Reaching Home Families with Children Workgroup: First Phase Priorities

Crisis Response System:

- Develop a statewide definition of what it means to end family homelessness in CT.
- Expand shelter diversion efforts to help families avoid homelessness.
- Expand rapid re-housing resources to meet the needs of families in the homeless system.
- Share promising practices from the Early Childhood Development Infoline pilot in Southeast CT.
- Connect families experiencing homelessness with home visiting resources.
- Standardize the use of a common assessment tool for families experiencing homelessness (Family VI-SPDAT, VI-SPDAT) within the homeless system.
- Develop and implement effective engagement and intervention strategies to meet the unique needs of parenting youth.
- Integrate employment linkages into the homelessness system.
- Create coordination locally between Coordinated Access Networks and DCF regional area office staff, SDE's McKinney-Vento liaisons, DSS, EOC early care, Head Start, education providers to ensure that children are connected to the appropriate benefits and community based-services.

Housing:

- Target affordable or subsidized housing resources to families experiencing homelessness.
- Create an inventory of housing resources available in each CAN that are dedicated to families experiencing homelessness.
- Create a preference for families experiencing homelessness for turnover units in the state administered Section 8 program, public housing authorities, project based section 8 and privately owned units by partnering with DOH, HUD and local PHAs.

Early Childcare:

- Allow immediate enrollment into all license child care and early care and education programs by providing a 90-day grace period for obtaining health documents and other documentation required by state licensing regulations.
- Prioritize eligibility and access to Head Start, early Head Start, and Care-4-Kids for children in families experiencing literal homelessness.
- Work through the Secure Jobs Advisory Committee to identify and address the major systems and policy barriers to economic security for families exiting homelessness.

Data:

- Improve and better utilize cross system data on family homelessness, including race, ethnicity, pregnant and parenting young adults to target resources to the highest risk.
- Add screening questions to identify housing needs of "at risk" families in all systems (i.e. mental health, early childhood, child welfare, education, juvenile justice, etc.).
- Cross-reference Department of Social Services data to ensure that families experiencing homelessness are receiving all the benefits they are entitled to receive all the benefits to which they are entitled and to understand benefit use patterns, family needs, and cost across systems.