

CHAPTER 9

PROGRAM USE AND SERVICE NEEDS

Highlights: Homeless Clients¹

- The programs that homeless clients report using most frequently in the past week are: soup kitchens (31 percent), emergency shelters (28 percent), and transitional housing programs (26 percent). Lifetime use each of these programs increases to 62, 65, and 40 percent, respectively.
- The services received by the most homeless clients in the past 30 days are: assistance getting clothing (28 percent), transportation assistance (25 percent), and assistance with getting financial or other public benefits (17 percent). However, 40 percent say that they did not receive any of 12 specified services in the past 30 days.
- Help finding a job (42 percent), assistance finding affordable housing (38 percent), and assistance with rent, mortgage or utilities for securing permanent housing (30 percent) are the most pressing needs reported by homeless clients.
- Homeless clients say that the most important barriers preventing their exit from homelessness are insufficient income (30 percent) and lack of job/employment (24 percent).
- 71 percent of homeless clients in families and 54 percent of single homeless clients report using some type of shelter program (including emergency, transitional and voucher). By contrast, only 11 percent of homeless clients in families report using a soup kitchen compared to 35 percent of single homeless clients.

Highlights: Currently and Formerly Homeless Clients and Other Service Users Compared

- In the week before being interviewed, 20 percent of currently homeless clients and 44 percent of formerly homeless clients report using no homeless assistance programs other than the one where they were interviewed. This is much less than the 65 percent of other service users under 65 and the 75 percent of other service users 65 and over who report the same pattern. In addition, 31 and 35 percent of currently and formerly homeless

¹ Unless noted specifically in the text, all comparisons are statistically significant at $p = .10$ or better, and all percentages presented by themselves have a 90 percent confidence interval no larger than ± 4 percentage points. A confidence interval of ± 4 percentage points means that if the reported percent is 60, 60 is the estimate of the value and the probability is 90 percent that the value falls between 56 and 64 percent. Confidence intervals greater than ± 4 percentage points will be noted in a footnote as: 90% C.I. = $\pm X$ percentage points.

clients, respectively, report using soup kitchens in the last week, compared to only 8 percent of other service users age 65 and older.

- When asked about the three things they “need the most help with now,” currently homeless clients stand out as the different group. They are *less* likely to report needing assistance getting food than either formerly homeless clients or other service users under age 65 (17 versus 32 to 33 percent) and more frequently report needing help finding a job (42 versus 27 to 30 percent), or assistance finding affordable housing (38 versus 17 to 21 percent).

INTRODUCTION

When planners and policy makers sit down to decide what services are most needed in a community, what services are already in adequate supply, and what gaps need to be filled, a piece of information they often have great difficulty obtaining is the perspective of the potential clients. Rarely do communities ask clients what services they use or what services they need. It is much more common to ask program staff for their opinions as to client needs, and to use the records of any programs that keep records as an indicator of use. NSHAPC offers the chance to rectify this situation with national data. Although these data still will not give local planners local information, they will provide a sense of which programs and services clients actually use and a sense of differences in client and staff perceptions that planners can use when making decisions about the service structure needed for their community.

HOMELESS CLIENTS

The majority of homeless clients report using homeless assistance programs and services recently as well as in their lifetimes. However, they still report numerous pressing needs that prevent them from getting out of homelessness.

Program Use

The survey asked clients about program and service use in several ways. First, it focused on the types of homeless assistance programs included in the NSHAPC program universe for client interviews (emergency shelters, transitional and permanent housing programs, vouchers for shelter, migrant housing, soup kitchens, food pantries, mobile food programs, outreach programs, and drop-in centers). It asked clients whether they had used each of these programs within the seven days preceding the interview and, if so, the number of days they had done so. Clients who had not used a given program within the week prior to the interview were asked if they had *ever* used that type of program and if so, how long ago.

Clients' use of various homeless assistance programs is reported in table 9.1. Soup kitchens are the most commonly used program type—visited by 31 percent of homeless clients within the week prior to interview. The two programs with the next highest frequency of use among homeless clients within the past week are housing programs: 28 percent used an emergency shelter and 26 percent used a transitional housing program. The remaining programs each served less than 10 percent of all homeless clients within the week prior to interview: drop-in centers (9 percent), outreach (7 percent), food pantries (5 percent), mobile food (5 percent), permanent housing (3 percent), and shelter voucher programs (1 percent).

When the day of the interview is included with the past seven days, the proportion of clients using a shelter program increases to 73 percent. Similarly, the percentage of clients using a soup kitchen rises to 40 percent. Additionally, 31 percent of individuals report using streets as a source of shelter—streets include automobiles or abandoned vehicles.

In addition to the four-way break discussed above, clients' use of shelter programs, food programs, and other programs (including permanent housing, drop-in, outreach, and other) programs on the day of their interview and the past seven days is detailed in a Venn diagram (figure 9.1). Forty-three percent of homeless clients report using only a shelter in this time period, while 19 percent used only food programs and 5 percent used only other programs. Twenty-one percent of homeless clients used shelter and food programs on the day of the interview and during the week prior to the interview. Only 3 percent of homeless clients reported using all three of these programs in the specified time period.

Lifetime Use

The proportion of homeless clients who report having *ever* used various programs or services is obviously much higher than the proportion who report use in the prior week (figure 9.2). Almost two-thirds of all homeless clients have ever used an emergency shelter (65 percent) or a soup kitchen (62 percent). Transitional housing programs and food pantries are the third most commonly used programs, with 40 percent of all homeless clients having used each of them at some point in their lives. Lifetime use of other programs is also quite high: drop-in centers (26 percent); mobile food programs (21 percent); outreach (17 percent); shelter vouchers (15 percent); and permanent housing programs (10 percent). Only 3 percent of homeless clients report ever sleeping at a migrant workers' camp.

Use of Services

Clients access a variety of homeless assistance services besides the assistance programs discussed above. Some of these homeless assistance services are offered at NSHAPC programs, while others are provided at facilities and programs that do not have a specific focus on serving homeless people. For example, data presented in Chapter 6 show that more homeless clients report receiving health care in the last year at a hospital or community health clinic than report

Table 9.1
Program and Service Use, by Homeless Status

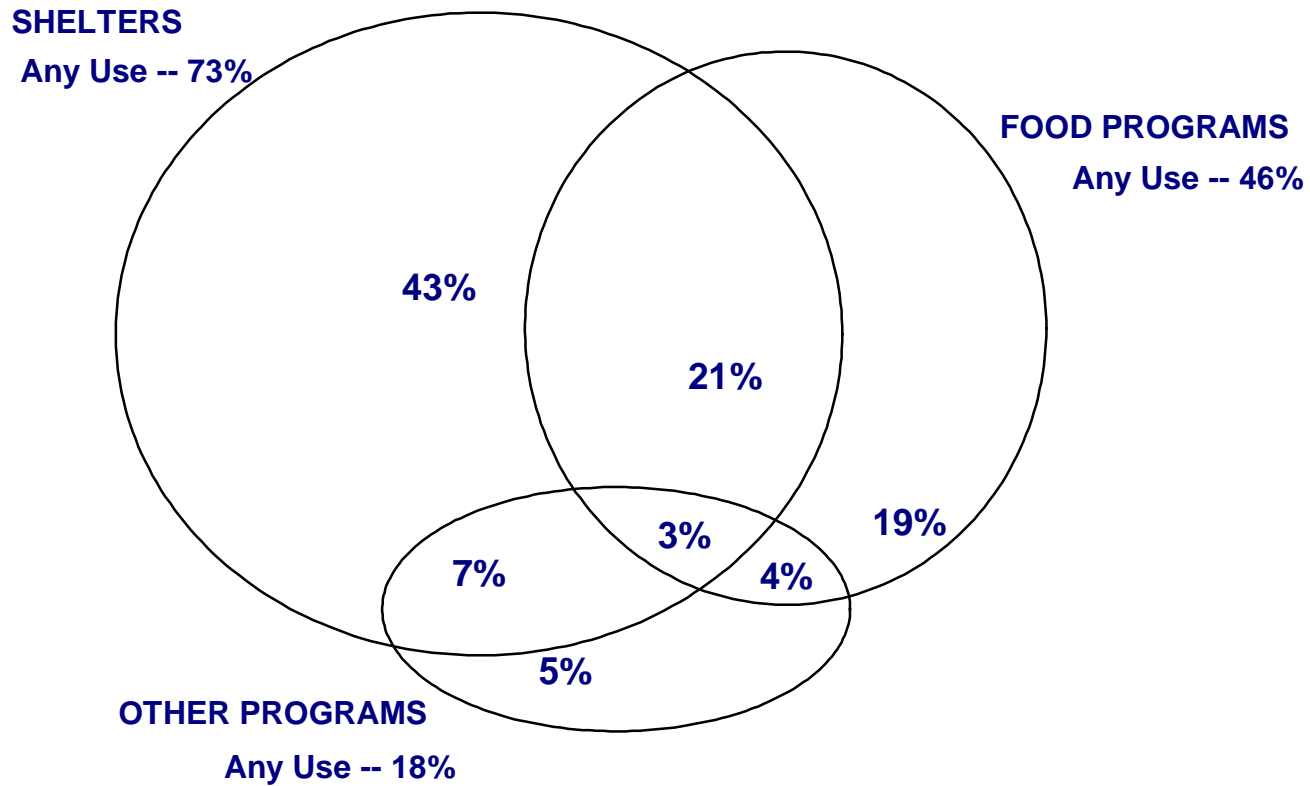
	Homeless Status			Other Service Users, by Age Category	
	Currently Homeless Clients (N=2938)	Formerly Homeless Clients (N=677)	Other Service Users (N=518)	Other Service Users Under Age 65 (N=410)	Other Service Users 65 and Older (N=108)
Type of Program Use Within Last Seven Days or on Day of Interview					
Street ^a	32(%)	0(%)	0(%)	0(%)	0(%)
Shelter ^b	73	1	2	3	0
Soup Kitchen ^c	40	47	44	41	53
Other ^d	27	69	63	65	57
Programs Used Within Last Week					
Emergency shelter	28	0	0	0	0
Transitional housing	26	0	0	0	0
Shelter ^e	3	0	0	0	0
Permanent housing	3	11	0	0	0
Shelter vouchers	1	0	0	0	0
Soup kitchen	31	35	19	23	8
Food pantry	5	10	6	8	2
Mobile food	5	6	+	6	15
Outreach	7	3	1	1	*
Drop-in center	9	10	5	5	4
Programs Ever Used					
Emergency shelter	65	65	0	0	0
Transitional housing	40	23	0	0	0
Permanent housing	10	19	0	0	0
Shelter vouchers	15	18	0	0	0
Soup kitchen	62	74	32	37	19
Food pantry	40	59	50	54	41
Mobile food program	21	18	17	13	28
Outreach	17	14	9	9	8
Drop-in center	26	27	11	11	9
In the Last 30 days, Received Other Kinds of Assistance					
Assistance getting clothing	28	18	7	8	4
Transportation assistance	25	19	14	15	13
Help with legal issues	6	5	3	3	2
Help with domestic violence problems	5	3	2	3	1
Help with managing money	7	9	5	4	9
Assistance with getting financial or other public benefits (e.g., food stamps, AFDC, SSI, Section 8)	17	14	9	11	4
Help finding a job	11	10	6	8	1
Job training	8	6	5	6	1
Assistance with finding affordable housing	9	4	1	1	1
Assistance with rent, mortgage, or utilities for securing permanent housing	8	12	7	8	4
Help with parenting	3	1	1	2	0
Help to resolve problems with the landlord or with persons with whom you are living	*	3	*	*	0
None of the above	40	51	68	65	77

Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data.

* Denotes values that are less than .5 percent but greater than 0.

^aThis includes clients who reported staying in the streets or other places not meant for human habitation (e.g., abandoned buildings, vehicles) on the day of the NSHAPC interview or during the seven days prior to the interview. ^bThis includes clients who reported staying in an emergency shelter, transitional housing program or voucher program on the day of the NSHAPC interview or during the seven days prior to the interview, or clients who were selected for the study at one of these programs. ^cThis includes clients who reported using a soup kitchen during the seven days prior to the interview, or clients who were found and interviewed for NSHAPC at a soup kitchen. ^dThis includes clients who reported using an other program (food pantry, mobile food, outreach, drop-in center and/or permanent housing) during the seven days prior to the interview, or clients who were found and interviewed for NSHAPC at one of these programs. ^eThis includes clients who did not report staying in an emergency shelter, transitional shelter, permanent housing, or voucher program over the last seven days but said yes to question 6.6e that they received food over the last seven days in the shelter where they live.

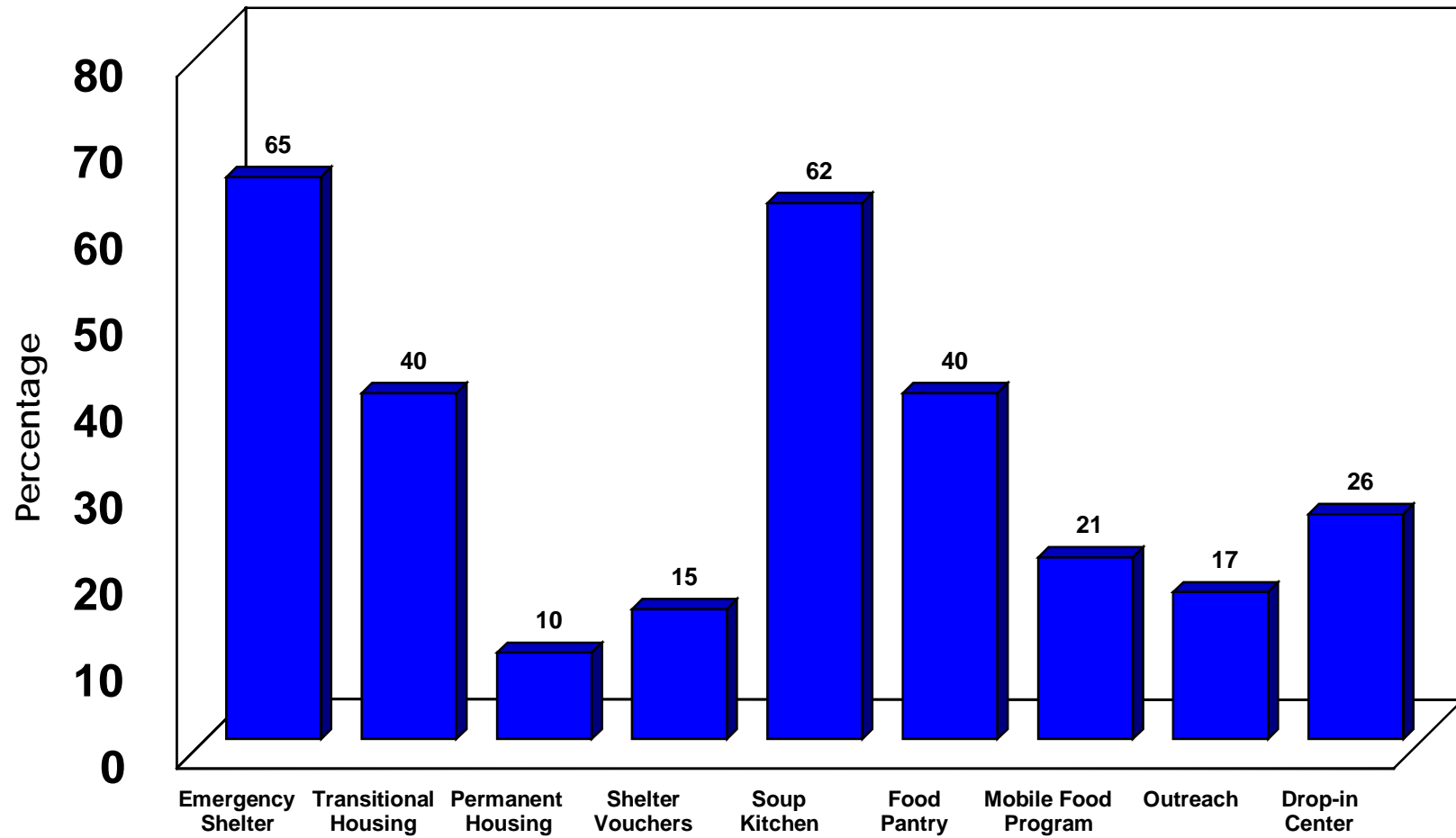
Figure 9.1
**Overlap of Program Types Used by Homeless Clients
 On Day of Interview and Previous 7 Days***



Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data. * Respondent used option at least once during the 8 days including the day of the interview and the 7 previous days including being selected for the sample at a relevant program. "Shelter" = emergency shelters, transitional housing, and voucher programs; "Food Programs" = soup kitchens, food banks, mobile food; "Other Programs" = permanent housing, outreach programs, drop-in centers, and other programs.

Figure 9.2

Homeless Clients' Use of Homeless Assistance Programs in Their Lifetime



Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data.

receiving health care at a shelter, soup kitchen, or other program for homeless clients during the same time period. Further, one should understand that even if a homeless client accessed only one program over the past week, the client might have received a variety of services at this program. Data in Chapter 7 show that over one-half of homeless clients who report using a shelter program within the last week also say they receive food from their shelter, and Chapter 16 discusses the wide array of services offered at the various types of NSHAPC programs included in this study's telephone and mail surveys.

This section discusses homeless clients' reports of other services they receive. Homeless clients may have received these services when they used a soup kitchen or shelter, or they may have obtained the service at a non-homeless specific program.

Clients were asked to report their use of 12 different types of assistance over the last 30 days: assistance getting clothing, transportation assistance, help with legal issues, help with domestic violence problems, help with managing money, assistance with getting financial or other public benefits, help finding a job, job training, assistance with finding affordable housing, assistance with rent, mortgage, or utilities for securing permanent housing, help with parenting, and help to resolve problems with the landlord or with persons with whom the client is living. Forty percent of homeless clients report that they did not use *any* of these services over the past 30 days (figure 9.3). The remaining 60 percent of homeless clients report receiving assistance getting clothing (28 percent of all homeless clients), transportation assistance (25 percent), and assistance with getting financial or other public benefits (17 percent). Some homeless clients report receiving help finding a job (11 percent) and assistance with job training (8 percent).

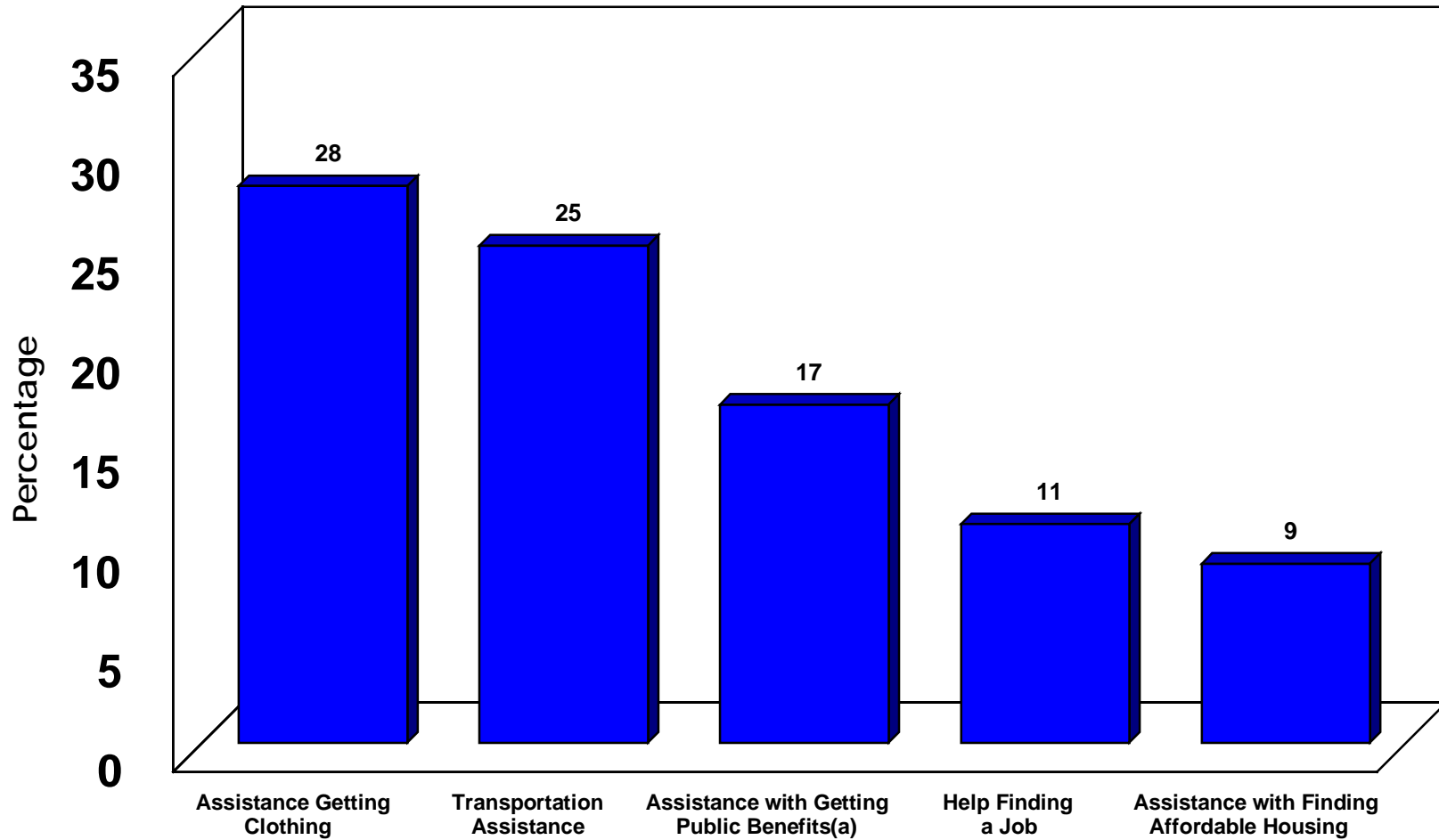
Homeless clients also received housing-related services over the past 30 days. Nine percent report receiving assistance with finding affordable housing; 8 percent with rent, mortgage or utilities for securing permanent housing; and 7 percent with managing money. Finally, homeless clients report receiving help with: legal issues (6 percent), domestic violence problems (5 percent), and parenting (3 percent). This last figure represents 16 percent of homeless clients in families.

Service Needs

In the final questions of the interview, the survey asked clients about their current needs (table 9.2). Each client was presented with a list of various needs and asked to select "the three things you need the most help with now." Of the comprehensive list of 27 different needs and benefits, the most commonly named is help finding a job, identified by 42 percent of homeless clients (table 9.2). Assistance with finding affordable housing is the next most common need (38 percent), followed by assistance with rent, mortgage, or utilities for securing permanent housing (30 percent). Twenty-four percent of homeless clients say they need something other than the items listed (often the needs they name are not for services but for "peace of mind," "a good man/woman," "my health," and the like).

Figure 9.3

Most Common Types of Assistance Received by Homeless Clients in Last 30 Days



Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data. a Including food stamps, AFDC, SSI, or Section 8 housing assistance.

Table 9.2
Reported Service Needs, by Homeless Status

	Homeless Status			Other Service Users, by Age Category	
	Currently Homeless Clients (N=2938)	Formerly Homeless Clients (N=677)	Other Service Users (N=518)	Other Service Users Under Age 65 (N=410)	Other Service Users 65 and Older (N=108)
"What Are the (three) Things You Need the Most Now?"					
Help finding a job	42(%)	30(%)	22	27(%)	8(%)
Assistance with finding affordable housing	38	21	14	17	5
Assistance with rent, mortgage or utilities for securing permanent housing	30	15	5	7	1
Other	24	25	31	24	46
Transportation assistance	19	17	14	15	13
Assistance getting clothing	18	25	14	19	2
Assistance getting food	17	32	33	31	37
Job training	13	15	13	15	6
Medical care for yourself	13	19	13	17	3
A GED or other education	11	10	13	11	19
Dental care for yourself	11	16	24	29	11
Assistance with getting financial or other public benefits (e.g., food stamps)	9	14	12	8	21
Treatment for use of alcohol or other drugs	9	4	*	*	0
Services for emotional or psychiatric problems	6	6	1	2	1
Detoxification from alcohol or other drugs	5	3	2	3	0
Assistance with rent, mortgage or utilities for current residence	4	4	6	6	6
Help finding out availability of resources	4	4	6	7	2
Help managing money	4	10	10	10	11
Help with legal issues	4	5	6	9	1
Money, cash, etc.	3	2	2	2	*
Child care services and payment of costs	2	1	1	2	0
Help with parenting	2	2	1	1	0
Ability to read and write	1	1	2	1	7
Dental care for your children	1	1	2	2	2
Help getting or managing medications	1	2	3	3	2
Help with domestic violence problems	1	*	*	*	0
Medical care for your children	1	2	1	2	0
Help to resolve problems with landlords or persons with whom you are living	*	1	*	*	0
Help with enrolling children in school	*	1	*	*	0
What Client Needs the Most Help with Now (one thing)					
Assistance getting food	3	9	18	14	29
Transportation assistance	6	3	3	3	4
Help finding a job	19	14	13	16	7
Assistance with finding affordable housing	16	8	5	5	2
Securing permanent housing	15	6	1	2	*
Other	13	14	25	18	42
Anything else ^a	28	46	35	42	16
Single Most Important Thing Preventing Exit From Homelessness					
Insufficient income	30	Not Applicable		Not Applicable	
Lack of suitable housing	11				
Lack of job/employment	24				
Insufficient education/skills/training	3				
Addictions to alcohol or drug	9				
Physical condition or disability	3				
Mental health condition	2				
Family or domestic instability	1				
Insufficient services or lack of information about available services	1				
Other	16				

Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data.

* Denotes values that are less than .5 percent but greater than 0.

^aIncludes: assistance getting clothing, help with legal issues, help with parenting, child care services and payment of costs, help with enrolling children in school, help with domestic violence problems, ability to read and write, a GED or other education, help with managing money, assistance getting financial or other public benefits, job training, assistance with rent, mortgage, or utilities for current residence, help to resolve problems with landlord or roommates, medical care for yourself, medical care for your children, dental care for yourself, dental care for your children, help getting or managing medications, detoxification from alcohol or other drugs, treatment for use of alcohol or other drugs, services for emotional or psychiatric problems, help with finding out availability of resources, and money, cash, etc.

Almost one-fifth of homeless clients need transportation assistance, and 18 percent report needing assistance getting clothing. Assistance getting food is reported by 17 percent of homeless clients. The next most common needs of homeless clients are job training (13 percent), medical care for themselves (13 percent), a GED or other education (11 percent), dental care for themselves (11 percent), assistance with getting financial or other public benefits (9 percent), and treatment for use of alcohol or other drugs (9 percent). No more than 6 percent of homeless clients say they need any of the remaining fifteen items on the list.

After reporting the three things they need the most help with now, homeless clients were asked to identify which of these three was the single most important thing they needed. The top five responses are the same as those listed above (figure 9.4). However, the ranking of these responses changed slightly. When asked to choose the one thing they need the most help with now, the single most common response among homeless clients is help finding a job (19 percent), followed by assistance with finding affordable housing (16 percent), assistance with rent, mortgage, or utilities for securing permanent housing (15 percent), and transportation assistance (6 percent). However, 41 percent of homeless clients report that one of the other 23 possible items is the one thing they need the most help with now (none was selected by more than 5 percent of homeless clients).

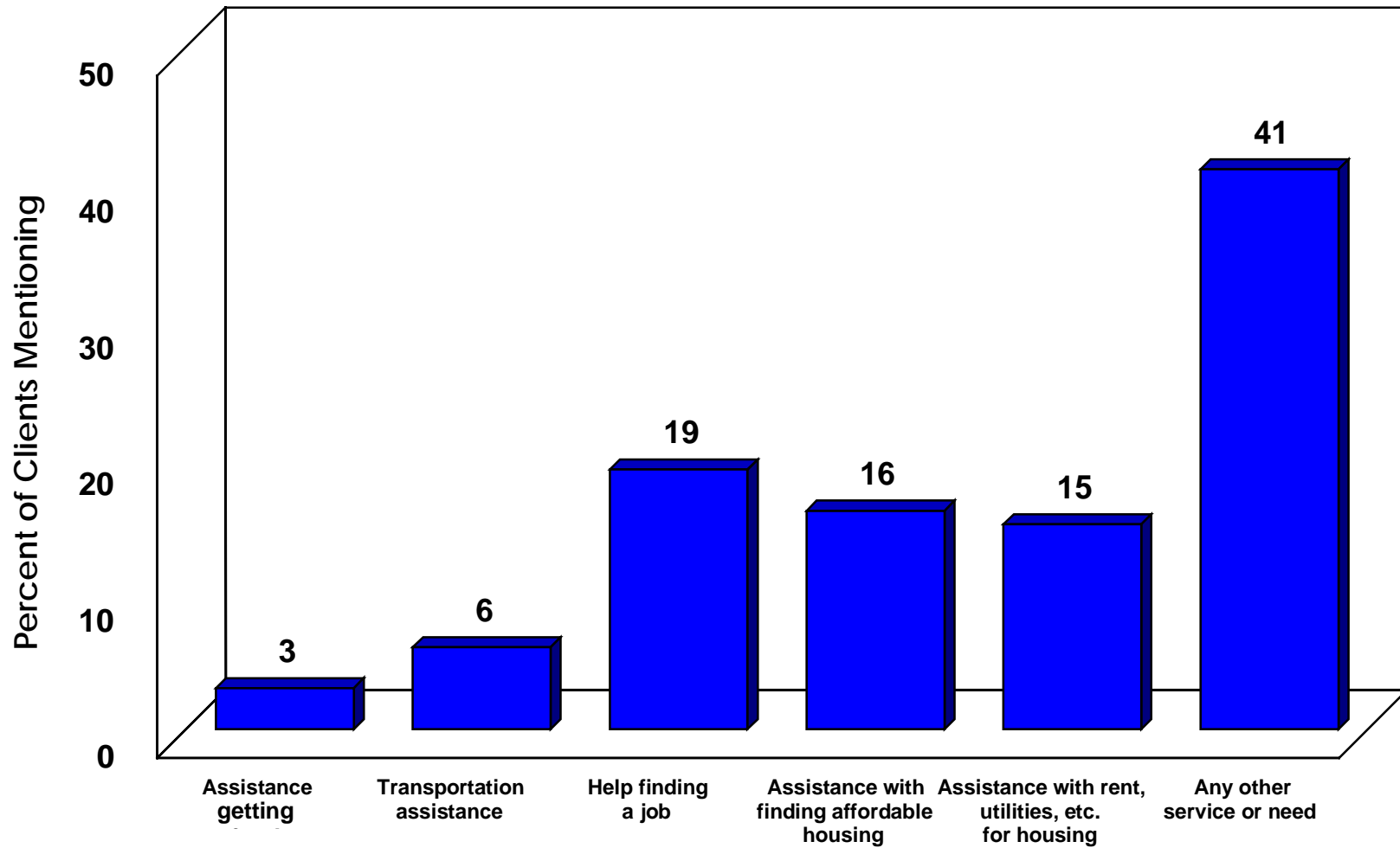
Comparing Client and Program Staff Perceptions of Client Needs

Many people are also interested in understanding whether the clients of homeless assistance programs and the people who serve them through these programs have the same views of what clients need. As discussed in Chapter 16, NSHAPC asked homeless assistance providers for their perceptions of the proportion (all, most, some or none) of their homeless clients who needed any of 59 specific services. Direct comparison of the client and program staff perceptions of service need is not possible. Clients and program staff were not asked about the same sets of services, and the possible response categories were not strictly comparable. In addition, homeless clients were only asked to name their top three needs, whereas program staff offered their perceptions of client need levels for all 59 specific services on the mail survey.

Despite these limitations, similarities can be found between client and program staff perceptions of client needs, but the two groups differ on what they see as the most important need. Both groups report that assistance with housing and food are very important needs. However, homeless clients are most likely to report they need help finding a job whereas program staff are likely to say that most of their clients need services in the areas of case management and life skills (e.g., budgeting, household skills, parenting training). This large discrepancy in needs might be explained if one assumes that homeless clients are responding to their immediate “concrete” needs, which they think will help them get out of homelessness. By contrast, program staff are probably responding to the long-term needs of homeless clients. From their previous experiences working with homeless individuals, program staff might believe that their clients cannot maintain employment or housing without life skills training or case management services.

Figure 9.4

Things that Homeless Clients Need Most Help With at Time of Interview



Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data.

Therefore, it could be inferred that the two groups are reporting the same needs, but have different approaches to meeting the needs and remaining housed.

Most Important Barrier to Leaving Homelessness

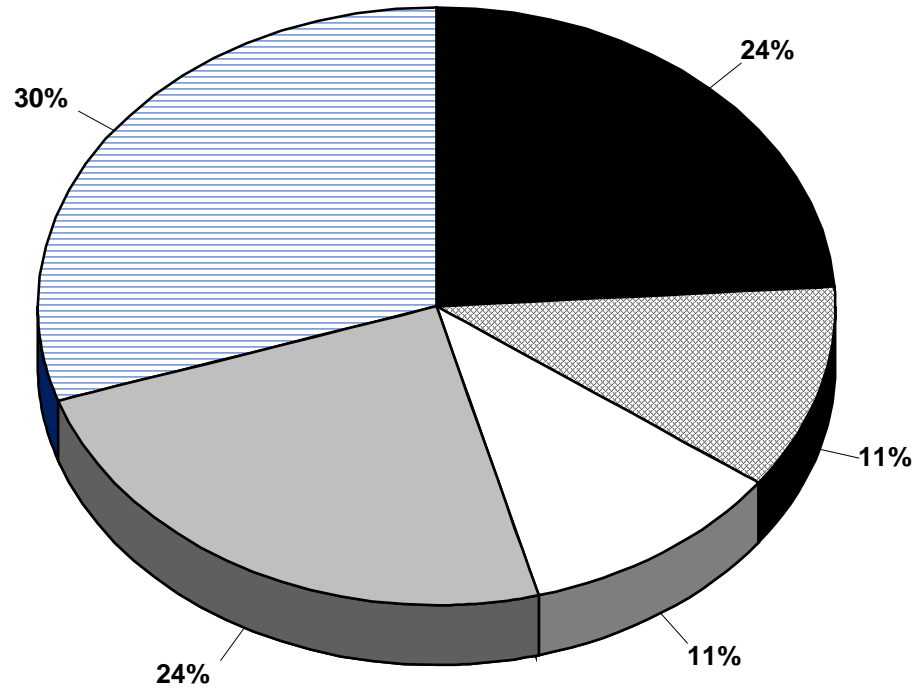
The final question on the survey asked homeless clients what is the single most important thing keeping them from leaving homelessness. Thirty percent report that their biggest roadblock is insufficient income, another 24 percent identify lack of a job or employment (figure 9.5). Additionally, 11 percent of homeless clients say lack of suitable housing is their biggest barrier to leaving homelessness, and 11 percent say it is an ADM problem (9 percent, addiction(s) to alcohol or drugs; 2 percent, mental health problem). No more than 3 percent of homeless clients report any of the remaining factors as the most important one keeping them from leaving homelessness, including insufficient education, skills, training or housing; physical condition or problems; family or domestic instability; or insufficient services or lack of information about available services. Together with the 16 percent identify some “other” factor as the single most important barrier to leaving homelessness, these smaller categories comprise 24 percent who cite an “other” barrier.

Differences by Family Status

Homeless clients in families report different patterns of program use and service needs than do single homeless clients (Appendix tables 9.A1 and 9.A2). Though homeless clients in families report higher rates of use of shelters and food pantries over the past week and in their lifetime, they report lower use of soup kitchens, mobile food programs, and drop-in centers. In the 30 days before being interviewed, a larger proportion of homeless clients in families report receiving at least one of the 12 surveyed services. Looking at what services or assistance are most needed right now and what is keeping them homeless, the two family status groups differ greatly. Those clients in families are more likely to report needing help with education and job training, whereas single homeless clients are more likely to identify addiction(s) to alcohol or drugs as keeping them homeless.

Program Use. Compared to single homeless clients, a greater share of homeless clients in families report using some type of shelter program over the last week (71 versus 54 percent). By contrast, only 11 percent of homeless clients in families report using a soup kitchen program compared with 35 percent of single homeless clients.

Figure 9.5
Most Important Thing Preventing Exit from Homelessness Among Homeless Clients



Biggest Factor in Preventing Client's Exit from Homelessness
■ Insufficient income ■ Lack of job/employment □ Lack of suitable housing ■ Mental health, alcohol and/or drug problems ■ Other

Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data. Note: Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Considering lifetime program use, homeless clients in families and single homeless clients report similar rates of use of emergency shelters (69² and 64 percent, respectively) and transitional housing programs (46³ and 39 percent, respectively). As with current use, homeless clients in families report noticeably lower lifetime use of soup kitchens compared to single homeless clients (40 versus 66 percent). In addition, they are less likely to have used mobile food programs (13 versus 23 percent) and drop-in centers (18 versus 28 percent). However, 63 percent of homeless clients in families report using a food pantry in their lifetime, compared to 36 percent of single homeless clients.

Use of Services. In the last 30 days, 39 percent of homeless clients in families report receiving assistance getting clothing, while only 26 percent of single homeless clients report receiving it. Homeless clients in families are also more likely to have received help with domestic violence problems (13 compared to 3 percent) and assistance with finding affordable housing (20 compared to 7 percent) than have single homeless clients. As expected, receiving help with parenting is another point of difference between the two groups: 16 percent of homeless clients in families received this type of help in the past 30 days, while only 1 percent of single homeless clients did. Finally, homeless clients in families are more likely than single homeless clients to report receiving at least one of the twelve services (75 versus 57 percent).

Service Needs. In identifying the three things that they need the most now, homeless clients in families and single homeless clients did not differ except in a few respects. The former group reports that they need help with a GED or other education more frequently (25 versus 9 percent) and they are more likely to identify job training (21 versus 12 percent), as one of their three top needs. They are also less likely than single homeless clients to report dental care for themselves as one of their top three needs (5 versus 12 percent).

Most Important Barrier to Leaving Homelessness. A very large proportion of homeless clients in families identify insufficient income (43 percent) as the single most important thing preventing their exit from homelessness, compared to only 27 percent of single homeless clients. They are also more likely to report lack of suitable housing as the most important barrier (21 versus 10 percent). By contrast, a larger proportion of single homeless clients report insufficient education, skills, or training (26 versus 14 percent) or addiction(s) to alcohol or drugs (10 versus less than 1 percent) as the biggest barriers to leaving homelessness.

² 90% C.I.= ± 7 percentage points.

³ 90% C.I.= ± 8 percentage points.

Differences by Past-Month Alcohol, Drug, or Mental Health Problems

Homeless clients with and without alcohol, drug, or mental health (ADM) problems in the past month report similar current use of programs and services. However, there are differences in lifetime use of programs, service needs, and reasons for remaining homeless. Homeless clients with past-month ADM problems report higher lifetime use of soup kitchens, and frequently report treatment for alcohol or drugs as one of their biggest needs right now. In addition, addiction(s) to alcohol or drugs is one of the most commonly reported barriers to leaving homelessness.

Program Use. Differences in program use over the past week between homeless clients with and without past-month ADM problems are minimal. Over their lifetime, however, there are variations in program use. Homeless clients with ADM problems are more likely than those without such problems to report using soup kitchens (68 versus 51 percent).

Use of Services and Needs. A very similar proportion of homeless clients with and without past-month ADM problems report receiving at least one of various services over the past 30 days. However, differences exist in service needs. In identifying the three things that they need the most now, homeless clients with past-month ADM problems are more likely than those without such problems to identify a need for treatment for use of alcohol or other drugs (13 versus 1 percent).

Most Important Barrier to Leaving Homelessness. Differences between these two groups are also apparent when examining barriers to leaving homelessness. Thirteen percent of homeless clients with ADM problems identify addiction(s) to alcohol or drugs as the single most important thing preventing them from leaving homelessness, but no homeless clients without ADM problems do so.⁴ By contrast, homeless clients without such problems are more likely those who have them to report lack of job or employment (34 versus 20 percent) as the most important barrier to leaving homelessness.

Differences by Race/Ethnicity

Program use and service needs vary considerably by racial/ethnic group (Appendix tables 9.A1 and 9.A2).

Program Use. Comparing program use in the past week across racial/ethnic groups illustrates some interesting differences. Homeless Native American clients report lower use of transitional housing than do other homeless clients (11 percent, compared to 24 to 32 percent). Also, 50

⁴ This was a criterion for classifying someone as having a past-month ADM problem.

percent of homeless Native American clients report using soup kitchens in the past week, compared to only 26 to 30 percent of other homeless clients.

Overall lifetime use of homeless assistance programs is very similar by the race/ethnicity of clients. However, differences can be found for individual programs. For example, 19 percent of white non-Hispanic homeless clients have used a shelter voucher program compared to 7 percent of homeless Native American clients. Also, homeless Hispanic clients are less likely to report using a soup kitchen in their lifetime than homeless Native American and black non-Hispanic clients (50 versus 65 and 67 percent, respectively). Food pantry use varies across all four groups, with 47 percent of white non-Hispanics, 37 percent of black non-Hispanics, and 26 percent of Native Americans reporting that they ever used one. Finally, homeless Native American clients report using outreach programs more frequently in their lifetimes than the homeless clients sample as a whole: 31 percent, compared to 17 percent overall.

Use of Services. Compared to other homeless clients, Native American homeless clients are far less likely to report receiving any of the 12 surveyed services (59 to 65 versus 30 percent). Very few differences are apparent when looking at the service use of the three other homeless race/ethnic groups. White non-Hispanic homeless clients are more likely to report assistance getting clothing (34 versus 23 to 27 percent).

Service Needs. Looking at the three things most needed by homeless clients across race/ethnic groups reveals a number of variations. The largest differences exist when studying need for assistance with clothing, food, transportation, employment, and affordable housing. Hispanic homeless clients are more likely than Native Americans to report needing assistance with food (22 versus 11 percent). Also, 31 percent of homeless Hispanic clients report requiring assistance in obtaining clothing compared to 13 to 21 percent of other homeless clients. Homeless Native American clients are more likely to identify transportation assistance (37 versus 15 to 21 percent) as one of their biggest needs. Finally, needing assistance to find affordable housing varies across all groups, from a high of 44 percent of homeless black non-Hispanic clients to a low of 26 percent of Hispanic homeless clients.

Most Important Barrier to Leaving Homelessness. Responses do not vary considerably across race/ethnic groups when homeless clients are asked what is the single most important thing preventing their exit from homelessness. Hispanic homeless clients are less likely than black non-Hispanic homeless clients to identify lack of suitable housing (6 versus 13 percent).

CURRENTLY AND FORMERLY HOMELESS CLIENTS AND OTHER SERVICE USERS COMPARED

Patterns of program use and service needs vary by homeless status (tables 9.1 and 9.2).⁵ This should not come as a surprise since the criteria used to determine clients' homeless status included the use of certain homeless assistance programs.

Program Use

Self-reported use of at least one homeless assistance program during the week before interview varies considerably by a client's homelessness status. While the vast majority of currently homeless clients report using a shelter in the past seven days, including the day of the interview, by definition no formerly homeless clients or other service users did so. Instead, formerly homeless clients and both age groups of other service users are more likely to have used some "other" program which includes food pantries, mobile food, and outreach programs (57 to 69 percent versus 27 percent of currently homeless clients).

When the day of the interview is not included with the past seven days, the program use distribution presents some additional interesting similarities and differences. Other service users 65 years of age and older are less likely than any other group of clients to have used a soup kitchen in the last week. They were much more likely to have gone to a soup kitchen on the day of the interview or in the past seven days. Use of permanent housing programs in the past week is more common among formerly homeless clients than among currently homeless clients (11 versus 3 percent).

Clients also reported whether they had ever used any of ten types of programs in their lifetime. Other service users are least likely to report using homeless assistance programs in their lifetime (table 9.1). A similar proportion of currently and formerly homeless clients report lifetime use of mobile food programs (21 and 18 percent), outreach programs (17 and 14 percent), and drop-in centers (26 and 27 percent). In addition, lifetime use of emergency shelter programs is just as common for currently and formerly homeless clients (65⁶ percent). However, transitional shelter program use is more likely among currently homeless clients (40 versus 23 percent). Soup kitchen and food pantry use varies across all four groups of clients. Formerly homeless clients are the most likely clients to indicate lifetime use of soup kitchens (74 versus 19 to 62 percent).

⁵ See page 2-6 for the reasons why the group of other service users is split into two groups by age for textual discussions.

⁶ 90% C.I. = ± 5 percentage points for formerly homeless clients.

Use of Services

The proportion of clients receiving any of the 12 surveyed services varies by homeless status, with currently homeless clients most likely to receive assistance and other service users 65 years of age and older least likely to do so. Currently homeless clients are the most likely to have received at least one of the 12 surveyed services in the past 30 days (60 versus 33 to 49 percent), while both groups of other service users are the least likely to have done so (65 and 77 versus 40 to 51 percent).

Service Needs

Examining the three things clients need most now by homelessness status reveals some interesting variations. Needing help finding a job is most common among currently homeless clients, with 42 percent reporting this compared to 8 to 30 percent of all other clients. Currently homeless clients also indicate more often that they need assistance to find affordable housing (38 versus 5 to 21 percent), and with rent, mortgage, or utilities for securing permanent housing (30 versus 1 to 15 percent). By contrast, needing assistance with food is more common among formerly homeless clients and other service users age 64 and younger. Seventeen percent of currently homeless clients report they need assistance getting food, compared to 32 percent of formerly homeless clients, and 31 percent of other service users 64 years of age and younger. Other service users 65 and older are the least likely to need clothing assistance (2 versus 18 to 25 percent), while other service users under age 65 are the most likely to need dental care for themselves (29 versus 11 to 16 percent).

Appendix Table 9.A1
Program and Service Use, by Standard Groupings

	All Homeless Clients (N=2938)	Family Status		ADM, Past Month@		Race/Ethnicity			
		Clients in Families (N=465)	Single Clients (N=2473)	With ADM (N=1826)	Without ADM (N=1112)	White Non-Hispanic (N=1176)	Black Non-Hispanic (N=1275)	Hispanic (N=335)	Native American (N=106)
Type of Program Use Within Last Seven Days or on Day of Interview									
Street ^a	32(%)	6(%)	36(%)	35(%)	24(%)	31(%)	30(%)	39(%)	30(%)
Shelter ^b	73	83	72	69	81	74	71	74	79
Soup Kitchen ^c	40	16	44	40	40	37	39	48	50
Other ^d	27	26	27	30	21	23	30	28	29
Programs Used Within Last Week									
Emergency shelter	28	33	27	26	31	27	25	33	34
Transitional housing	26	39	24	27	24	24	29	32	11
Shelter ^e	3	*	4	2	6	2	2	1	23
Permanent housing	3	1	3	4	1	2	5	4	0
Shelter vouchers	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	*	*
Soup kitchen	31	11	35	31	31	30	30	26	50
Food pantry	5	9	4	4	6	4	5	8	4
Mobile food	5	1	6	5	5	4	5	8	4
Outreach	7	5	8	8	5	7	5	8	13
Drop-in center	9	3	10	9	10	11	8	8	8
Programs Ever Used									
Emergency shelter	65	69	64	67	60	64	65	67	63
Transitional housing	40	46	39	42	36	44	39	36	32
Permanent housing	10	9	10	11	8	11	10	7	6
Shelter vouchers	15	18	15	14	18	19	15	13	7
Soup kitchen	62	40	66	68	51	60	67	50	65
Food pantry	40	63	36	42	35	47	37	35	26
Mobile food program	21	13	23	24	16	19	24	20	19
Outreach	17	12	18	20	10	16	13	23	31
Drop-in center	26	18	28	29	21	29	25	26	17
In the Last 30 days, Received Other Kinds of Assistance									
Assistance getting clothing	28	39	26	27	30	34	27	23	11
Transportation assistance	25	30	24	26	22	25	26	32	11
Help with legal issues	6	6	5	6	4	6	6	5	1
Help with domestic violence problems	5	13	3	5	5	5	6	5	1
Help with managing money	7	8	7	8	5	6	7	9	7
Assistance with getting financial or other public benefits (e.g, food stamps, AFDC, SSI, Section 8)	17	24	16	17	17	21	14	16	7
Help finding a job	11	9	11	10	12	11	12	10	6
Job training	8	11	7	8	6	8	8	5	11
Assistance with finding affordable housing	9	20	7	11	7	9	11	4	12
Assistance with rent, mortgage, or utilities for securing permanent housing	8	12	7	8	7	10	8	7	1
Help with parenting	3	16	1	2	4	2	4	3	2
Help to resolve problems with the landlord or with persons with whom you are living	*	0	*	*	0	*	0	0	0
None of the above	40	25	43	40	40	35	41	37	70

Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data. * Denotes values that are less than .5 percent but greater than 0.

^aThis includes clients who reported staying in the streets or other places not meant for human habitation (e.g., abandoned buildings, vehicles) on the day of the NSHAPC interview or during the seven days prior to the interview. ^bThis includes clients who reported staying in an emergency shelter, transitional housing program or voucher program on the day of the NSHAPC interview or during the seven days prior to the interview, or clients who were selected for the study at one of these programs. ^cThis includes clients who reported using a soup kitchen during the seven days prior to the interview, or clients who were found and interviewed for NSHAPC at a soup kitchen. ^dThis includes clients who reported using an other program (food pantry, mobile food, outreach, drop-in center and/or permanent housing) during the seven days prior to the interview, or clients who were found and interviewed for NSHAPC at one of these programs. ^eThis includes clients who did not report staying in an emergency shelter, transitional shelter, permanent housing, or voucher program over the last seven days but said yes to question 6.6e that they received food over the last seven days in the shelter where they live.

@ADM = Alcohol, drug, or mental health problem in the past month.

Appendix Table 9.A2
Reported Service Needs of Homeless Clients, by Standard Groupings

	All Homeless Clients (N=2938)	Family Status		ADM, Past Month@		Race/Ethnicity				
		Clients in Families (N=465)	Single Clients (N=2473)	With ADM (N=1826)	Without ADM (N=1112)	White Non-Hispanic (N=1176)	Black Non-Hispanic (N=1275)	Hispanic (N=335)	Native American (N=106)	
"What Are the (three) Things You Need the Most Now?"										
Help finding a job	42(%)	37(%)	43(%)	41(%)	43(%)	34(%)	48(%)	42(%)	51(%)	
Assistance with finding affordable housing	38	39	38	36	42	35	44	26	37	
Assistance with rent, mortgage or utilities for securing permanent housing	30	32	30	30	31	28	33	29	25	
Other	24	19	24	22	27	24	26	23	12	
Transportation assistance	19	18	20	21	17	20	15	21	37	
Assistance getting clothing	18	23	18	20	16	13	21	31	17	
Assistance getting food	17	19	17	18	17	18	16	22	11	
Job training	13	21	12	13	14	12	16	14	7	
Medical care for yourself	13	8	14	16	8	15	13	10	13	
A GED or other education	11	25	9	12	11	13	11	13	3	
Dental care for yourself	11	5	12	12	7	9	12	13	10	
Assistance with getting financial or other public benefits (eg. food stamps)	9	7	9	8	9	8	9	10	7	
Treatment for use of alcohol or other drugs	9	6	10	13	1	9	9	6	14	
Services for emotional or psychiatric problems	6	3	7	9	1	9	4	7	4	
Detoxification from alcohol or other drugs	5	0	6	7	1	2	6	4	16	
Assistance with rent, mortgage or utilities for current residence	4	4	4	3	4	4	5	3	*	
Help finding out availability of resources	4	6	4	4	4	6	3	3	6	
Help managing money	4	7	3	4	3	4	5	3	3	
Help with legal issues	4	6	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	
Money, cash, etc.	3	3	3	2	4	2	4	1	4	
Child care services and payment of costs	2	10	*	1	3	2	2	1	1	
Help with parenting	2	6	2	3	2	1	3	4	*	
Ability to read and write	1	*	2	2	1	1	2	2	*	
Dental care for your children	1	2	*	1	1	1	1	*	1	
Help getting or managing medications	1	1	2	1	2	3	*	*	1	
Help with domestic violence problems	1	3	*	1	1	1	1	2	*	
Medical care for your children	1	5	1	1	2	1	3	1	*	
Help to resolve problems with landlords or persons with whom you are living	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	0	
Help with enrolling children in school	*	1	0	0	*	*	*	*	0	
What Client Needs the Most Help with Now (one thing)										
Assistance getting food	3	6	3	3	3	4	3	3	1	
Transportation assistance	6	5	6	7	3	5	4	10	16	
Help finding a job	19	9	20	17	22	16	21	22	16	
Assistance with finding affordable housing	16	27	14	16	17	17	18	8	12	
Assistance with rent, mortgage or utilities for securing permanent housing	15	20	14	14	18	14	16	14	19	
Other	13	7	14	12	17	13	15	10	7	
Anything else ^a	28	26	29	31	20	31	23	33	29	
Single Most Important Thing Preventing Exit From Homelessness										
Insufficient income	30	43	27	28	33	31	30	25	Insufficient N	
Lack of suitable housing	11	21	10	10	14	10	13	6		
Lack of job/employment	24	14	26	20	34	26	22	32		
Insufficient education/skills/training	3	5	3	4	2	1	4	7		
Addictions to alcohol or drugs	9	*	10	13	0	8	10	6		
Physical condition or disability	3	2	4	3	3	5	2	4		
Mental health condition	2	1	3	3	0	3	2	2		
Family or domestic instability	1	2	1	2	1	2	2	1		
Insufficient services or lack of information about available services	1	3	1	2	1	1	2	1		
Other	16	10	15	15	12	13	14	16		

Source: Urban Institute analysis of weighted 1996 NSHAPC client data. Note: Numbers do not sum to 100% due to rounding. * Denotes values that are less than .5 percent but greater than 0. ^aIncludes: assistance getting clothing, help with legal issues, help with parenting, child care services and payment of costs, help with enrolling children in school, help with domestic violence problems, ability to read and write, a GED or other education, help with managing money, assistance getting financial or other public benefits, job training, assistance with rent, mortgage, or utilities for current residence, help to resolve problems with landlord or roommates, medical care for yourself, medical care for your children, dental care for yourself, dental care for your children, help getting or managing medications, detoxification from alcohol or other drugs, treatment for use of alcohol or other drugs, services for emotional or psychiatric problems, help with finding out availability of resources, and money, cash, etc. Insufficient N signifies that sample size was too small for data to be reported.
 @ADM = Alcohol, drug, or mental health problem in the past month.