

REACHING HOME

2013 Progress Report

In 2012, the Reaching Home Campaign was relaunched around *Opening Doors – Connecticut*, an innovative framework to prevent and end homelessness in our state. As part of this new effort, stakeholders across various sectors worked to develop estimates of housing assistance needs that have shaped some of our work over the past year. This report aims to look at what we did in our first year, what unexpected events occurred to impact our work, and where we can improve moving forward.

WHERE ARE WE TODAY?



Varying levels of activity have directly impacted the state's and its communities' responses to homelessness in Connecticut — from the HEARTH Act's mandated shift to community-wide reductions in homelessness to the indiscriminate cuts in federal spending known as sequestration. On the state level, public officials also grappled with difficult decisions on budgetary spending. Despite these challenges, opportunities exist to reverse the persistent condition of homelessness in Connecticut.

Realizing the need for government to exercise budgetary constraint, Reaching Home partners have

moved forward with several strategies that do not require additional federal dollars or state legislative action. An example with immediate implications for Reaching Home and the contents of this report is the increased capacity of Connecticut's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to meet the expanded data-matching, reporting, and research needs identified in the *Opening Doors – CT* process. These improvements will produce refined housing assistance needs and enable Reaching Home to more accurately define and serve the target populations under *Opening Doors – CT* in the future.

FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

2012 Annual Population

Households: **1,385**

Adults: **1,631**

Children: **2,524**

2013 Point In Time Count

Households: **475**

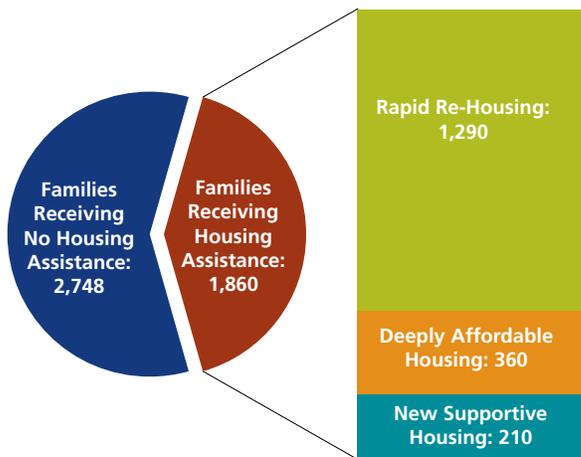
Adults: **534**

Children: **918**

Source: CT Coalition to End Homelessness

ESTIMATED NEEDS OF FAMILIES EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

2012 - 2016



In 2012, we made slow progress on our goals for preventing and ending homelessness among families with children. The number of families experiencing homelessness grew 4% from 2011 to 2012. Given the economic recession, this is unsurprising, but it reinforces the need to increase our efforts.

Over the past year, local communities have been engaged in a planning process to streamline access to the crisis response system and housing assistance resources on both the state and local levels. The outcome — a statewide coordinated access system — will strengthen local collaboration and coordination, and improve effective access to housing resources for families. With this system in place, efforts to bring rapid re-housing to scale throughout the state will shorten the length of time that a family experiences homelessness.

Because most families do not require permanent supportive housing, we must not only bring rapid re-housing to scale, but also increase the stock of deep income-targeted affordable housing and connect those units to rapid re-housing and other local initiatives aimed at families.

As currently structured, rating and ranking for the Competitive Housing Assistance for Multifamily Properties (CHAMP) program is focused on mixed-income, mixed-use development, transit-oriented development, revitalization, and housing for the elderly. Consequently, changes in rating and ranking for the last two CHAMP rounds did not produce a significant number of units for extremely low income (ELI) populations.

On the other hand, the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) has produced a healthy mix of housing across the affordability spectrum and could offer insight on how to incorporate deeply targeted units into mixed income deals by structuring rating and ranking in a way that rewards this sort of mixed-income development.

UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH

The approach to ending homelessness among runaway and unaccompanied youth in Connecticut differs slightly than our strategies to end homelessness among other *Opening Doors* – CT target populations. This is largely due to the unique barriers facing youth in reaching out for services and the difficulty in capturing accurate data on the prevalence of homeless youth.

Over the past year and a half, we have made great strides in beginning to understand the scope of youth's experiences by conducting and completing an Unaccompanied Homeless Youth study. This study will further efforts to develop a methodology for identifying unaccompanied homeless youth on an annual basis. Findings from the study's report will also inform advocacy for responsive delivery services for youth to connect them to the housing and supports they need.

BETTER UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF CT'S HOMELESS YOUTH

For the Unaccompanied Homeless Youth study, 98 youth experiencing homelessness and more than 17 key informants were interviewed, answering questions about their experiences and needs. The final report will be used to draw attention to the issue and influence public policy.

CHRONICALLY HOMELESS ADULTS WITHOUT CHILDREN

Our earlier assumptions on the number of chronically homeless individuals in Connecticut proved to be much lower than reality. About 3,000 people were chronically homeless in FFY 2012, which is 178% higher than what Reaching Home assumed before data improvements within HMIS. Additionally, our first phase housing goals assumed that Connecticut would receive federal funds from a Section 811 grant, but Connecticut was not among the states that received an award.

Connecticut did, however, receive federal funding for two national demonstration programs: the Social Innovation Fund (SIF) and the Agency for Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF) Supportive Housing for Families (SHF) demonstration program. The state made 150 subsidies available for SIF, as well as 50 subsidies for families participating in SHF. SIF and SHF will produce the evidence and experience needed to serve certain high-cost, vulnerable populations, but do not necessarily target people who are chronically homeless.

While the 2013 legislative session resulted in funding for 100 new units of supportive housing, our original projections indicated the need for 300 new units a year to meet the goal of ending chronic homelessness by 2017. As we continue to lag in funding for supportive housing, and better data indicate that the need is great, we have a new projected need for 4,470 units of supportive housing to end chronic homelessness by 2017. Additionally, we have not yet realized or maximized the opportunity to utilize Medicaid to expand services dollars for supportive housing and to increase Medicaid savings that can be reinvested into new housing and subsidies.

2012 Annual Population

Adults Without Children: **3,006**

2013 Point In Time Count

Adults Without Children: **931**

Source: CT Coalition to End Homelessness

MEETING THE NEED FOR THOSE EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Targeted Permanent Supportive Housing, 2012-2016

3,090 NEW UNITS
scattered- & single-site

+ 1,380 TURNOVER
new & existing units

4,470 HOUSEHOLDS SERVED
estimated # of households that need assistance

VETERANS

2012 Annual Population

Veteran Households: **1,064**

2013 Point In Time Count

Veterans: **340**

Source: CT Coalition to End Homelessness

ESTIMATED NEEDS OF VETERANS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

2012 - 2016

Rapid Re-Housing



Deeply Affordable Housing



New Permanent Supportive Housing



Targets reflect households needing assistance over 2012-2016 timeframe. Actuals reflect resources available in 2012 and 2013, and rapid re-housing projection for 2014.

Ending homelessness among Veterans by 2017 is a very real possibility in Connecticut. In 2010, 461 Veterans were homeless on a single night in January. This number had decreased to 438 in 2011 and even further to 330 in 2012, though it saw a slight increase to 340 in 2013. Over the same period, the number of Veterans experiencing homelessness over the course of a year increased 8%, suggesting that more Veterans are coming home and falling on hard times, but that improved services are able to quickly return them to housing.

While this data is promising, our efforts remain incomplete. In early 2013, Reaching Home partnered with the CT Heroes Project (CTHP) to develop a set of concrete, actionable steps to meet the goal of eliminating homelessness amongst Veterans in Connecticut two years early, by 2015. These efforts build upon the *Opening Doors – CT* framework and efforts at the Veterans Administration by: scaling what is working; ensuring excellent coordination and implementation of existing resources; identifying and filling gaps in services; aligning state, federal, and local systems; and importing best practices from the state and the country. Investments in data integration and more fine-toothed analysis will reveal the precise and implementable strategies needed to take the final steps to accomplish this goal.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

As a campaign, our technology and data have become more sophisticated, allowing us to refine our targeting practices and be truly data-driven in our approach. Concurrently, we are learning how to rely on experiences in the field as we re-calibrate the need for the various interventions we know work and target the right resources to the right people.

For those without critical service needs, we have developed an understanding of the tools and community coordination needed to quickly move children and adults out of shelter as rapidly as possible while mitigating the long-term, negative impacts of homelessness on child and family welfare.

Coordination at the community level will also be critical in our success to finish the job of ending chronic homelessness. Substantial work has been done to improve partnerships with hospitals and other healthcare providers to target the most-high need and hardest to reach individuals through a combination of coordinated healthcare and access to housing.

Now is the time.

We have an unprecedented commitment to housing from the Malloy Administration, which was reflected in both the Governor's budget for FY '14 and FY '15, and in the creation of a new state Department of Housing (DOH). We must capitalize on these housing investments in order to maximize the efforts of communities and link local initiatives to creation of housing that is affordable to CT residents at the lower end of the affordability spectrum.

Moving forward, we must continue nurturing and growing our relationships with the wide array of stakeholders involved in meeting the aggressive goals of *Opening Doors – CT* during a time marked by limited resources and political gridlock.

- ✧ Communities that are able must engage their local housing authorities and strategize a mutually beneficial plan for helping each other deal with cuts in HUD funding.
- ✧ We must continue to explore how to expand and target employment services and best practices for people who are homeless and to develop and strengthen regional economic security partnerships between Continuums of Care (CoCs), Workforce Investment Boards, and employers.
- ✧ Moreover, we must capitalize on changes coming from the Affordable Care Act (ACA) to increase opportunities to pay for services for people in supportive housing.

Ultimately, we must continue demonstrating innovative approaches to engaging programs which allow local CoCs to leverage mainstream resources, services funding, increase economic security for people who are homeless, and better integrate healthcare and housing stability. Getting there is complicated but feasible, and requires not only civic and political will, but also meaningful partnerships.

Published October 2013

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CORE VALUES

- ⊙ Homelessness is unacceptable. It is solvable and preventable.
- ⊙ There are no "homeless people," but rather people who have lost their homes who deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.
- ⊙ Homelessness is expensive. Invest in solutions.

GOALS

- ⊙ Finish the job of ending chronic homelessness by 2017.
- ⊙ Prevent & end homelessness among Veterans by 2017.
- ⊙ Prevent & end homelessness among families, youth and children by 2022.
- ⊙ Set a path to ending all types of homelessness.

KEY PRINCIPLES

- ⊙ Stable housing is the foundation.
- ⊙ What happens at the ground level matters.
- ⊙ Collaboration is fundamental to our success.
- ⊙ Our strategies and solutions must be driven in a way that puts the person or family facing homelessness at the center.
- ⊙ Strategies must be implementable, user-friendly, cost-effective, and scalable.