

COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE PLAN ON HOMELESSNESS

The broader CHS priorities and strategies build a foundation for affordable housing for all income levels throughout the state. The strategies and intended outcomes, if carried out, will change the nature of the housing market so that it is more equitable, predictable, consistent across the state, and is intentionally addressing housing shortages at all income tiers. The CHS plan asserts the importance of housing production for the state's economy; if working families cannot afford housing, there is not a thriving future for residents.

The transition from housing to homelessness has stagnated at an unsustainable level in New Hampshire. 70% of people experiencing homelessness are for the first time and few households have been able to permanently leave homelessness. This is in large part due to lack of housing that is both affordable and available.

The State Plan on Homelessness focuses on the need to understand the nuances of the homelessness experience. The plan focuses into the delivery of homelessness prevention assistance, street outreach and service coordination efforts, targets housing needs and strategies for various subpopulations, and enhances the connections and collaboration between the many systems of services that touch those experiencing homelessness.

Homelessness in New Hampshire impacts less than 1%¹ of the state's population but has persistently impacted upwards of 4,000² households per year and approximately 1,300 at any given point in time. Within these figures is a story; the number of people who are long-term homeless with at least one disability is on the rise, and at the same time on average 70% of people experiencing homelessness in each of the past four years were considered "new," with no prior homeless service experience.

And while the Point in Time Homeless Count, required annually by HUD, documents a relatively low number of youth and young adults aged 18-24 experiencing homelessness, there is cause for concern. early 4,000 students identified in New Hampshire Public Schools as homeless. While the Department of Education has a much broader definition of homelessness, including school children experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness, this number is concerning for the children of New Hampshire today and for the future. As noted by the New Hampshire Coalition to End Homelessness in the 2020 State of Homelessness Report, "research shows that the stress, uncertainty, and instability of one or more homeless experiences can have long term impacts on the physical, emotional, cognitive, social, and behavioral development of children." These figures are an indicator of severe housing instability that is likely to be a source of ongoing need for affordable housing and a coordinated homelessness response both now and as these students age to their own independence.

This data points to real challenges that create new and increased opportunities for change. The pandemic revealed issues already known to providers of homelessness response services – that housing is a public health response. The pandemic also provided a clear and urgent necessity to collaborate and respond in new ways without delay. Many of these practices are described in the strategic plan below to sustain and retain lessons learned for a more proactive response.

¹ <https://www.usich.gov/homelessness-statistics/nh>

² <https://www.nhceh.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2020-State-of-Homelessness-in-NH-Report-Online-Final-compressed-1.pdf>

STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

This plan proposes an array of priorities and strategies that use varying combinations of housing and services to both prevent homelessness, to transition people in shelters and on the street as quickly as possible to housing and ensure long term housing stability. Guided by person-centered principles and the overarching goal to have homelessness **rare, brief and one-time**, the strategies lead to measurable changes in reduction of homelessness and housing instability. This will not happen overnight, and there must be a deep commitment at the state and local-level of leadership, providers, and stakeholders. Homelessness is a complex issue that necessitates a statewide vision to guide the local response by reshaping resource pathways and coordinated actions. This plan is informed by people with lived experience of homelessness, direct services providers, advocates, policy makers, and community developers.

The belief is that New Hampshire can take action to make changes needed to ensure homelessness is rare, brief, and one-time.

Addressing and ultimately ending homelessness in New Hampshire requires the development of a highly coordinated response by leaders at all levels for resources to be easier to access by people and communities, improve coordination and collaboration, reduce duplication, and improve outcomes together. This can be done by committing to a growth plan for interventions that promote housing options that enable people to remain in their community, updating policies that inhibit housing stability, which result in the uneven distribution of options for affordable housing and safety net support across the state, and using data to drive decision-making at local and state levels.

The strategic plan will guide the actions, investments, and policy changes that improve the state's human resources and housing infrastructure beginning July 2021 through June 2024. The purpose of the shorter-term strategic plan is to keep stakeholders engaged to evaluate progress and modify goals and strategies in an effort to respond to the data and experience in the community.

Direct Feedback Shaped the Plan including that CSH conducted three surveys to establish priorities, gather feedback on how the current systems function, and what will propel change moving forward. In all 162 people responded, including 8 Mayors, 85 system stakeholders, and 69 people with lived experience. Each set of responses built on similar themes, all with a call to action for increased housing that is available and affordable, quality services that are person-centered, increased services that are easy to access in communities; organized and coordinated across networks, cities, and regions.

People with Lived Experience reflected an overwhelming need for more housing units that are available to move out of shelters. Respondents remarked that in communities where there are jobs, housing is not available. There is a need for jobs that pay a living wage. For the resources that do exist there are waiting lists and it is difficult to navigate. During the service navigation process people expressed a feeling of dehumanization and fear at the prospect of being homeless, especially for those with children.

Rent is ridiculous. And there's hardly any all year around shelters. Subsidized housing or vouchers take forever to get.

System Stakeholders provided a similar view on housing and services—that more of both are needed. In addition to more housing resources available to people exiting homelessness, there is a need to address how landlords treat people with poor credit and criminal records; engagement of landlords needs to be done with incentives

and support of those participating in partnerships. Stakeholders noted that capacity is low within provider agencies meaning that staff are stretched thin, service caseloads are high, and there is not enough agency leadership to expand programming that is badly needed in the community. Addressing encampments in a compassionate and strategic way was a common theme, along with building upon coordinated efforts across street outreach teams that had been successful during COVID-19 response. Stakeholders identified key policy areas to address around funding, removal of barriers to housing development, cross-systems partnerships, and rely on data and the voice of people with lived experience to guide decision-making.

I don't think it's a training issue—
I think it's a "having enough people to
do a thorough job on an individualized
level with vulnerable individuals
and families" issue.

Mayors from a subset of communities in seven of ten counties responded. This group expressed a strong feeling of both responsibility, concern, and yet disconnection from the main source of resources and policies that shape the majority of the response to homelessness. Those who responded are seeking leadership from the state level and within counties, who are viewed as having more financial leverage, and can assist with the

localized response. While all communities are required to respond to residents in financial crises, there are uneven and inconsistent responses across all towns and as a result the participating Mayor's feel their communities are shouldering a disproportionate amount of financial responsibility through local welfare. Some ideas from respondents include homeless day centers in each county with 24/7 homeless prevention access, enhanced case management support, and increased affordable and supportive housing options. There are deep needs for mental health capacity as well as services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The crux of the mayoral responses is that their local welfare systems are not designed to meet the deep and varying needs of those presenting in financial and social crises in the community, and this necessitates a higher level of leadership and response.

Equip the smaller towns for responses so issues don't overwhelm large cities.

A Note of Comparison to the 2006 Plan

Innumerable things have changed since 2006, the last time New Hampshire had a framework to address homelessness. In reflecting on the 2006 plan, many issues and strategies appear in this 2021 strategy road map. Both plans recommend the need for more housing and additional and coordinated services. The need to look at different ways of financing and funding, as well as addressing special populations. The 2021 plan adds new strategies and connections in an effort to ensure homeless is rare, brief, and one-time. The strategies focus on the connection between street outreach and housing assessments and housing placements. Services in housing are proposed with Medicaid as a funding stream which has the potential for a stable source of funding. Data is a component, looking at system performance measures across the three Continuum of Care's (CoC's). Best practices such as Housing First and low barrier shelter are guiding practices instead of new concepts. There is a greater recognition of the perspectives and needs of people with lived experience in shaping program and policy improvements.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

New Hampshire use a single goal as its north star over the next three years

Ensure that homelessness in New Hampshire is rare, brief, and one-time.

The following objectives were created to achieve and measure the North Star goal.



Objective 1: Improve housing stability focused on those at risk of homelessness.

In addition to the strategies outlined in Objective 1 of the Council Plan, the Council determined it is necessary to intentionally improve housing stability for those at risk of homelessness. Approximately 70% of households that enter homelessness each year are new. The data demonstrates the need for additional resources for short and medium term financial assistance for rent and utilities for people in economic crises as well as enhancing transitions for people as they maneuver through the different system of care. This challenge presents opportunities to stem the tide through strengthened safety net support and cross-agency planning to promote stable housing without accessing emergency shelter.



Objective 2: Invest in a range of housing options to increase the number of people leaving homelessness to stable housing.

As the State increases production of housing with the implementation of the strategies outlined in Council Plan objectives, the Council determined it is necessary to intentionally build options for housing people leaving homelessness. Over the past five years, the rate of households leaving the homeless system has declined, to where only 37% of households were able to leave homelessness for permanent, stable housing in 2019. This data is embedded in the trends of an overall housing deficit throughout the state, tight and costly housing market, and reluctance from current owners to lease to people with challenges. Permanent, affordable housing is the foundation on which sufficient and quality services are most effective for people in transition along with other specialized interventions. In addition to the scale and type of housing models needed, capacity is needed throughout the state. According to the State of Homelessness 2020, "43.5 percent of New Hampshire's overall homeless population residing in smaller, more rural communities, it is important that a statewide plan includes comprehensive initiatives that focus on local and regional solutions in all areas of the state."

"We need affordable housing, rent caps, better public transport, and training for landlords to not be discriminatory. Housing availability for individuals with eviction/criminal history."



Objective 3: Create a Coordinated and Person-Centered Response System.

Data drives solutions, partnerships, and resource appropriations. National data on homelessness has become highly sophisticated and has led to innovative strategies in particular for people with multiple complexities. It has also revealed that homelessness does not impact all groups equally, and that even in a state like New Hampshire, people of color have a disproportionate over representation. Behind the data are real people, with real expertise to improve programs, policies, and processes intended to end homelessness. As noted in the State of Homelessness 2020 report, the pandemic propelled cross-agency and system partnerships that were taking significant time to execute. Out of necessity, agencies responded very collaboratively to meet the needs of all residents and are seeking to maintain those operations moving forward post-pandemic.

COORDINATED ENTRY

New Hampshire has a statewide effort to improve how people facing homelessness are assessed for and connected to the available housing option that is right for their needs. This effort called “Coordinated Entry” is required by the Department of Housing and Urban Development so that community agencies work together to establish community priorities and ensure that people with high housing and services needs are offered available resources first. This is a movement away from “first come, first served,” which often left behind those experiencing long-term and unsheltered homelessness.

Across the three Continuums of Care there are 22 physical Coordinated Entry locations statewide, and residents can call 211 to be connected to the most appropriate location. Assessments and referrals are tracked in the Homelessness Management Information System. Data from 2020 demonstrates the deep unmet need for rental housing to help people exit homelessness.

In 2018, New Hampshire’s Continuums of Care began the rollout of a universal housing assessment that is also the process by which people are prioritized and matched to units within the homelessness system as they become available. The Department of Housing and Urban Development initiated the Coordinated Entry framework so that people who experience homelessness can have their needs and experiences consistently reflected and understood, that households will access housing resources that both meet their level of need, and ensure that homeless response systems are attending to people who experience long-term and chronic homelessness. The majority of persons touching the homeless CoC’s will receive a Standard Housing Assessment in Coordinated Entry; this data is also tracked in the Homelessness Management Information Systems.

Statewide Data for 2020 demonstrated that:

- ◆ 1,232 households were assessed for housing
 - ◇ 283 persons experiencing chronic homelessness
 - ◇ 924 single adults
 - ◇ 120 Families with children
 - ◇ 126 Youth 18-24
- ◆ Of those assessed, 164 households were matched to available supportive housing

As noted in the action plan, a full data dashboard of Coordinated Entry activity and outcomes is in development.

ONE-YEAR ACTION PLAN ON HOMELESSNESS

To advance these objectives in State Fiscal Year 2022 (June 30 2021–June 30, 2022) the following one-year action plan will be executed. The one-year action plan will be updated on an annual basis and published annually by November 30th.

Action	Lead	Time Goal	Lever for Change
 <p>Use ARP funds to increase homelessness prevention funding as an incentive to implement best practices for shelter diversion.</p>	Department of Health and Human Services, CoC's	2021–2023	Appropriations
 <p>Use ARP funds to increase shelter funding to promote best practice for shelter operations and for those those that increase and improve transitions to permanent supportive housing.</p>	Department of Health and Human Services,	2021–2023	Appropriations
 <p>Develop a workflow and operating policies to support homelessness prevention, shelter placement, and re-housing activities between Local Welfare, shelters, housing providers, and municipal and county leaders.</p>	CoC's, Community Action Programs (CAP)/ Regional Access Points	2021–2022	Partnership Development Capacity Building
 <p>Use ARP funds to launch a statewide campaign to recruit private landlords and provide a financial incentive for leasing to households using rental assistance vouchers.</p>	NHHFA	2021–2022	Appropriations
 <p>Use ARP -Homeless Assistance and Supportive Services Program (HASSP) to immediately acquire and repurpose property for affordable and supportive housing that will take referrals directly from Coordinated Entry in that region.</p>	NHHFA Community Development Finance Authority, CoC's	2021–2023	Appropriations Partnership Development

Action	Lead	Time Goal	Lever for Change
 <p>Create a services funding plan that sets an expected budget per household for new units created in the housing plan, with anticipated or identified sources of funding.</p>	<p>Department of Health and Human Services, NHHFA Community Development Finance Authority</p>	2021–2023	Appropriations
 <p>Build community capacity to bill Medicaid for Housing Tenancy Supports through training, policy development, and recruitment of appropriate providers;</p>	<p>Department of Health and Human Services</p>	2021–2023	Capacity Building Partnership Development
 <p>Developing training and resource material for first responders to have the tools necessary to assist individuals experiencing homelessness with immediate access to services.</p>	<p>Department of Health and Human Services Department of Safety</p>	2021-2023	Partnership Development Capacity Building
 <p>Apply to HUD for Youth Homelessness Demonstration funds to enhance and develop a statewide system to respond to youth and young adult homelessness.</p>	<p>Department of Health and Human Services</p>	Apply in 2021	Appropriations Capacity Building
 <p>Create a dedicated budget allocation in the BHS supports and DCYF that supports a statewide system to respond to youth and young adult homelessness.</p>	<p>Department of Health and Human Services</p>	2021–2022	Appropriations Capacity Building

THREE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN ON HOMELESSNESS

To advance these objectives the following three-year strategic plan will be executed. The three-year strategic plan will be reviewed on an annual basis and published annually by November 30th.



Objective 1: Improve housing stability focused on those at risk of homelessness.

- ◆ Use ARP funds to increase homelessness prevention funding to incentivize best practices for shelter diversion and demonstrate effectiveness, including:
 - ◇ Align definitions of homelessness prevention, shelter diversion, and eligibility across entities
 - ◇ Update workflows and operating policies across entities that support prevention
 - ◇ Track the number of individuals receiving prevention services by source
 - ◇ Test and implement a shelter diversion assessment and program for people seeking homeless assistance at shelters, Local Welfare Departments, and 211
 - ◇ Provide training on assessing, referring, and delivery of revised prevention and shelter diversion strategies
 - ◇ Build public awareness of resources and how to access them through targeted outreach campaigns
 - ◇ Direct funding for short-term financial and housing stability supports in collaboration with school systems to help homeless students
- ◆ Develop a workflow and operating policies to support homelessness prevention, shelter placement, and re-housing activities between Local Welfare, shelters, housing providers, and municipal and county leaders. Design and implement consistent outcome measures and program goals at the local, county, state, and CoC levels for all homeless response programs from prevention/diversion, shelter, outreach, supportive housing.
- ◆ Provide housing system navigation services targeted to people experiencing chronic homelessness assessed by Coordinated Entry.



Objective 2: Invest in a range of housing options to increase the number of people leaving homelessness to stable housing.

- ◆ Use ARP funds to launch a statewide campaign to recruit private landlords and provide a financial incentive for leasing to households using rental assistance vouchers.
- ◆ Use ARP -Homeless Assistance and Supportive Services Program (HASSP) to immediately acquire and repurpose property for affordable and supportive housing that will take referrals directly from Coordinated Entry in that region.
- ◆ Create at least three regional Medical Respite/Recuperative Care programs as a cost effective alternative to extended hospital stays for those experiencing homelessness.

- ◆ Establish coordinated street outreach partnerships with a lead entity in each region to engage with unsheltered households into services and coordinate with police and fire.
- ◆ Expand funding and programming of evidence-based and evidence-informed services models that are designed to help people access and maintain housing as well as establish on-going community-based service connections from health, mental health, employment, and education.
- ◆ Create a services funding plan that sets an expected budget per household for new units created in the housing plan, with anticipated or identified sources of funding.
- ◆ Build community capacity to bill Medicaid for Housing Tenancy Supports through training, policy development, and recruitment of appropriate providers.
- ◆ Recruit existing affordable housing resources to take direct referrals from Coordinated Entry to increase people exiting homelessness to stable housing.
- ◆ Create Moving On initiatives to create resource pathways for supportive housing tenants to move on to other affordable housing.
- ◆ Develop a flexible rental assistance program using private foundation, healthcare, or general revenue funding that pays for a combination of rent and services to increase exits out of homelessness.



Objective 3: Create a Coordinated and Person-Centered Response System.

- ◆ Increase leadership opportunities for people with lived experience of homelessness by creating a Statewide Lived Experience Advisory Board/Council (10-20 members), increasing minimum participation standards within each Continuum of Care, and ensure the Lived Experience Advisory Board has formal voice in CoC affairs and the ongoing work of the Council on Housing Stability.
- ◆ Engage and train across systems about discharge planning and how to avert from homelessness.
- ◆ Increase statewide adoption of harm reduction, trauma informed care, and other service modalities at every stage of engagement, including the expansion of low-barrier shelter capacity.
- ◆ Create a dedicated budget allocation in the BHS supports and DCYF that supports a statewide system to respond to youth and young adult homelessness.
- ◆ Assess and refine Coordinated Entry processes at least annually.
- ◆ Develop harm reduction and low-demand shelter capacity for people with active behavioral health needs.
- ◆ Sustain the Ending Veteran Homelessness initiatives.
- ◆ Expand the partnership between the Doorways substance use system and the homeless systems to improve housing and service outcomes for unsheltered homeless with substance use issues.
- ◆ Use data to inform racial disparities in service delivery and resource access and address issues.

- ◆ Publish a dynamic Coordinated Entry Data Dashboard for all three Continuums of Care (CoC) to demonstrate real-time data on housing needs and housing outcomes by regions;
- ◆ Create regional subgroups within the CoC's to understand data, troubleshoot and improve local resource deployment, support Coordinated Entry, and implement strategies in the State Plan;
- ◆ Develop a data integration or data sharing partnership to support changes in policy and programming between homelessness, corrections, and state Medicaid;

HOMELESS MEASURES AND TARGET METRICS

The Council will consider the following metrics to evaluate the New Hampshire State Plan 2021–2024 where applicable and measurable in that time frame. The Council will report on measurable impacts and update annually in November as part of the Council Plan.

Measure	Current Metric	Target Metric
Increase the number of individuals diverted from homelessness via prevention programs.	No current metric exists.	Compile existing data sources to establish a baseline; Propose metrics for change
Reduce overall homelessness	4,451 individuals were served in the homeless system in FY20	By 2024, reduce overall homelessness by 30%, or 1,386 households
Continue to reduce the number of households experiencing homelessness for the first time.	3,422 households in 2019, down from 4,246 in 2015	By 2024, reduce first-time homelessness by 30% or 1,000 households
Reduce unsheltered homelessness	348 households in 2020 Point in Time Count	By 2024, reduce unsheltered homelessness by 30% or 104 households
Accelerate the trend of reducing the number of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness	264 in 2020, including 77 families with children	By 2024, reduce unsheltered homelessness by 30%, or 125 households
Increase the rate in which individuals and families are exiting from homelessness to housing. Known as a “positive system exit”.	37.4% in 2019, a steady decline since 2015, at 50.8%	By 2024, increase exits to permanent housing to 50%; reverse the trend (do not decrease in positive exits)

Measure	Current Metric	Target Metric
Increase the number of available Permanent Supportive Housing units	1,131 homeless-dedicated supportive units in 2019	By 2024, add 200 new units to the production pipeline
Increase the number of RRH Units	213 units in 2019	By 2024 double the Rapid Rehousing Capacity to 425 units available
Increase the representation of people with lived expertise on the CoC Board	Requirement is at least 1 on the governing board - Client action board/Lived Experience	Establish 1 statewide Lived Experience Advisory Board/ council (10-20 members); increase local representation —increasing minimum participation—marching toward balanced/equal representation
End Veterans homelessness by the year 2022	Currently one measure outstanding to achieve status of ending Veteran homelessness	Align metrics with Ending Veteran Homelessness Initiative; Establish Functional Zero definition
Increase discharges from public institutions directly into stable housing, averting homelessness. (i.e. corrections, recovery homes, mental health facilities)	No current metric exists.	Assess data and set measure
Reduce family homelessness by 10% by 2024	1,577 families experienced homelessness in 2019	Reduce by 10% to 1,420 annually by 2024
Reduce Youth Homelessness by 25% by 2024	84 unaccompanied youth during 2019 Point in Time Count.	Establish a baseline through a specific Youth Homeless Count
Reduce homelessness among school students/re-enrollment into U.S. Department of Education McKinney-Vento homeless services	School Year 2017-2018: 3,982 New Hampshire public school students were reported as homeless, 75% of which were doubled up.	Metrics to be determined