

Fostering economic security for the most vulnerable

High housing costs may drive homelessness, but poverty reinforces it. People experiencing homelessness have an urgent need for income, but are the least connected to training and employment opportunities.

To tackle this problem, the Reaching Home Campaign's Economic Security Workgroup - made up of partners from across the state focused on employment and income growth for vulnerable populations - recommends sustainability and expansion of the Pathways to Independence (PTI) model for people who are chronically homeless and have more intensive service needs. PTI is a holistic approach to improving income growth and employment that was piloted by Columbus House in New Haven. It is targeted to people experiencing homelessness who have complex and chronic health and behavioral issues.

Pathways to Independence: Economic mobility as a bridge to housing stability & better health

THE PROBLEM: Breaking the cycle of poverty, disability & homelessness

Chronic homelessness is expensive for individuals, families and communities - and linked to extreme poverty and poor health. Lack of income creates barriers to housing and contributes to returns to homelessness.

People who are homeless, and people with disabilities who are homeless, have been unable to effectively access the two mainstream sources of income – Social Security benefits and the labor market.

THE SOLUTION: Pathways to Independence

Pathways to Independence uses a coordinated and multidisciplinary team to increase income and economic mobility for adults with disabilities experiencing homelessness as part of a rapid exits from shelter strategy:

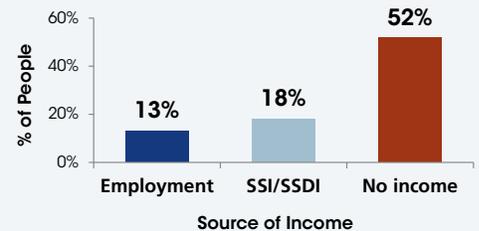
➔ Step 1. Increase income through mainstream sources

- *Social Security Benefits* - expedite access using proven SOAR practice
- *Employment* - tailored job placement & retention supports
- *Benefits Counseling* - to inform benefits and/or employment decisions; to keep focus on income sustainability

➔ Step 2. Expand economic mobility - link to housing, healthcare & skills for success

- Prioritize access to subsidized housing (supportive & affordable)
- Expand access to non-subsidized rental market by negotiating rent affordability with landlord networks
- Use patient navigators to link with behavioral health and primary health
- Build skills with financial literacy classes, peer coaching/mentors

Income sources for people experiencing homelessness



Source: DSS Emergency Shelter Statewide Demographic Report, annual period October 2011-September 2012, adult-only households, Table 12: Source of Income (excludes records that "did not enter" data)

Last updated August 2014



Opening Doors in Connecticut...

...to a Future Where **Everyone** Has a Home

THE PTI TEAM: Busting silos, building partnerships & fostering better outcomes

- Homeless/housing providers – coordinate team, identify and engage individuals experiencing homelessness, provide housing specialist to offer support with housing applications
- SSA & Disability Determinations Services – expedite Social Security decisions
- Vocational rehabilitation/employment specialists – provide benefits counseling and tailored employment supports (including supported employment)
- Healthcare organizations – provide health/clinical assessments and primary and behavioral health services

When I first met Rachel, she spent most days near the shelter, picking up old cigarettes or eating food from garbage cans. I introduced myself to her, bringing her food regularly as she waited to enter the shelter.

After some time, I obtained signed medical releases and began to gather important information including past trauma, mental health services, and more recent life activities including attending college. In applying for Social Security benefits I learned of her substantial past work history.

Upon approval, Rachel received \$800/month in benefits, and was assisted in managing this with a representative payee. She then began to engage in mental health treatment, and began a new regimen of medication that greatly diminished her psychiatric symptoms. This seemed to help her in meeting regularly with her case manager, and Rachel then successfully applied for supportive housing.

After moving in to her apartment, we noticed almost immediately that Rachel felt at home in her new community. She began to pay more attention to her appearance and also made new friends. Rachel is no longer reliant on the shelters - she has a new home, friends, better health, and better quality of life.

- Libby Protzman, SOAR Benefits Administrator, Pathways to Independence, Columbus House, Inc.

THE RESULTS FROM NEW HAVEN'S EXPERIENCE:

During the first two years of operation, the PTI pilot in New Haven assisted 107 people to obtain **\$1.3 million in combined SSA benefits and employment income.**

Income – Social Security

Average monthly SSI award	\$578/mo
Average monthly SSDI award	\$1,228/mo
Total Cumulative Retroactive SSA Income:	\$617,089
Avg per person SSA award	\$19,284

Income – Employment

Total people employed	75
Avg starting wage	\$10.18/hour
Hours/week (avg)	31 hours
Total Cumulative Income	\$711,635
Avg per person	\$9,488

Housing

Total People Housed	101
Subsidized Housing	85
Non-subsidized housing	16

Healthcare

Primary care referrals	41
% of total assessments	73%
MH/SA referrals	44
% total assessments	79%

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