service has reduced repeat stays by 50%.

Depth of services is especially important for homeless youth. Housing is a critical issue for homeless youth but it is just one of the challenges many of them face. According to service providers, homeless youth often lack the life skills necessary to keep a job or an apartment. They need lots of support to be successful. Providing housing without that support doesn't work for many homeless youth, it just sets them up for failure. There is a need for additional supportive long-term transitional living opportunities for homeless youth in Lewiston Auburn for identified subpopulations of this group. There is also a need for culturally appropriate and creative on-site mental health services for the homeless youth using New Beginnings' Homeless Youth Outreach Services and Transitional Living Programs.

Finally, an enormous challenge to homeless youth service providers in Lewiston Auburn is not only how to expand services but how to maintain existing services in the face of tremendous funding changes. New Beginnings currently provides many of the services available to homeless youth, but maintaining its Outreach Center and Transitional Living Program (TLP) are going to be particularly challenging. The TLP is experiencing significant funding changes. Medicaid has

provided funding for TLP as an adult supervised licensed facility for the last ten years through funding for PNMI (Private Non-Medical Institutions). Now, that funding is moving from a housing-based to a treatment-based approach. A homeless youth needs a diagnosed illness to be referred, and a treatment plan developed for the illness. When the treatment plan is complete, the youth is discharged, regardless of their housing and employment situation. This transformation of PNMI to a medical model means that TLP will have to choose to between providing independent living apartments only or ceasing to provide transitional living opportunities for homeless youth in Lewiston Auburn altogether. While independent living opportunities may work for some youth ages 18-21, it will not work for any of the youth ages 16-17 currently served by TLP. This will mean a complete loss of transitional living in a licensed setting for those youth.

A major concern facing New Beginnings is that the building where the Outreach Center is currently located is sorely inadequate: designed to serve 10-15 youth, it is too small for the 30 youth it serves every day. The building is run-down, and there is no interior access between floors. New Beginnings is interested in renting a different space for outreach programming but funding is tighter now than ever.

New Beginnings Shelter is the only youth shelter in the area. While it has recently expanded the age of youth it can serve to 18 years old, it is underfunded and dependent on Medicaid funding that is currently undergoing changes at the state and federal levels. The loss of foster care payments for youth referred by the to the shelter by DHHS due to the state's residential reform efforts has led to a chronic funding crisis at all Maine youth shelters, and funding for these shelters, including New Beginnings, will need to be addressed with state and local resources.

IV. Homeless Families

A) Problem Description

The Maine State Housing Authority conducts an annual statewide point in time survey “to provide a snapshot of homeless housing needs.” The *2008 Point in Time Survey*⁸ found that 48 people were homeless and staying in shelters in Lewiston and Auburn on January 30, 2008: 30 individuals (62%) and 6 families (38%).

Statewide, 43% of the 341 people identified as homeless in the *2008 Point in Time Survey* were families; nationally, families make up 41% of the homeless population. Homeless families are most commonly headed by single mothers in their late 20s with approximately 2 children.⁹

Poverty and the lack of affordable housing are the principal causes of family homelessness. Low wages and unstable employment mean that many families struggle to pay for housing, food, and medical care. Families living on the edge are more susceptible to crisis. Without resources, an unexpected expense, illness, or the loss of a job can force a family out of their home.¹⁰

Homelessness frequently breaks up families, sometimes because of shelter policies that separate families by gender (as is the case at Hope Haven in Lewiston), or because children may be placed in foster care when a family becomes homeless.

Children of homeless families are in fair or poor health twice as often as other children, and have higher rates, for example, of asthma and ear infections. They are twice as likely to experience hunger, and four times as likely to have delayed

⁸ Maine State Housing Authority. (2008). *Annual Point in Time Survey – January 30, 3008*. Retrieved September 5, 2008, from <http://www.mainehousing.org/Documents/Homeless/Homeless-COCMainePointInTime012008.pdf>

⁹ National Coalition for the Homeless. (2007, August). *Homeless Families with Children Fact Sheet*. Washington DC.

¹⁰ *ibid*

development. They have more mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression.¹¹

In the families focus group conducted for this study, the lack of subsidized housing in Lewiston and Auburn was identified as a major challenge. The federal Housing Choice Section 8 Voucher Program provides subsidies to low-income families for help pay for the cost of rental housing. The owner of the unit must agree to rent under the program, and the subsidy is paid to the landlord directly on behalf of the family. Demand for assistance often exceeds resources, and long wait periods are common; a housing authority may close its waiting lists when it has more families on the list than can be assisted in the near future.

Vouchers in this area are distributed in Lewiston by the Lewiston Housing Authority, in Auburn by the Auburn Housing Authority, and in the remainder of Androscoggin County by Avesta Housing. All three currently have long waiting lists. Auburn's waiting list is about 8 months to a year for Auburn residents, and 2 to 3 years for out of town residents (including people from Lewiston). Lewiston's waiting list has been closed since October of 2007. Avesta's waiting list is currently closed, although it was able to open briefly from June 2 to August 2 after an influx of additional vouchers from the Maine State Housing Authority (40 vouchers for Oxford County, 20 for Androscoggin). Now the wait for Avesta's vouchers is back up to about 2 to 3 years.

Like others experiencing homelessness, homeless families often stay with friends and relatives. Because the federal definition of homelessness includes only people who are on the street or in a shelter, this means they are not considered homeless. This can exclude them from priority for the Avesta vouchers, which have a homeless preference. Lewiston and Auburn do not have a homeless preference, and there is disagreement over whether the pros of such a priority outweigh the cons, primarily that people will stay in a shelter in order to get moved to the front of the list.

When a family does finally have a voucher in hand, it is not always easy to secure appropriate housing. Some homeless families lack references. One focus

¹¹ National Coalition for the Homeless. (2007, August). *Homeless Families with Children Fact Sheet*. Washington DC.

group participant who became homeless after leaving her husband reported that a landlord refused to rent to her because of her husband's poor rental history; she had no rental history of her own. Substandard housing conditions are also a problem. Finally, the Maine State Housing Authority recently reported that 1 in 3 of the vouchers it gave out last year expired without the person securing a rental, due to a pricing gap and landlords not being willing to accept them.¹² This may become an even bigger problem if heating costs rise again and the amounts of the vouchers aren't also increased.

B) Numbers

The only emergency shelter available to families experiencing homelessness in Lewiston and Auburn is Hope Haven. Last year, Hope Haven sheltered 30 families. As of September 18, Hope Haven had sheltered 23 families so far this year, and had turned away 47 families seeking shelter because there was no room for them in the facility.

As with homeless youth, Lewiston and Auburn school department homelessness liaisons identify homeless children enrolled in school. In 2007-2008, 58 children in grades K-8 were identified as homeless.

Table F1: Identified Homeless Youth Grades K-8 in Lewiston and Auburn Schools, 2007-2008

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Homeless Youth Enrolled in Lewiston, Grades K-8 | 35 |
| Homeless Youth Enrolled In Auburn, Grades K-8 | 23 |
| Total | 58 |
| Source: Lewiston and Auburn School Departments | |

C) Population at Risk

Poverty and a lack of affordable housing are the primary causes of homelessness among families.

In 2000, the most recent year in which the U.S. Census collected income data, there were 1,408 families living at or below the poverty level in Lewiston and

¹² Section 8 vouchers more difficult to redeem as rents rise. (2008, August 25). *Bangor Daily News*, p. A1.

Auburn (Table F2). These families are most at risk of homelessness in the event of a crisis.

| Table F2: Families Living in Poverty in Lewiston Auburn | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| | Families Below Poverty Level | Total Number of Families | % of Families Below Poverty Level |
| Families | 1,408 | 14,674 | 10% |
| With Children < Age 18 | 1,192 | 7,072 | 17% |
| With Children < Age 5 | 383 | 1,454 | 26% |
| Female Head of Household | 881 | 1,651 | 53% |
| Families < 65 Years | 197 | 2,550 | 8% |

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

According to the Maine State Housing Authority (MSHA), both home ownership and home rental have become increasingly unaffordable to Lewiston Auburn households earning the median income or less. MSHA calculates an annual affordability index, comparing the price that a household earning the median income can afford to pay for a home with the actual median home price. An affordability index of 1 means that a household earning the median income can afford the median home; an affordability index of less than 1 means that household cannot afford the median home. Between 2002 and 2007, the home ownership affordability index in Lewiston Auburn dropped from 1.08 to .80. During that time, the price of the median home price rose 82%, while the median income rose just 19.5%. The rental housing affordability index dropped from .99 to .91, as the median rent for a 2 bedroom increased 41% and the renter median income increased just 15.8%.

Substantial increases in costs for heat like those experienced this fall are likely to increase the risk of homelessness for many families. Increases in numbers of people applying for food stamps and assistance from food pantries suggest that many people are feeling their budgets tighten (see Heating Costs, page 35).

D) Services

This section considers services for homeless families chronologically: first in the

period of prevention, then in the period of crisis, and finally in the period of transition out of homelessness.

Prevention

General Assistance is available from the Cities of Lewiston and Auburn to provide immediate help for basic needs such as rent and food. General Assistance is a state mandated program, and functions as a safety net. Eligibility is determined according to income and other guidelines established by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Limited case management services are available to help clients access other resources and services.

Crisis

Currently, the Hope Haven provides the only emergency shelter for families experiencing homelessness (victims of domestic violence, discussed in the next section of this report, are sheltered at the Abused Women's Advocacy Project). Hope Haven has 30 beds, 16 of which can serve women and children, while 14 serve men and boys over age 12. Families and individuals staying at Hope Haven are asked to establish goals, such as applying for assistance or seeking employment, and progress toward those goals is reviewed after 30 days to determine whether someone can extend their stay or not. A caseworker from DHHS drops by the shelter once a week to help people access services. Everyone staying at the shelter has to leave by 8 am.

Transition

The Lewiston-Auburn Alliance for Services to the Homeless (LAASH) has a security deposit program that assists low-income persons with a security deposit to help them secure housing.

Tedford Housing, which operates emergency shelters and supportive housing in Brunswick and the mid-coast area, plans to develop 10 units of permanent, supportive family housing in Lewiston.

E) Service Gaps and Issues

Limited emergency shelter is a significant problem for families. New

Beginnings, the youth shelter, can't serve children, and so can't take in young mothers. At Hope Haven, everyone shares group accommodations. This can make staying at the shelter more difficult for families.

Locating assistance and navigating services can be challenging for a family in crisis. One of the school department homelessness liaisons noted that the greatest challenge he faces is not identifying students but helping their parents access services. Often families don't know what to do or where to go when they become homeless, and the school is a trusted point of contact.

Finally, child care can be a significant hurdle for homeless single parents with regard to appointments and interviews.

Affordable housing is a key component of resolving family homelessness. One national study found that 80% of formerly homeless families who received subsidized housing stayed stably housed, compared to only 18% of families who did not receive subsidized housing.¹³ There are currently very long wait lists (8 months to 3 years) for subsidized housing vouchers in the Lewiston Auburn area.

¹³ National Coalition for the Homeless. (2007, August). *Homeless Families with Children Fact Sheet*. Washington DC.

V. Homeless Domestic Violence Survivors

A) Problem Description

When a woman leaves an abusive relationship, she often has nowhere to go; this is especially true for women with few resources. Thus, a significant proportion of people who are homeless tend to be domestic violence survivors. The Maine State Housing Authority's *2008 Point in Time Survey* found that 23% of homeless people surveyed that night were domestic violence survivors.¹⁴

A lack of affordable housing and long waiting lists for subsidized housing mean that many women and their children are forced to choose between abuse at home and homelessness.¹⁵ One study in found that 46% of homeless women reported staying in an abusive relationship because they had no place else to go.¹⁶ In Lewiston Auburn, domestic violence survivors can go to the Abused Women's Advocacy Project's (AWAP) emergency shelter. The shelter provides housing and support. In a July 2008 focus group of domestic violence survivors, the importance of AWAP's emergency shelter could not be over-emphasized. Said one women, "You can talk to others, they listen to you, they can offer suggestions, they cry with you, they celebrate with you when you get Section 8. The shelter helps you start the healing process and helps you to retrain yourself. You can share your experiences and that is needed."

Although there is a 30-day stay guideline, no one has to leave the shelter until they have some place to go. AWAP has only 7 units of transitional housing for women leaving the shelter: 3 are temporary transitional units (up to 24 months), 4 are permanent supportive housing. With support from AWAP, many of the women have to find housing for themselves and their children. They are limited to the apartments that will take vouchers, and the focus group participants said it

¹⁴ Maine State Housing Authority. (2008). *Annual Point in Time Survey – January 30, 2008*. Retrieved September 5, 2008, from <http://www.mainehousing.org/Documents/Homeless/Homeless-COCMainePointInTime012008.pdf>

¹⁵ National Coalition for the Homeless. (2008, June). *Domestic Violence and Homelessness Fact Sheet*. Washington DC.

¹⁶ Wilder Research Center. (2003). *Homeless in Minnesota*. Retrieved September 5, 2008, from <http://www.wilder.org/download.0.html?report=536>

is difficult to find housing that is safe and appropriate. With a voucher, you are limited to the specified number of bedrooms and price range. The focus group participants said that some of the apartments available to them were in really poor condition, but they felt they didn't have much of a choice. The location of housing is also very important. Focus group participants said that the housing that is available tends to be in parts of the city that they are trying to stay away from as survivors of domestic violence. As one woman put it, "You leave an abusive relationship and then have to live next door to one and you hear it. It hurts and it all comes back to you."

Subsidized housing vouchers are specific to the areas served by the housing authority distributing the voucher. Lewiston Housing Authority vouchers can only be used in Lewiston, while Auburn Housing Authority vouchers can only be used in Auburn; neither has a homelessness preference. AVESTA distributes MaineHousing vouchers for the rest of Androscoggin County and Oxford County, and while they do have a homelessness preference (which domestic violence survivors qualify for if they have been staying in the shelter) the AVESTA vouchers cannot be used in Lewiston and Auburn without special permission, called a portability waiver (for example, if someone has a disability and has to live in the city to access services).

With the wait lists for vouchers in Lewiston and Auburn so long, the focus group participants said women will sometimes move into a bad apartment just to become a resident of the city which then bumps them up on the list. Otherwise, they may have to accept a voucher from AVESTA that doesn't allow them to live in Lewiston or Auburn but forces them to move to a surrounding community. This can have serious negative consequences. It means that a woman still in crisis is now isolated and removed from her support network. Without support she may feel that she cannot succeed and she may go back to the abusive relationship. Also, some domestic violence survivors do not have a license because their abuser would not let them get one, and many do not have a car. Public transportation is limited, and all the services they need and the jobs are in Lewiston and Auburn, far away from the outlying area where they are now living.

The domestic violence survivors said everything can be overwhelming, they are struggling with so many issues of which housing is just one piece. Navigating

the system to access services can be really complicated. One woman said she feels sometimes as though there is no way to win: she has mental health issues and right now she needs to find a job to qualify for TANF¹⁷ and MaineCare (Medicaid) so that she can get the medications she needs, but when she gets a housing voucher from AVESTA she will have to move out of the city and then will have no transportation to get to her job or counseling appointments.

B) Numbers

Last year, AWAP's emergency shelter served 170 women and children.

C) Population at Risk

In 2006, 434 domestic violence crimes were reported by the Lewiston and Auburn police departments.¹⁸ 78% (334) were male against female assaults; 22% (96) were female against male assaults.

Nationally, 85-95% victims of domestic violence are women.¹⁹ Low-income women are more likely to experience domestic violence. Among states that have studied domestic violence and welfare receipt, most report that between 50-60% of welfare recipients say they have experienced violence from a male partner.²⁰ These women are also the most likely to lack the resources necessary to secure housing if they leave.

D) Services

This section considers services for homeless domestic violence survivors chronologically: first in the period of prevention, then in the period of crisis, and finally in the period of transition out of homelessness.

¹⁷ Temporary Assistance for Needy Families is welfare for families with children under age 18

¹⁸ Maine State Police Records Management Services, Uniform Crime Reporting (personal communication, August 27, 2008)

¹⁹ American Institute on Domestic Violence. *Domestic Violence Statistics*. (n.d.). Retrieved September 5, 2008, from <http://www.aidv-usa.com/Statistics.htm>

²⁰ National Coalition for the Homeless. (2008, June). *Domestic Violence and Homelessness Fact Sheet*. Washington DC.

Prevention

The Abused Women's Advocacy Project (AWAP) has outreach offices which provide support, information, referrals to community resources and court advocacy.

Crisis

AWAP has a 15 bed shelter. Beds are for both women and their children. When those are full, people are transferred to other shelters around the state. Although there is a 30-day stay guideline, no one has to leave the shelter until they have some place to go.

Transition

AWAP has 7 units of transitional and permanent supportive housing for women leaving the shelter. Support services to help all women leaving the shelter rebuild their lives are available for up to 24 months.

E) Service Gaps and Issues

With only 7 units of transitional and permanent supportive housing available through AWAP, a number of women leaving the shelter must secure their own housing. Although they are given priority for AVESTA's subsidized housing vouchers, the housing is located far away from jobs and services, making an already difficult situation even more so. The wait for housing in Lewiston and Auburn can be very long, and the housing is sometimes of poor quality and in less than ideal locations.

VI. Homeless New Americans

A) Problem Description

New Americans in Lewiston Auburn include recent immigrants to the area from Somalia, Ethiopia, and Iraq. Primary immigrants come directly from another country, typically through a resettlement agency, and have some support from charitable organizations; secondary immigrants move here from another state and have no formal institutional support.

Overcrowding was identified by participants in a July 2008 focus group as a primary housing issue faced by New Americans in Lewiston Auburn. There are not enough larger units (4+ bedrooms, 2+ bathrooms) to meet the needs of immigrant families, leading to overcrowding, for example families of 9 or more people living in a 2-bedroom apartment. Although not included in the federal definition of homelessness, the problem of overcrowding—too many people living in a housing unit—is not unrelated. Overcrowding is a housing concern both because it can be stressful for residents and because it suggests, as in this case, a shortage of affordable housing units. In addition, it can result in heavy use of units and excessive wear and tear.

New American focus group participants also identified lack of choice and sub-standard housing as housing issues. They said they have found that many landlords do not accept subsidized housing vouchers. There are almost no units available that are handicapped accessible. Available units are often in poor condition: in disrepair, with infestations of cockroaches and bedbugs, with plumbing that isn't to code, and contaminated by lead paint, a serious health hazard for children.²¹ Several people said that they had difficulty finding an apartment before their voucher expired (3 months after issuance).

Even when there are serious problems, people feel they have no choice but to accept sub-standard housing, because there are more families than there are

²¹ According to the 2007 *Androscoggin County Profile* (published by Healthy Androscoggin) slightly more children in Androscoggin County (3.0%) have elevated blood lead levels than in the State of Maine as a whole (1.7%).

suitable units. This feeling is exacerbated by subsidized housing voucher program rules requiring a person to stay in a unit for a year. One participant, whose upstairs neighbors were dealing drugs and carried guns, said he was told by the housing authority he had to stay where he was or lose his voucher.

The New Americans participating in the focus group felt that landlords in Lewiston Auburn have a lot of power. A small number of landlords own a significant amount of the properties available to those with subsidized housing vouchers. Some of the landlords are absentee and/or unresponsive, i.e. they cannot be reached at office and do not return calls when tenants have issues. The New Americans also suspect some discrimination, for example landlords not returning calls to applicants with an accent, and there is concern that some landlords take advantage of language and cultural barriers and a lack of awareness among New Americans about their rights.

Subsidized housing program rules limit guests to 2 week stays, and the New American focus groups participants said this can create additional hardship if someone needs a place to stay temporarily. Families of those who need a place to stay for whatever reason are hesitant to take them in for fear they will lose their housing. The focus group participants said most homelessness among New Americans is related to this issue. For example, if there is a domestic dispute and the police come, sometimes the husband is not allowed to return to the home and he will have no place to go. Traditionally these kinds of issues were "solved" by elders of the community, so there is an effort currently to establish some form of community intervention to try and address the problem without having to call the police.

Some of the problems that arise with New Americans tenants could be minimized with a housing orientation. Miscommunications could be cleared up before they become problems, for example, one focus group participant told of a New American who was ticketed for parking in the wrong parking space; clearly explaining the parking rules ahead of time may have prevented the problem.

The focus group participants said that the absence of a sense of community in their new homes is hard for New Americans. Many come from places where traditionally the community lives around a mosque with ample open space and lots of neighborhood interaction. In the apartment buildings, there are no places

for children to play or for adults to gather, which makes it hard to create a feeling of neighborhood identity. In addition, families may be spread around the two cities and disconnected from each other.

There was discussion during the focus group about the implications for home ownership of Islamic law prohibitions against paying or collecting interest. Not being able to take out interest loans often means that New American families aren't able to own a home. But some families could come together to buy home if no-interest banking were available, as it is in several other states. Increasing home ownership among New Americans would be valuable for both the individuals and families and the community as a whole, which would benefit from having them become long-term residents of their neighborhoods.

B) Numbers

Large numbers of Somali immigrants began arriving in Lewiston Auburn in 2001. Others have arrived from Ethiopia and Sudan. The Maine Department of Labor identified 2,461 immigrants who came to the City and enrolled in General Assistance programs between 1984 and 2006. The Census American Community Survey estimates that there are 4,341 black Americans living in Androscoggin County (but the range of their estimate is from 2,000 to 7,000). The most likely number is the estimate of a service provider in the region of between 4,000 and 6,000 New Americans living in Lewiston and Auburn.

C) Population at Risk

Some of the housing issues identified by the focus group participants, such as sub-standard housing, lack of choice, and a feeling of landlords having the power, affect other low-income renters as well. Not being able to assist friends and family in need of temporary housing is an issue for all renters living in subsidized housing. Other housing issues, like overcrowding, are more likely to affect New Americans because of their larger family sizes.

As of January 2007, the City of Lewiston identified 2,641 immigrants who had moved to the city and enrolled in General Assistance. Because of their low

incomes, these New Americans are most at risk for the housing issues identified by the focus group. A 2008 employment analysis by the Maine Department of Labor found unemployment among Somali immigrants to be at 51%. It described a scenario in which, following an initial plunge into the labor market after their arrival, many Somali immigrants found it difficult to stay in the labor force. "There were barriers caused by cultural and language differences. The jobs they had found were seasonal or temporary."²² Each year, a few more workers became discouraged, and the employment level dropped. Asked about job opportunities, the focus group participants agreed that there are few jobs available, and English language skills are a barrier; discrimination is also a concern. They said three quarters of New Americans with jobs work for LL Bean seasonally (September through December) and then are unemployed for the rest of the year. Service providers note that low rates of literacy and, especially for large families, the expense of child care make employment that much more difficult for many New Americans.

D) Services

This section considers services for homeless New Americans chronologically: first in the period of prevention, then in the period of crisis, and finally in the period of transition out of homelessness.

Prevention

Primary immigrants typically come to the states through a resettlement agency and have some support from charitable organizations (such as Catholic Charities of Maine); secondary immigrants have no formal institutional support.

Many New Americans receive housing assistance through the subsidized housing voucher program.

General Assistance is available from the cities of Lewiston and Auburn to provide immediate assistance with basic needs such as rent and food. In 2001, about 50% of Lewiston General Assistance applicants were New Americans; now, they are about 18-20%.

²² Maine Department of Labor. (2008). *An Analysis of the Employment Patterns of Somali Immigrants to Lewiston from 2001 to 2006*.

Crisis

There are no crisis services specifically for homeless New Americans.

Transition

There are no transition services specifically for homeless New Americans.

E) Service Gaps and Issues

There are not enough large apartments to meet the needs of the larger New American families. Few apartments are handicapped accessible. Housing available through the housing assistance voucher program is limited and in poor condition.

Subsidized housing rules limiting guests make it difficult to assist friends and family in need of temporary housing.

A lack of no-interest mortgage opportunities means that few New Americans will be able to own a home. Other communities have grappled with this issue, and some banks outside of Maine now offer loans designed specifically without interest.

Income is an important factor in housing issues. Unemployment among New Americans is very high and most of the jobs available are seasonal. Low-income New Americans are most at risk for housing issues. There is a need to develop better education and job training opportunities, and to address issues around child care.

VII. Homeless Single Adults

A) Problem Description

The reasons a person becomes homeless can include mental illness, substance abuse (or both), unemployment, relationship issues, domestic violence, legal situations, and transience. In a July 2008 focus group of homeless single adults in Lewiston and Auburn, many participants said they struggle with mental illness or substance abuse; some have a physical disability. Most became homeless due to some kind of personal crisis: domestic violence, fire, loss of a job, loss of a license, or as a teenager due to family problems.

Several of the single adults in the focus group stated that there is a need for more emergency shelter beds in Lewiston Auburn. They said Hope Haven has too many religious restrictions, and St. Martin is good but requires a referral and there are not enough beds. One person spoke of living in a car, of staying on people's porches and in hallways while homeless; people also camp by the river when the shelters are full. Another said he is currently living with a friend and it is very crowded. Others agreed that there is no consistency and no structure when staying with friends. If you are not paying any money, the friend expects you to baby-sit their kids, cook for them, etc. It can cause fighting and ruin a friendship.

There is a need for a place for people who are homeless to go during the daytime. Currently, most people go to the library and to the Jubilee Center at the Trinity Church, which provides meals and clothing and serves as a drop-in center for adults. With nothing to do, many homeless single adults just wander around. Focus group participants said this is especially true of those with mental health problems.

Jobs are difficult to find, especially if a person has a felony offense. A felony offense can also prevent someone from being able to get subsidized housing assistance. It does not matter what the felony was for, for example, three driving offenses are a felony. There was a sense among the focus group participants that people should be dealt with differently for different crimes, and that the current system turns good people into bad. If a person is a convict, sex offender, or

mentally ill, they said, there are many closed doors and they will most likely continue to get into trouble. Sex offenders have an especially difficult time, as they cannot seek emergency shelter at Hope Haven because it also serves women and children, and they are disqualified from subsidized housing.

Many homeless adults lack the education and skills to qualify for employment. A lack of transportation also makes access to both services and employment more difficult. One person did not accept a subsidized housing voucher from AVESTA because it would have required a move to an outer town and away from the city.

The single adult focus group participants said there is a need for long-term supportive living arrangements and for housing with treatments for different problems. They said the substance abuse programs are only for a few months, and one single adult stated that is not enough, 2 years is what's needed. Currently, the person said, when you leave the facility, there is no further help to stay clean.

B) Numbers

There are two shelters serving homeless single adults in Lewiston Auburn: St. Martin De Porres, which serves only single adults, and Hope Haven, which serves both single adults and families.

In 2007, St. Martin De Porres provided emergency shelter to 185 individuals. Most (77%) were male, and almost half (44%) were between the ages of 18 and 29 (see Table SA1). Hope Haven served 361 people in 2007; as of September 18 this year it has served 252 individuals, and turned away 207 because it was full.

The Maine State Housing *Authority 2008 Point in Time Survey* found that that 46% of homeless individuals (not families)

| Individuals | 185 | |
|------------------------------|------------|-----|
| Males | 142 | 77% |
| Females | 43 | 23% |
| 18-29 Years Old | 81 | 44% |
| 30-39 | 46 | 25% |
| 40-49 | 39 | 21% |
| 50+ | 19 | 10% |
| Source: St. Martin de Porres | | |

were from Lewiston and Auburn; 45% were from other places in Maine and 9% were from other places in the U.S. The majority (77%) were white.²³

C) Population at Risk

Many homeless single adults struggle with mental illness and/or substance abuse issues. The Maine State Housing Authority's *2008 Point in Time Survey* found that statewide, 23% of homeless persons surveyed had persistent and severe mental illness; 19% had chronic substance abuse. According to the U.S. Census, in 2000 there were 3,875 non-institutionalized individuals over the age of 16 with

| Table SA2: Non-Institutional Population with a Mental Disability in Lewiston Auburn | | | | |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| Individuals | Ages 16-20 | Ages 21-64 | Ages 65 and Over | Total |
| With a Mental Disability | 446 | 2,334 | 1,095 | 3,875 |
| Employed | 125 | 704 | | |
| Not Employed | 221 | 1,630 | | |

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

a mental disability living in Lewiston Auburn.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse estimates that nationwide, 9.6% of persons age 12 and over need treatment for an illicit drug or alcohol use problem.²⁴ Applied to the Lewiston Auburn population, this rate suggests that as many as 3,396 individuals over the age of 12 may have significant substance abuse issues. In 2007, Catholic Charities Maine St. Francis Recovery Center provided substance abuse treatment to 178 men over the age of 18 through its 3-45 day shelter treatment program. Approximately 30% of those individuals identified themselves as homeless.

²³ Maine State Housing Authority. (2008). *Annual Point in Time Survey – January 30, 2008*. Retrieved September 5, 2008, from <http://www.mainehousing.org/Documents/Homeless/Homeless-COCMainePointInTime012008.pdf>

²⁴ National Institute on Drug Abuse. (Revised 2008, June). *NIDA InfoFacts: Treatment Approaches for Drug Addiction*. Retrieved September 18, 2008, from <http://www.drugabuse.gov/infofacts/treatmeth.html>

The Maine State Housing Authority's 2008 *Point in Time Survey* found that 3% of homeless surveyed were veterans. Nationally, 18% of homeless persons are veterans; this would translate to 140 homeless veterans in Maine. The Bureau of Maine Veterans' Services believes that number is low, and estimates that there are at least 200 homeless veterans in the state of Maine, without including those who are staying with friends, sleeping in their car, or living in a tent.²⁵ In Androscoggin County, there are nearly 700 veterans living below the poverty level, of whom two-thirds are disabled. This number is expected to increase in the coming years as more veterans return from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Table SA3. Veterans in Androscoggin County, 2006

| | Veteran | Under poverty | Under poverty and disabled |
|--------------------------|----------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 18 to 34 years | 1,189 | 57 | 57 |
| 35 to 54 years | 4,211 | 397 | 273 |
| 55 to 64 years | 1,987 | 45 | 45 |
| 65 years and over | 4,196 | 190 | 80 |
| Total | 11,583 | 689 | 455 |

Source: US Census, American Community Survey

Finally, people coming out of jail without a plan for reintegration into the community are also more vulnerable to becoming homeless. In 2005, 126 offenders returned from Maine's eight correctional facilities to Androscoggin County. According to the Maine Department of Corrections, "Recidivism is a key issue. A 2003 study of Maine correctional facilities' residents found 81% had prior convictions; 55% of those had more than 5 priors and 31% had 10 or more priors. Over half of offenders admitted into state facilities are incarcerated as reoffenders or revocations of probation, 54% of which were for technical violations."²⁶

D) Services

This section considers services for homeless single adults chronologically: first in the period of prevention, then in the period of crisis, and finally in the period of transition out of homelessness.

²⁵ Bureau of Maine Veterans' Services (personal communication, September 17, 2008).

²⁶ Maine Department of Corrections. (2007). *Prisoner Reentry Initiative Narrative*.

Prevention

General Assistance provided by the cities of Lewiston and Auburn can include money for basic necessities for people who are homeless or near homeless. Assistance is based on need, and first-time applicants must create a plan, including, for example, applying for food stamps or other services; they have to prove they are following the plan to qualify for subsequent help. General Assistance also provides referrals to other services.

According to General Assistance employees, most of the people who apply for General Assistance in Lewiston Auburn are already in crisis. Many are single adults, though the number of families applying for assistance is increasing. Many have mental illness and/or substance abuse issues. Some are coming out of jail with no plan for reintegration into the community. Approximately half of the single adult applicants have an application for disability pending, though approval can take up to 3 years.

Most requests are for housing assistance, others include requests for assistance with electric bills, food, and prescriptions. In 2007, there were 160 no heat calls, and many first-time applicants for heating assistance. The cities anticipate more of those calls this winter.

One of the services General Assistance provides is a "payee" service, helping clients manage their money by holding onto their disability or social security checks for them and giving them money as they need it. This seems to work very well for some individuals but it is not for everyone. Asked about whether having a payee to help them manage their money would be beneficial, the homeless single adult focus group participants said they would not want that.

Crisis

There are two emergency shelters serving homeless single adults in Lewiston Auburn: Hope Haven and St. Martin De Porres.

Hope Haven provides housing, meals, and clothing. The shelter has 30 beds. An outreach caseworker from DHHS drops by once a week to work with clients, helping them set goals and access services. Hope Haven re-evaluates an individual's situation after 30 days to determine whether or not to extend their

stay. For single men, there is a separate rehabilitation program that includes religious study; it can last between 6 months and a year and is intended to help individuals experiencing homelessness transition back into the community.

St. Martin De Porres provides shelter, meals, and one-on-one case management to help individuals access services, meeting with them weekly to review progress towards goals. The shelter has 12 beds, but usually serves only 10 individuals at a time due to staff constraints. There is no time limit, and some individuals stay just a couple of weeks while others stay for a month or two. For safety reasons, St. Martin De Porres requires a referral from a service provider or the police.

Catholic Charities Maine St. Francis Recovery Center provides both short- and long-term substance abuse treatment programs for men over the age of 18. The short-term program, called Extended Shelter, is for early recovery, and includes counseling and 24-hour care. Participants have to have been clean and sober for 7 days to enter—the program does not provide detox. Extended shelter doesn't serve dual diagnosis, so while participants can have co-occurring mental health and substance abuse issues, their mental health issues need to be stable. Extended shelter can last anywhere from 3 to 45 days. After that, some participants are able to move into the Half-way House, where the focus is on long-term treatment and skills for reintegration into the community. However, since each program only has a 16-bed capacity, and the length of stay at the Halfway House is much longer than at the Extended Shelter, many people leaving the Extended Shelter are not able to move into the Halfway House. In 2007, for example, the Extended Shelter treated 178 individuals, while the Halfway House treated 80. The recidivism rate at St. Francis is 20%. The center reports that some people do cycle through all the programs available to them. Long-term success is difficult to gauge because the center cannot follow up with individuals to see how they are doing down the road due to confidentiality concerns.

Transition

Some of those in the single adult focus group who have mental illness have case managers, either through Common Ties or Tri-County Mental Health Services.

Common Ties Shelter Plus Care Program provides rental subsidies for homeless individuals with a disability. The Breaking Free program provides supportive shared housing for individuals with mental illness and substance addiction.

Tedford Housing, which operates emergency shelters and supportive housing in Brunswick and the mid-coast area, hopes to renovate the Franklin School in Auburn to construct 6 single-occupancy rooms of permanent, supportive housing. The proposal has been approved by the Auburn City Council.

The Bureau of Maine Veterans' Services provides several housing programs for homeless veterans around the state, including an 8-bed 2-year transitional program in Biddeford, a 5-bed permanent housing program in Waterville, and a pending 10-bed program for homeless veterans with chronic mental illness and substance abuse issues in Saco. In addition, the bureau received 35 additional housing vouchers that will be distributed to chronically homeless veterans throughout the state in 2008, and will provide case management to those individuals. Finally, the bureau has begun the process to re-develop existing buildings on the Togus VA Medical Center campus in Augusta to provide emergency shelter for homeless veterans.

E) Service Gaps and Issues

There is a perception that the existing emergency shelters have high barriers. Both require a person to not be using drugs or alcohol and be taking their medications if they have a mental illness. St. Martin De Porres requires a referral. Hope Haven has a reputation for giving preference to people who subscribe to its religious teachings, most likely because those who participate in the separate men's rehabilitation program are given more comfortable accommodations.

During the day, homeless single adults can go to the library or the Jubilee Center at the Trinity Church. There are approximately 80 people hanging out at Trinity Church every day, and the atmosphere can be intimidating and is not appropriate for everyone. One service provider suggested that there is a need for a place for people to go during the day where they can work or volunteer, get education or training, and become more a part of the community.

There are long waits for subsidized housing vouchers. AVESTA distributes vouchers from Maine State Housing, and they have a homelessness priority, but

to prove homelessness a person has to have been staying in a shelter. Also, the vouchers from AVESTA can't be used in Lewiston and Auburn, which means that a person has to move out of the city and away from services and employment opportunities. Transportation is an obstacle for many homeless single adults.

There is a need for more supportive housing opportunities. Many of the homeless single adults in Lewiston Auburn struggle with mental illness and/or substance abuse. Catholic Charities Maine St. Francis Recovery Center Halfway House is able to accommodate fewer than half of those coming out of the Extended Shelter treatment program. In addition, St. Francis serves only men, and there is no place to for women with substance abuse issues to go for treatment.

Changes in funding structures mean that funding once given to the agencies for all clients is now allocated for individuals. It is described as a gatekeeper system: a person has to be in the MaineCare system to access services, including case management. Recent restrictions on MaineCare mean that adults without children need to have a diagnosed illness to qualify for MaineCare. Without a diagnosis, a person has no access to services, but a diagnosis may be logistically difficult to get for someone not enrolled in MaineCare: it can be a question of finding a doctor willing to see the person and getting them there.

Finally, despite best efforts, people transitioning from one system to the next can get lost. For example, children leave the youth system when they turn 18, but a childhood diagnosis may no longer qualify them for adult services. Individuals being released from jail often arrive in the community without a plan for re-integration into the community. Individuals leaving mental health facilities may not have the support they need in place when they leave.

VIII. The Cost of Heat

Heating oil prices reached unprecedented levels in the fall of 2008, and there is a lot of concern that many families may not be able to afford to heat their homes this winter if prices stay high. The City of Auburn received 47 no heat calls last year; Lewiston General Assistance reported that they had a lot of families apply for the first-time. With heating costs expected to be even higher, both cities are anticipating even more families to be in need this winter.

The federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides home heating assistance to low-income households. In 2007, Community Concepts, which distributes LIHEAP funds to residents of Oxford and Androscoggin Counties, received more than 8,900 applications for heating assistance, a 10% increase over the prior year. 6,700 of the applicants were eligible to receive funds under the income requirements (\$36,040 for a four-person household, \$23,000 for a 2-person household, and \$17,680 for a one-person household). Of these, 50% lived in Lewiston-Auburn. Seniors in particular are at risk from rising heating oil prices; 50% of those who received LIHEAP are seniors. This year, Community Concepts had already received 1600 applications by the beginning of August. Unfortunately, the assistance only provides about \$400-450, which is just about 100 gallons at current prices. Unable to heat their homes, some households will reduce their living area to one or two rooms, and others may try to keep warm with space heaters and cooking stoves; neither is a safe option. There are 3,600 households over the age of 45 living under poverty in Androscoggin County.

| | 45-64 | 65+ | Total |
|---|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Married-couple family | 307 | 163 | 470 |
| Male householder, no wife present | 0 | 30 | 30 |
| Female householder, no husband present | 212 | 0 | 212 |
| Male householder | 426 | 378 | 804 |
| Female householder | 1,091 | 1,002 | 2,093 |
| Total | 2,036 | 1,573 | 3,609 |
| Source: US Census, American Community Survey | | | |

Finally, there is also concern about landlords closing their buildings for the winter and leaving tenants stranded and homeless. In 2007, of 47 no heat complaints made to the City of Auburn, 8 resulted in buildings being instances where landlords walked away from their buildings and their tenants. 12 units in all were affected, suggesting a very serious situation for both landlords and tenants.

IX. Challenges

This report is an assessment of homelessness need in Lewiston Auburn. It reveals a number of challenges facing the cities with regard to this issue. .

1. **There is a shortage of shelter beds.** Hope Haven report that it turns away half of singles who apply for beds, and more than two-thirds of families. In particular, there are no shelter arrangements exclusively for families.
2. **There is confusion in the voucher program.** Some vouchers can only be used outside of Lewiston and Auburn, some only inside. This is confusing and sometimes burdensome to applicants.
3. **There is exploitation in the world of "couch-surfing."** Thousands of Lewiston and Auburn residents survive by moving from friend to friend, apartment to apartment, couch to couch. They do not show up in the homeless data until they arrive at a shelter, but they are homeless regardless. This is a living situation that invites financial, emotional, and sexual exploitation.
4. **There is a job/incomes problem.** Lewiston and Auburn apartments are in fact considerably cheaper than in the surrounding southern-central Maine region. More rental vouchers are needed in the short run, but what is needed in the long run is for people to have the jobs and income to afford these apartments.

Table C1: Lewiston-Auburn Rental Affordability Comparison, 2007

| | Avg 2-Bdrm Rent | Renter Household Median Income | 2-Bdrm Affordable at Median Income | # Households Unable to Afford Median Rent | % Households Unable to Afford Median Rent |
|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Lewiston-Auburn | \$651 | \$25,749 | \$644 | 7,707 | 50.50% |
| Portland Area | \$913 | \$34,039 | \$851 | 24,197 | 53.30% |
| Maine | \$777 | \$27,645 | \$691 | 83,673 | 55.70% |

Source: MaineHousing

5. **The housing stock is old and in poor condition.** It is a problem that the stock is old and energy-inefficient; that rents are too low to allow

landlords to make needed repairs, yet are too high for many tenants to afford. This is a situation that may lead to the abandonment of apartments by landlords, and at the same time overcrowding by tenants.

6. **Homeless people need help in reintegrating into society.** Homelessness is a shock. Many people arrive in this state because they lack social support and personal organizational skills. If they are simply given a bed for a night, and returned to that world, without any further support or help, the likelihood is that they will be back. Lewiston Auburn needs more transitional housing with living skills education services to help people stabilize medicines, learn budgeting skills, and get job experience.

The opportunity present in Lewiston and Auburn is that there are many partners with the interest, resources, and skills to help. They include:

- Local governments
- State government
- Schools
- United Way
- Business community
- Non-profits and service providers
- Churches
- Landlords
- Federal government

The participation of all will be critical to the effort to end homelessness in Lewiston Auburn. Creating particular strategies for success is the second phase of this study.