

Connecticut has the 6th highest rental costs in the nation. As a result, many low-income households exist on the brink of homelessness.

Already, more than 4,500 people are homeless on any given night in Connecticut; nearly 1 in 5 are children. Tens of thousands more are one lost job, or unanticipated expense, away from homelessness. Emergency shelters are above capacity, and people experiencing homelessness or housing instability far exceed the number of available beds.

The following recommendations were developed through a cross sector, multi-partner, statewide planning process as priorities for moving the state forward on its path to end chronic homelessness and homelessness among veterans in 5 years and homelessness among families, children, and youth in 10 years.

The result will be stable, healthy families and individuals, less use of expensive crisis services, and children on a positive road to opportunity.

Expand Supportive Housing to Address Chronic Homelessness in the State:

Supportive housing is a successful and cost-effective approach to addressing chronic homelessness by creating permanent affordable housing with services. Overwhelming evidence suggests that supportive housing leads to stability and success and reduces use of high-cost public services like emergency rooms, prisons, and nursing homes. *Opening Doors – CT* aspires to end chronic homelessness by 2017 – this would require an additional investment in a little over 2,700 units over 4 years.

Reaching Home proposes that Connecticut create 650 new units of permanent supportive housing annually through a mix of scattered-site and single-site development to meet this projected need. A portion of the rental subsidies and service funding should be made available to be paired with state-financed affordable housing programs to encourage the integration of supportive housing units.

Expand Rapid Re-Housing and Support a Statewide Coordinated Access System:

Many families benefited from the homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing programs initially funded by the 2009 federal stimulus. Three years after receiving Rapid Re-Housing, 82% of singles have not returned to a Connecticut shelter. For families, the result is 95%. *Opening Doors – CT* estimates a need for 1,290 rapid re-housing interventions among families with children by 2016, including families made homeless due to domestic violence.

Reaching Home calls for a statewide Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) Program that coordinates with other RRH funded initiatives in the state and is integrated within a statewide Coordinated Access system. This will allow for more effective targeting of resources, monitoring of outcomes, and assessment of the overall capacity and needs within the homelessness assistance system.

- Allocate \$500,000 to provide the financial assistance required to rapidly re-house people who are homeless, including survivors of domestic violence.
- Provide the funding to maintain a Housing Services Unit at 2-1-1 providing homeless services assessment for families and connecting individuals to appropriate homelessness services in their regions of the state – a major component of statewide Coordinated Access

Target Employment Supports to Clients of Rapid Re-Housing:

High housing costs drive homelessness — poverty reinforces it. Persons experiencing homelessness have the most dire need for income, and are the least likely to be connected to training and job opportunities. **Reaching Home recommends that the state establish a model that directly connects recipients of rapid re-housing to targeted employment resources and training vouchers:**

- Offer subsidized employment to employers who hire recipients of rapid re-housing services

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...to a Future where *Everyone* has a home

- Target employment training vouchers to families receiving rapid re-housing assistance so they may develop an employment plan and the necessary links to community resources to carry out that plan
- Pilot this integrated model with two Rapid Re-Housing regions for up to 50 clients total – track outcomes, demonstrate effectiveness, and create a process for expansion

Fund the Homeless Youth Program to Address the Immediate Safety Needs of Kids in Housing Crisis:

There are numerous runaway and homeless children and youth being identified right now in Connecticut who are fleeing abuse, disconnected from formal supports, avoiding or unaware of limited available services, being assaulted and victimized, engaging in survival sex or being sex trafficked. There are extremely limited crisis options - not enough providers and very few places to sleep. Only 4 Connecticut private agencies provide crisis housing intervention, respite services or street outreach. None are in Hartford. **Reaching Home calls for the restoration of funding to implement the Homeless Youth Program established in Connecticut statute in 2010, in order to:**

- Establish two regional teams to provide outreach and youth drop-in centers with walk-in access to crisis interventions and ongoing supportive services
- Outreach, host home and respite options to confront the immediate crisis facing these youth
- Limited longer term supports through a transitional living component to help maintain their stability and inform service capacity planning
- Create an option that would not require commitment to state services in order to receive support

These initiatives rely on the protection and preservation of the existing homeless services system and housing related resources. Many of the initiatives leverage existing resources, staffing, and facilities that create a system of diverse programs, based on an array of needs. Funding reductions to any existing programs and services would deeply impact the emergency crisis response system and the valuable resources that help stabilize families after a crisis.

In addition, Reaching Home recommends and is advancing multiple strategies in collaboration with our private and public partners that do not require additional state funding. For further information, please contact Alicia Woodsby at alicia@pschousing.org, or (860) 244-0066.

Many thanks to the leaders of the six Reaching Home Workgroups tasked with the compilation of the recommendations and development of the Opening Doors – CT strategies, chaired by:

Housing: Betsy Crum, Executive Director of the Connecticut Housing Coalition: betsy@ct-housing.org
Retooling the Crisis Response: Lisa Tepper Bates, Executive Director of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness: ltbates@cceh.org
Economic Security: Alice Pritchard, Executive Director of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund: apritchard@cwealf.org
Health and Housing Stability: Sarah Gallagher, Director of the CT Office, Corporation for Supportive Housing: sarah.gallagher@csh.org
Youth: Stacey Violante-Cote, Director of Teen Legal Advocacy Clinic at the Center for Children's Advocacy: sviolant@kidscounsel.org
Veterans: Greg Behrman, Founder, CT Heroes Project: g_behrman@yahoo.com

Homelessness is unacceptable. Homelessness is solvable and preventable. Homelessness is expensive. Invest in solutions.