

Panel of Experience Experts

Panelist bios

Moderator: Barbara George Johnson, Executive Director of the John S. Watson School of Public Policy at Thomas Edison State College, has been a leading voice in shaping economic, health and social policy in the region. As Executive Director, Barbara manages the activities of the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association, and oversees the six policy centers housed at JSWIPP.

Panelists:

James Abro became a homeless rights activist after experiencing homelessness in 2009 -- as a direct result of caring for a terminally ill parent. He is a published author and national advocate for Homeless Rights and Housing First. (Housing First is based on the concept that a homeless individual or household's first and primary need is to obtain stable housing,) His articles have been published in The Nation magazine as well as other distinguished national and international outlets. He is the author of, most recently, *An Odyssey in the Great American Safety Net*, a memoir of homelessness and recovery. He prides himself most on his work with the homeless & impoverished in the community where he lives.

Angela Jackson resides at a shelter for women and families in Middlesex county. She is interested in advocating for issues surrounding homelessness and also would like to be a child support advocate for men. She is a mother of grown children who had a good job – running her own business for 6 years. But she lost her job and then her housing. She is having trouble finding a job and getting herself out of this situation. She's 60, and feels her age might be part of the problem.

Megan, a mother of two young children, lives in transitional housing for victims of domestic violence. She receives SNAP and WIC and goes to the food pantry for additional help. She is trying to rebuild her life after surviving years of abuse, both as a child and an adult.

Shakir, an Atlantic City native, is a husband and father of three. Shakir worked in the casino industry since 2007, for Borgata and Revel. He apprenticed to become a cement mason and helped to build Revel. He then opened that casino as a window cleaner, and was one of thousands who were laid off when it closed last year.

Leigh Taylor is a substitute teacher and a mom of young children with disabilities. After being evicted from her home, she stayed at a shelter. She is now in a transitional housing program run by Catholic Charities. Leigh applied for affordable housing but was turned down because of credit issues. Leigh strives to advocate for the low-income individuals that she has met this past year.