

## Reaching Home Workgroup Quarterly Updates October 2014

### Increasing the Stock of Affordable and Supportive Housing

The Affordable and Supportive Housing Workgroup focused on several initiatives this quarter to increase the targeting of mainstream resources to individuals and families who are homeless or chronically homeless. The CHAMP V round included increased targeting for both extremely low income households and set-asides for individuals experiencing homelessness, and the Workgroup developed and implemented strategies to increase the number and quality of applications for those funds from our development community. We drafted a Blueprint as a technical guide for public housing authorities interested in project-basing U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Housing Choice Vouchers, which provides step-by-step guidance on using Section 8 vouchers to expand housing for individuals and families who are homeless. The Blueprint is currently under review by housing authorities, and will hopefully provide the basis for future discussions on ways in which public housing authorities can work more closely with supportive service providers.

The Workgroup also met with staff of the New Lease Program, a Massachusetts initiative that provides HUD-financed housing to homeless households on a priority basis. This new program works primarily with private, for-profit owners of affordable housing, and provides a potential new resource of affordable units that could be paired with service dollars, when available. The Workgroup is also working with the HUD Area Field Office and several smaller housing authorities to develop a pilot program to set aside units for homeless and at-risk households in existing and renovated developments by linking services to those developments.

### Retooling the Crisis Response System

The Retooling Workgroup continues its work to facilitate implementation of Coordinated Access across the state, which will all be up and running by December 2014 with United Way's 211 phone-based infoline as the front door for homeless services. Local communities will respond to shelter inquiries through each "Coordinated Access Network," (CAN) the eight local provider groups that will provide homeless services across the state. Next steps include enhancing community efforts to divert clients to solutions other than shelter when possible, consistent with emerging best practice and guidance from HUD and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH).

In tandem with efforts to build Coordinated Access across the state, the Retooling Workgroup has focused on the issue of accelerating placements in housing, and thereby exits from shelter. Rapid re-housing is essential in creating the system flow-through critical to the success of Coordinated Access systems. As one community leader put it,



“Coordinated Access requires coordinated exit.” This intervention is effective for both families and singles, and can be viewed as a helpful mechanism to assist those who might be at highest risk of falling into chronic homelessness if unassisted with housing. Through conversations with the Workgroup, the CT Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH) and Department of Housing (DOH) developed a two-tiered approach. Higher need clients will be referred to the DOH-funded CT- Rapid Re-Housing Program providers (who are able to provide more intensive case management supports and longer periods of rent subsidy). Lower barrier clients will be re-housed with shorter-term financial assistance and more modest supports by shelters and other frontline providers that choose to participate in the DOH rapid re-housing financial assistance fund.

### **Fostering Housing Retention through Economic Security**

After multiple technical assistance sessions through the Partnerships’ iForums and CCEH Learning Institutes, the Economic Security Group is prepared to launch Secure Jobs CT in November 2014. The goal of Secure Jobs CT is to increase the income of families transitioning from homelessness to housing by connecting them to the education, training and supports they need to secure and maintain stable, competitive employment. This will be accomplished by better integrating and coordinating the efforts of the homeless service sector, the workforce system and child care sector to effectively serve families participating in Connecticut’s Rapid Re-housing Program. Secure Jobs CT will launch with a kick-off event to inspire, orient, and outline Pilot expectations. The event will be targeted to the five regional CT rapid rehousing providers, their corresponding Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), and Chair/Co-Chairs from the eight CANs. Following the kick-off, each region will have two weeks to submit a letter of intent from an eligible lead organization describing their interest in obtaining a Pilot planning grant. The purpose of the planning grant is to support the collaborative development of a regional plan for increasing the number of families experiencing homelessness who obtain and maintain employment and stable housing.

The result of the planning process will be the development of an action plan, which will provide a model of how to build a coordinated service system which links extremely low-income households that are formerly homeless and receiving short-term rental assistance with the resources required to enter the workforce. The plan will serve as the basis for the regional partnership’s application for a Secure Jobs CT implementation grant. There will be two opportunities for grantees to apply for an implementation grant. The purpose of this optional timeline is to allow adequate planning time for all regions. Implementation grants will have a term of one year with the possibility of a renewal, if additional funds are procured.

### **Integrating Healthcare and Housing Stability**

Since March, eight supportive housing service providers have participated in the CSH-led Medicaid Institute for Supportive Housing Agencies (MISHA), a multi-session program aimed at building agency capacity to: 1) Improve

Medicaid enrollment and retention among eligible beneficiaries, 2) Maximize current opportunities to benefit from Medicaid-billable services, either directly or via partnerships, 3) Create business plans and build capacity to access Medicaid benefits as a sustainable resource for supporting services. The agencies are currently preparing their final business plans for presentation and initial implementation, and will have the opportunity to apply for capacity-building grant support from the Melville Charitable Trust to enhance their ability to implement this work.

The workgroup is also working to improve integration of housing and health services. Funded by the CT Health Foundation, the project has moved forward and pilot coordinated care teams have launched or are in the process of launching at five hospitals around CT. This initiative, in partnership with the CT Hospital Association (CHA), aims to reduce re-hospitalizations and readmissions for people who are homeless or unstably housed through better identification, discharge planning, and connections to community supports. PSC/CHA partnered with Value Options to better identify and support frequent users of emergency care. CSH has secured a grant from the Liberty Bank Foundation to help disseminate the Community Care Team model developed and led by Middlesex Hospital.

In addition, Social Innovation Fund (SIF) sub-grantees have now housed 94 tenants in the Connecticut Integrated Housing and Healthcare Neighborhoods (CIHHN). Medical Respite programs are now fully operational in Columbus House and New London Homeless Hospitality Center.

Lastly, the Steering Committee for the FUSE program, housing frequent users of criminal justice and shelter systems, has been expanded to include Social Innovation Fund stakeholders focusing on high-cost, high-need Medicaid recipients who are homeless. The case management and service delivery teams from both projects are now meeting quarterly for case conference to explore the considerable overlap between target population needs and strategies for building capacity to serve and support these tenants. FUSE is operating at near-full capacity. All vouchers have been used. The team at the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the University of Connecticut is performing an evaluation, which will help make the case for expansion.

## Ending Homelessness among Veterans

The Veterans Workgroup and the CT Heroes Project are on track to accomplish the mission of ending homelessness among Veterans by the end of 2015. A variety of initiatives are connecting Veterans quickly to the services they need: 1) Monthly case conferences convening case workers from Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); 2) Bimonthly Veterans Outreach Nights to connect outreach staff to Veterans at shelters; 3) Coordinated homelessness screening and housing assistance services at the State VA's Stand Down in September; 4) Increased access to services for Veterans living at the State VA's Rocky Hill campus.

To streamline VA supportive housing (HUD-VASH) we are working to: 1) Improve coordination between HUD and VA to ensure complete utilization of HUD-VASH vouchers; 2) Implement a concerted campaign to shorten the lease-up process entering supportive housing, decreasing the amount of time spent homeless and improving retention; 3) Seek a limited number of rental assistance vouchers for HUD-VASH veterans who have graduated case management, freeing up deeper resources for those more in need.

In addition, a new level of Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and VA data analysis is driving our campaign in numerous ways: 1) Targeted outreach lists for key providers based on shelter stays and outreach engagements; 2) Identification of high-need veterans for additional services; 3) Metrics on rapid re-housing performance, creating critical feedback for providers.

### **Meeting the Needs of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth**

The Homeless Youth Workgroup has focused on initiatives to plan for, count and address the crisis needs of youth who are homeless in CT. The Youth Workgroup is overseeing a comprehensive planning process with three subcommittees looking at data, housing and supports/services to develop a blueprint to address the needs of youth who are homeless. A Project Director was hired with generous support from the Melville Charitable Trust to harness the work of the subcommittees into a comprehensive blueprint for change. This will be used to guide advocacy efforts addressing barriers for youth who are homeless.

Since the successful legislative campaign to restore \$1 million to the Homeless Youth Program, the Youth Workgroup has worked with state agencies to determine current and future needs for crisis response services (crisis beds, street outreach, etc). Since the few existing services are concentrated in southern parts of the state, the focus is on expanding these to other areas as well as reaching youth who are unconnected to state services.

The Young Workgroup is also overseeing the process for CT's first homeless youth count. In January 2015, CT will undertake its first attempt at counting unaccompanied homeless youth across the state. Conventional methodologies for collecting data on youth experiencing homelessness are ineffective because youth who are homeless are often difficult to track down, unwilling to tell adults about their housing instability or unaware of their status as homeless. Because of this, efforts to count this population must address the unique features of youth. The CT statewide homeless youth count will employ different methods to reach this disconnected population by utilizing a youth specific statewide survey with concentrated outreach work in special focus areas of the state.