

WHY SPARC?

The Center for Social Innovation launched Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities (SPARC) in 2016 in response to the overwhelming evidence that people of color were dramatically overrepresented in the nation’s homeless population—across the country and regardless of jurisdiction.

In March 2017, The Center for Social Innovation partnered with The Housing and Homeless Coalition of Central New York (HHC) and other service providers in Syracuse to collect qualitative and quantitative data to examine the racial dimensions of homelessness in the area. This document is a distilled report presenting preliminary findings and initial recommendations.

3 STRUCTURAL CHANGE OBJECTIVES

for our work to address racial inequity in the homelessness response system in Syracuse, New York

- **Implementation of trauma-informed care and anti-racism** at the policy and practice levels.
- **Staff diversity and inclusion**, with careful attention to increasing the number of senior managers of color.
- **Promoting housing quality**, including improving the current stock of affordable housing.

EXAMINING HOMELESSNESS BY COLOR IN SYRACUSE

Total Population in Syracuse, NY



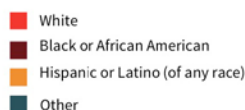
Total Population in Syracuse, NY Living in Poverty



Total Population in Syracuse, NY Experiencing Homelessness



0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%



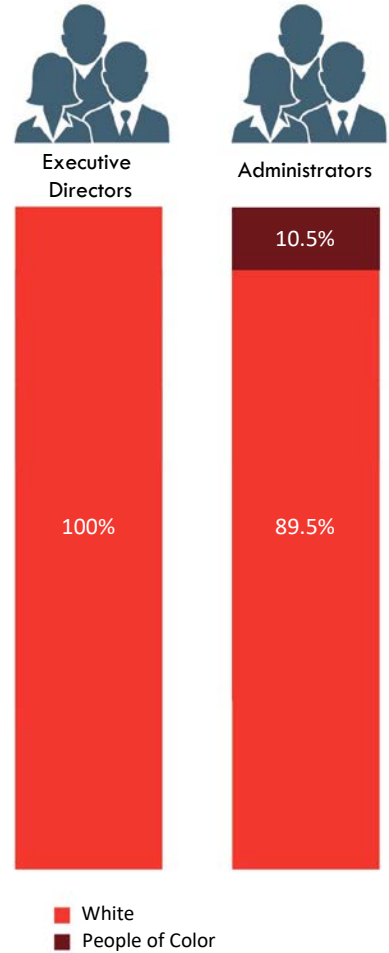
DATA COLLECTION INCLUDED:

- HMIS data from fiscal years 2011 to 2016.
- Qualitative research, including 26 individual interviews with people of color experiencing homelessness and 3 focus groups of providers, stakeholders, and consumers.
- An online demographic survey of homeless service providers.

HOMELESSNESS SERVICE PROVISION

Through an online survey, data was collected on the background of providers working in homelessness response programs and their self-reported desires for professional development. The findings were:

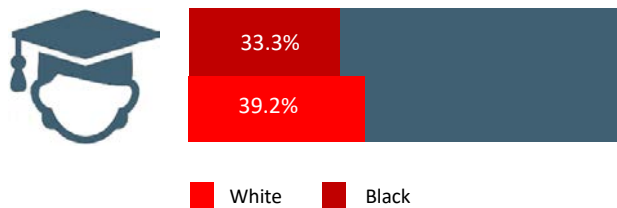
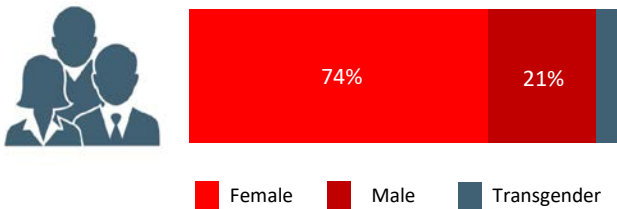
- The vast majority of surveyed service providers identified as White and Non-Hispanic or Latinx. 100% of Executive Directors and nearly 90% of Administrators identified as White.
- About three fourths (74.2%) identified as female, 21.0% as male; 3.2% identified as other, transgender or genderqueer.
- Among all respondents, Black and White individuals reported similar educational background; with 33.3% and 39.2%, respectively, holding Master's degrees.



STAFF EXPERIENCE WITH OWN HOMELESSNESS

Over twenty percent (22.6%) of respondents reported their own experience with homelessness.

In order to protect anonymity on this sensitive question, results are not presented by race.



THE SURVEY SUGGESTS THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT UNDERREPRESENTATION OF PEOPLE OF COLOR IN SENIOR-LEVEL POSITIONS, AND PEOPLE OF COLOR MAY NOT BE PROMOTED OR HIRED TO SENIOR MANAGEMENT AT THE SAME RATE AS THEY ARE HIRED TO WORK THE FRONTLINE.

PATHWAYS INTO HOMELESSNESS

- **NETWORK IMPOVERISHMENT** - There is no extra money anywhere in a respondent's social network.
- **ECONOMIC MOBILITY** - Respondents do not have difficulty finding jobs, but cannot secure jobs with adequate wages.
- **FAMILY DESTABILIZATION** - Families faced significant psychosocial stressors associated with poverty, substance use and mental illness, child welfare involvement, criminal justice involvement, and trauma.
- **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ISSUES** - Instability and trauma correlate with substance use issues.
- **VIOLENCE** - Women frequently had histories of intimate partner violence (IPV) connected to their pathways into homelessness.

“It's like you look at your parents' faces and it's like you see the hurt. It's like she doesn't know what else to do. She can't really feed her kids like she needs to, properly. So, me being the oldest, um, I'm watching the streets. I took to the streets like fish take to water.”

“What kind of place can I get with that kind of rent (\$300) but somewhere in the projects, somewhere in a drug infested area, you know, crime all around. I'm on parole. Why would I want to be somewhere where the chances of me having police contact is greater? So, you putting—you're not even giving me a chance or an opportunity to succeed.”

BARRIERS TO EXITING HOMELESSNESS

- **CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM INVOLVEMENT** - Criminal records limit housing and employment options.
- **QUALITY AFFORDABLE HOUSING** - Frustration at high rents for low quality housing was very common among participants.
- **TRANSPORTATION** - Respondents lacked extra money for transportation costs and cited a disconnect between affordable neighborhoods and job location.
- **NAVIGATING THE SYSTEM** - Many respondents felt the system was strapped for resources and designed to be difficult, and as result felt they had to strategize where they sought services and how they presented themselves to providers.

RECOMMENDATIONS



There are numerous actions that Syracuse, led by HHC, can take now and plan to take in the future. SPARC's recommendations include:

- 1. Design an equitable Coordinated Entry System.**
- 2. Include racial equity data analysis and benchmarks in strategic planning.**
- 3. Support organizational development**
 - Encourage anti-racist program delivery
 - Promote ongoing anti-racism training
 - Incorporate racial equity into grantmaking and contracting
- 4. Collaborate to increase affordable housing availability**
- 5. Investigate flexible subsidies**
- 6. Innovative upstream interventions**

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

As established by the:  **Center for Social Innovation**

- **EQUITY** A state in which belonging to a particular social group does not determine success, and where all groups have access to the resources and opportunities necessary to eliminate gaps and improve the quality of their lives
- **STRUCTURAL RACISM** A system by which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, and often reinforcing ways, to perpetuate power disparities based on race. It involves the cumulative effects of history, culture and ideology, and it systematically privileges White people and disadvantages people of color, in ways that allows it to persist and adapt over time.
- **RACIAL EQUITY LENS** A way of viewing the world through an understanding of systemic racism, and a recognition that equity for all cannot be achieved without simultaneous work to dismantle racism.