

REACHING HOME

2014 Progress Report

Since its re-launch in 2012, Reaching Home has focused on ending homelessness in Connecticut through the *Opening Doors-Connecticut* framework. Under this framework, Reaching Home has convened partners from various sectors to reach this goal, while initiatives happening at the local, regional, state and federal levels have reinvigorated efforts to bring an end to homelessness in our state.

It's now 2014. Are we making progress?

Annual data from the Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2013 show 11,026 households experienced homelessness compared to 11,495 in FFY2012, a 4% drop. This included declines among individuals experiencing chronic homelessness, families with children and Veterans (see bar graph below). While the FFY2013 HMIS data indicates that we are on track to end homelessness in accordance with the timelines created for the *Opening Doors-CT* target populations, 2014 Point In Time (PIT) data indicate that we may have fallen behind on our goals in 2014. Data from the 2014 PIT show a 14% increase in chronic homelessness among individuals and a 4% increase in family homelessness compared to those counted in the 2013 PIT.

Can we do more?

Yes, and we must to bring an end to homelessness. These are challenging times. Federal housing resources are stretched and a slow economic recovery has made it difficult for those experiencing homelessness to access the economic supports needed to secure housing.

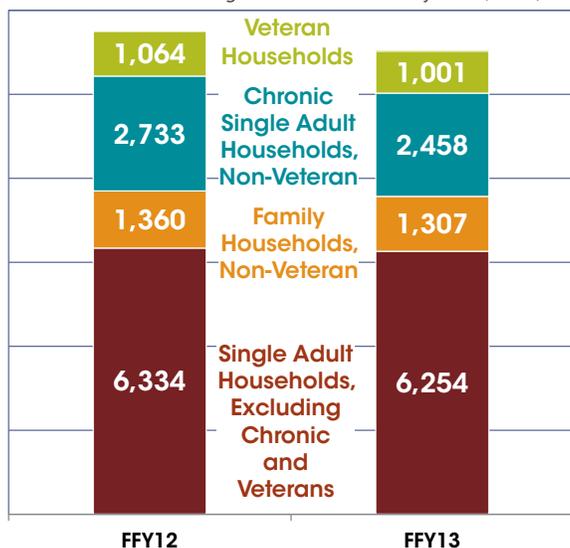
We are fortunate, however, to have state resources to draw upon, in addition to philanthropies and corporate funders who understand that homelessness is unacceptable, solvable and preventable. Connecticut's service providers, housing developers and advocates are working together and willing to stretch those limited resources, think creatively and invest in solutions that work.

What are the next steps?

This year, those involved in Reaching Home have spent significant time, energy and resources fleshing out new ideas, implementing and learning from proven and innovative approaches, connecting systems and improving our data systems so that we can better understand the challenges those experiencing homelessness face and what solutions might work best for them. The initiatives described in this report offer a path forward in our effort to end homelessness in Connecticut.

Number of households who experienced homelessness annually, FFY12 and FFY13

Source: Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS)



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR

- Veterans workgroup launched plan to end homelessness among veterans by 2015. Gov. Malloy and city leaders throughout the state have signed on.
- First of its kind state study of runaway and unaccompanied youth released.
- Pilot developed to connect families receiving rapid rehousing with employment supports.
- Resources for permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing increased.
- Funding restored for the state's homeless youth program.
- Implementation of the CT's Coordinated Access system expected to be available statewide by the end of 2014.
- Youth Count to be implemented during the 2015 Point In Time Count.
- Conversion to the new Homelessness Management Information System to be completed for all areas by the end of 2014.
- Data matching pilots that target frequent visitors of crisis systems (FUSE and CIHHN) successfully housing nearly 200 individuals at-risk of chronic homelessness.
- Local communities are moving forward on 100-day challenges, registry weeks and statewide implementation of new client assessment tool (VI-SPDAT).
- Efforts are underway to prepare service providers to access Medicaid for support services targeting high-risk and high-cost adult Medicaid beneficiaries experiencing homelessness.

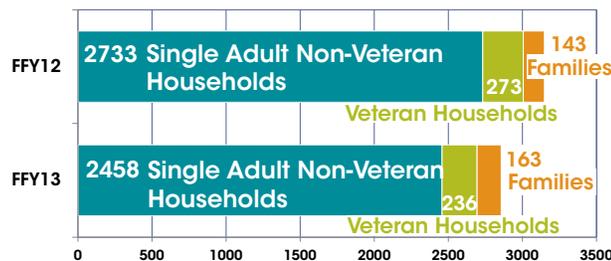
INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

To reach the goal of ending chronic homelessness by 2017, several strategies are being employed.

- With partner organizations, Reaching Home successfully advocated for continued state investment in supportive housing for existing and new supportive housing units.
- The Campaign’s Housing workgroup is working with state officials to outline options for increasing the flexibility of funds dedicated to supportive housing, with the goal of integrating supportive housing into affordable, market-rate, mixed-income housing developments whenever possible.
- Reaching Home launched a new Chronic Homelessness workgroup dedicated solely to developing and implementing efforts to end chronic homelessness by 2017. The workgroup will mine data on chronic homelessness to understand how much supportive housing is needed in different geographic areas in the state and enhance targeting strategies.
- Frequent Users Systems Engagement (FUSE) and Connecticut Integrated Housing and Healthcare Neighborhoods (CIHHN) efforts aimed at housing those most at risk of chronic homelessness have continued. The FUSE program is providing housing to 100 individuals identified as frequent users of criminal justice and shelter systems and there are efforts to expand the program by 140 units. The CIHHN program housed 92 individuals, with DOH providing additional housing funds; work to ensure future funding for CIHHN continues.

Number of households experiencing chronic homelessness annually, FFY12-FFY13

Source: Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS)



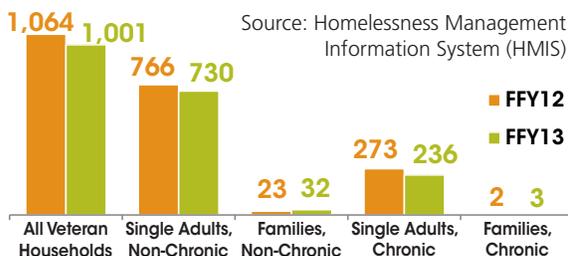
Annual HMIS data show that chronic homelessness among single adult households (not including Veterans) decreased by 10% from FFY12 to FFY13. However, data from the 2014 Point in Time (PIT) Count showed 1,062 single adult households (including Veterans) experiencing chronic homelessness, a 14% rise from the 931 counted in 2013.

Estimated housing needs for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness

	FFY14 need	FFY15 need	FFY16 need
Supportive Housing Turnover	205	260	315
New	700	700	700

VETERANS

Number of Veteran households experiencing homelessness annually, FFY12-FFY13



HMIS data show that homelessness among Veterans declined by 5.9% from FFY 2012 to FFY 2103. This data does not include the approximately 150 Veterans who live in the state VA’s Rocky Hill facility, but who are effectively homeless. Within the next year, these individuals will also be included in HMIS counts.

Estimated housing needs for Veterans

	FFY14 need	FFY15 need
Support Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)	300	300
Supportive Housing Turnover	75	95
New	65	40
Affordable Housing	65	65

In 2013, Reaching Home and the CT Heroes Project worked together to establish the Veterans workgroup with the task of developing a plan to end Veterans homelessness in Connecticut by 2015. Launched in late 2013, the plan is now being implemented, with significant progress on several initiatives:

- Outreach to Veterans in need has been greatly improved. Several months ago, over 100 Veterans in shelters were reported disconnected to key services; that number has since dropped to a few dozen.
- Improved tracking and analysis of HMIS data allow for more accurate counts of Veterans experiencing homelessness and the services accessed.
- Close coordination between Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) providers is improving key rapid re-housing services for Veterans.
- The Malloy Administration endorsed the mission, providing over a million dollars in funding and launching a new employment services initiative for Veterans.

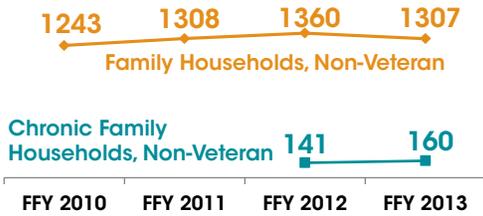
Several other initiatives are well on their way and will soon be yielding results:

- Unprecedented coordination between the Department of Corrections and the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is improving connections to housing services for Veterans exiting prison.
- VA designed a streamlined lease-up process for Veterans entering supportive housing, reducing the amount of time they spend homeless.
- VA designed initiatives to promote independence for Veterans in supportive housing, assisting willing Veterans in graduating to non-supportive housing.

FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Number of family households experiencing homelessness annually, FFY10-FFY13

Source: Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS)



While families with children accounted for only 12% of households experiencing homelessness in Connecticut in FFY13, the number remained persistently high at 1,307 non-Veteran families, equal to FFY11 levels. Chronic homelessness among non-Veteran families increased by 13% from FFY12 to FFY13.

Estimated housing needs for families

	FFY14 need	FFY15 need	FFY16 need
Rapid Re-Housing	360	430	500
Supportive Housing Turnover	85	90	90
New	55	45	30
Affordable Housing	73	73	73

Families with children who are experiencing homelessness have complex needs, with access to jobs and education made more difficult by limited childcare and transportation options. The Reaching Home Campaign is involved in two key initiatives to assist families experiencing homelessness.

Expansion of rapid re-housing programs:

- Data from around the nation indicates that rapid re-housing, which can be targeted to both individuals and families, has been particularly successful at helping family households end their homelessness. Reaching Home’s Retooling the Crisis Response System workgroup has engaged in discussions to better understand what is working in the state’s rapid re-housing programs, how existing resources can be coordinated to meet the complex needs of families experiencing homelessness, and how these programs can be scaled up to meet the need.
- Working closely with the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH), Reaching Home successfully advocated for increased funding for the state’s rapid re-housing program. In 2013, 253 families were enrolled in rapid re-housing programs tracked through HMIS.

Development of rapid re-housing and employment pilot:

- Reaching Home’s Economic Security workgroup recommended a pilot project to connect families receiving rapid re-housing with employment and tailored support services (childcare, transportation).
- Reaching Home hosted staff and officials involved in the execution of Massachusetts’ Secure Jobs program to learn more about this model and how to effectively implement it in Connecticut.
- Reaching Home, in partnership with the Melville Charitable Trust and a funders collaborative, will launch the Secure Jobs CT pilot opportunity in November.

UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH

Unaccompanied youth remain largely invisible, often lacking community supports and disconnected from mainstream and homeless services. Reaching Home’s Youth workgroup has engaged in a number of activities to better understand and assist this hidden, highly vulnerable population.

- First ever study of homeless youth, **“Invisible No More,”** was completed and released in December 2013. The study interviewed 16 stakeholders and 98 youth who experienced homelessness.
- \$1 million was restored to the Homeless Youth Program, which will bring much needed crisis services to areas of the state where there currently are none.
- Youth workgroup leaders are meeting with state agencies to address the needs of youth under their care with housing instability.
- Subgroups are creating a blueprint to address the needs of youth with housing instability that will include:
 - Housing assistance and supportive services options: a Youth Mapping project developed an inventory of current options in CT and is formulating recommendations for a continuum of housing assistance options for youth.
 - Data: a statewide Youth Count, coordinated by CCEH, will take place with the Point In Time (PIT) count in January 2015.
 - A proposal for a young adult supportive housing demonstration for kids age 18-26 most at-risk for chronic homelessness.

Better understanding runaway and homeless youth

Major findings of the **Invisible No More** study help us better understand the challenges facing unaccompanied youth:

- **32%** dropped out of school
- Over **60%** reported that their average income was between \$0 and \$4,499 or less than \$100 per week
- **24%** of the young people reported considering suicide over the last year
- Several youth reported that they had traded sex for money, a place to stay, and/or drugs or alcohol
- **24%** of the youth first experienced sexual intercourse at age 12 or under
- **50%** were arrested at least once in their lifetime
- **53%** of the young people reported family contact with the Department of Children and Families

CHANGING SYSTEMS

In addition to initiatives targeted to specific populations, there are a number of efforts being implemented that will change how homeless services are provided, accessed and evaluated.

- Complete roll out of Coordinated Access**
 By the end of 2014, CCEH, United Way 2-1-1, the Department of Housing (DOH), and local partner agencies across the state will complete the roll out of Coordinated Access to homeless services across Connecticut, allowing providers across a community to work together through “Coordinated Access Networks” to respond to the needs of those experiencing homelessness. The entire state has adopted a single assessment tool to consider each client’s level of need.
- Achieve HMIS conversion across the state**
 Led by CCEH, the entire state will collect data on homelessness using a unified and standard data system by the end of 2014, making Connecticut one of the few states to do so.
- Improve integration of housing and health services**
 A new initiative, led by the Partnership for Strong Communities (PSC) in cooperation with the CT Hospital Association (CHA) and funded by the CT Health Foundation, aims to reduce re-hospitalizations and readmissions for people who are homeless or unstably housed. Pilot community care teams have launched or are launching at five hospitals around the state.
- Increase production of housing targeted to extremely low-income households**
 State-funded housing initiatives were altered to better serve vulnerable households, increasing targeting for extremely low-income households, incentivizing set-asides for homeless individuals and Veterans, and specifically including a focus on ending homelessness in a special projects round.
- Implement 100-day challenges, registry weeks**
 New Haven providers have led the way in identifying new, effective ways to work with clients and stretch system capacity through their 100-day initiative with the Rapid Results Institute, brought to the state by CCEH. Several other communities in Connecticut are planning to launch 100-day initiatives in 2015.
- Build developer capacity to create housing that serves low-income households**
 The Connecticut Housing Coalition’s Affordable Housing Academy, focused on building developer capacity to produce high quality affordable and supportive housing, was launched and will continue through 2015.
- Expand enrollment, retention and agency capacity for Medicaid financed services**
 Since March 2014, the Corporation for Supportive Housing’s Medicaid Institute for Supportive Housing Agencies (MISHA) has led eight supportive housing service provider agencies through a multi-session program aimed at building agency capacity to access Medicaid benefits and apply for capacity-building grant support from the Melville Charitable Trust.
- Enhance sustainable mainstream funding for the supportive housing workforce**
 An amendment plan for Medicaid aimed at developing an authorized package of supportive services for individuals who are homeless, underserved, high cost beneficiaries of Medicaid has been fully developed and is under discussion with state officials.

LOOKING AHEAD

The year ahead will present new challenges and new opportunities. Many of the initiatives described in this report are in various stages of transforming how we address homelessness. At the heart of these efforts is the knowledge that we must seek to understand the needs of the individuals and families experiencing homelessness and address those unique needs. One size will not fit all. But if we think creatively, learn from each other, coordinate our resources and effectively target them, we will be able to assist the men, women and children who experience homelessness in our state in finally reaching home.

Published September 2014

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

- Prevent & end homelessness among Veterans by 2015.
- Finish the job of ending chronic homelessness 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.