

Edward M. Augustus, Jr.  
City Manager



CITY OF WORCESTER

## **First Annual Report**

### **Housing First Coordinating Council**

**December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

#### Background

In February 2018, Worcester City Manager Edward M. Augustus, Jr. appointed a 28-member Task Force to reverse the three-year rise in the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness in the City of Worcester. The Task Force was charged with developing a plan to engage the appropriate community infrastructure necessary to support and sustain a long-term system of permanent supportive housing within the City of Worcester. The Task Force engaged in a four-month process that drew from broad-based community representation, with expertise on chronic homelessness and the Housing First approach. This Task Force for Sustaining Housing First Solutions and community stakeholders developed a list of 26 recommendations with the overarching goal to achieve a “functional zero”<sup>i</sup> of adult chronic homelessness<sup>ii</sup> in the City of Worcester by building upon and enhancing a community response that incorporates the five components of Housing First: Crisis Response System; Housing Supply and Rental Assistance; Support Services; Housing Stabilization System; and a Data-Driven System. These recommendations were accepted by the Worcester City Council on July 9, 2018.

Since the acceptance of these recommendations by the Worcester City Council, the Housing First Coordinating Council meets quarterly to receive feedback from all four working groups. Four working groups comprised of members of the Coordinating Council and additional community members meet regularly to work on moving forward the recommendations. The following is a report on the status of these 26 recommendations one-year after their approval by City Council. The purpose of the Housing First Coordinating Council is to oversee and monitor the progress of the four working groups and to assist and enhance their work as they address the 3 overarching recommendations which are included in the 26 recommendations. Additionally the Housing First Coordinating council is able to advocate to the legislators and policymakers regarding the needs that the four working groups are facing in order to reach “functional zero” of adult chronic homeless in the City of Worcester. The Housing First Coordinating council has a wide representation of all social service providers in the City of Worcester as well as entrepreneurs

and organizations for the purpose of acquiring resources and financial assistance to support the construction of housing units that will house chronic homeless individuals in the upcoming year 2020.

### **Coordinating Council Members:**

Edward M. Augustus, Jr, Chair

Andrew Taylor  
**Assistant Chief Development  
Officer, Executive Office of  
Economic Development**

Alex Corrales  
**CEO/Executive Director –  
Worcester Housing  
Authority**

Amanda Wilson  
**Director, Housing/Health  
Inspections City of  
Worcester**

Brian Bickford  
**Central Mass Regional  
Manager, Eliot CHS  
Homeless Services**

Christopher M. O'Keeffe  
**Vice President for Program,  
Greater Worcester  
Community Foundation**

Doug Quattrochi  
**CEO/Executive Director  
Mass Landlords Inc.**

Dave McMahon  
**CEO/Executive Director  
Dismas House**

Emily Cooper  
**EOEA Chief Housing Officer**

Grace Carmark  
**CEO/Executive Director  
Central Massachusetts  
Housing Alliance**

Janice Yost  
**President, The Health  
Foundation of Central  
Massachusetts, Inc.**

Jim Cuddy  
**CEO/Executive Director  
South Middlesex  
Opportunity Council**

Nicole Gagne  
**CEO/Executive Director  
Community Health Link**

Ken Bates  
**CEO/Executive Director  
Open Sky**

Matilde Castiel MD  
**Commissioner of Health and  
Human Services**

Michelle Smith  
**CEO/Executive Director AIDS  
Projects Worcester**

Paul Therrien  
**Consumer Advisory Board**

Richard Gonzalez  
**Net of Compassion  
Hotel Grace**

Robyn Kennedy  
**Associate Executive  
Director, YWCA**

Stephanie Page  
**CEO/Executive Director  
Abby's House**

Susan Gentili  
**Chief Homeless Manager  
South Middlesex  
Opportunity Council**

Tim Garvin  
**President and CEO  
United Way of Central  
Massachusetts**

James Cuddy  
**Executive Director  
South Middlesex  
Opportunity Council**

Sharon Krefetz  
**Professor Emerita  
Clark University**

## **Working Group Members:**

### **Data and Evaluation**

Brian Bickford

Chris O’Keeffe, Chair

Danielle LaRiviere

Evis Terpollari

Jim Cruickshank

Jack Moran

Jerry Schlater

Jan Yost

Ron Hayes

Susan Gentili

Sharon Krefetz

### **Crisis Response**

Richard Gonzalez, Chair

Amaryllis Chaves/Aleska Lara

Brian Bickford

Evis Terpollari

Juliet Lesperance

Matilde Castiel

### **Housing Supply and Stabilization**

James Brooks, Chair

Alex Corrales

Amanda Wilson

Amy Grassette

Anna Rice

Antonella Lisanti-

Park

Donna Warshaw

Michelle Smith

Doug Quattrochi

Evis Terpollari

Grant Buchanan

Jan Yost

Jennifer Halstrom

Jim Cuddy

Juan A. Gomez

Katherine Person

Linda Cavaioli

Matilde Castiel

Michelle Smith

Rachlin Faye

Robyn Kennedy

Ron Hayes

Susann Ferraro

Terecita Figueroa

Tim McMahon

### **Supportive Services**

Brian Bickford & Keith Wales, Co-Chairs

Alfredo Noguera

Amaryllis Chaves

Amy Grasstte

Antonella Lisanti-Park

David McMahon

Emily Cooper

Evis Terpollari

James Cruickshank

Jennifer Halstrom,

Juliet L'Esperance

Karen Duby

Katherine Person

Linford Cunningham

Matilde Castiel

Meghan McLeod

Paul Therrien

Robyn Kennedy

Ryan Rodrigues

Stephanie Page

Taylor Lacroix

Terecita Figueroa

## **Task Force Recommendations and Status Report**

### **OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**1. Public entities, and nonprofit organizations, as well as private landlords should work together to produce 103 housing units with rental assistance and continue to preserve and develop adequate units for those who become chronically homeless in future years. About half of these units should be completed by December 31, 2019, and the other half by July 1, 2020.**

#### **Status of Response:**

1. The Housing Supply and Stabilization Working Group has met approximately every six weeks during the past year and members have reached out to various developers and building owners as well as nonprofit service providers to encourage the creation of additional housing units. Currently, there are four projects at various points of predevelopment with the potential of developing up to 88 units of housing out of the 103 housing units that will be built in the upcoming years.
  - i. The Worcester Housing Authority (WHA) has been approved by DHCD for a 25-unit modular single room occupancy (SRO) project.
  - j. The South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC) has been approved by DHCD for an 18-unit modular SRO project.
  - k. DHCD has approved the pre-applications and invited Worcester Housing Authority (25 units) & SMOC (18 units) to submit full One Stop Applications by Dec. 5, 2019, for a total of 43 the micro-modular housing units to address adult chronic homelessness.
  - ii. East Side Community Development Corporation (CDC) and CIVICO Development are currently exploring with Open Sky Community Services the development of 20 housing units which are designed as a Tiny House Village.
  - iii. Worcester Community Housing Resources (WCHR) in partnership with Community Healthlink is exploring the development of a 25 Tiny House Village model.

**2. All community housing entities and mainstream support service providers that serve adults who experience homelessness should become part of the Worcester City & County Continuum of Care (CoC) Coordinated Entry Systemic (CES), aimed at providing housing subsidies with individualized support services prioritized for chronically homeless individuals.**

#### **Status of Response:**

The City of Worcester has encouraged all organizations serving the adult chronic homeless population to participate in the Worcester City and Continuum of Care (CoC) Coordinated Entry

System (CES). Full participation is occurring and the CES committee regularly assesses participation and whether there are new providers who should be invited.

**3. The City Manager should establish and support a “Sustaining Housing First Solutions Coordinating Council,” which will meet quarterly at a minimum to ensure a coordinated community-wide system that acts with urgency, and embodies these essential elements:**

- a. Actionable, measurable goals;**
- b. Clear, accountable leadership;**
- c. Prioritized access to housing, with active case conferencing that respects confidentiality;**
- d. Public commitment & transparent reporting;**
- e. Funder education, alignment & sufficiency of resources.**

**Status of Response:**

The City Manager appointed the members of the Housing First Coordinating Council on September 26, 2018, with a quarterly meeting schedule to activate implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force, with the essential elements outlined above. The Coordinating Council met on October 10, 2018, January 16, 2019, May 29, 2019, and September 25, 2019.

**RECOMMENDED SYSTEM COMPONENTS:**

**Crisis Response System**

**4. Outreach providers serving the chronic homeless should continue to build upon a coordinated system to deploy staff to locations most frequented by people who are unsheltered to engage and connect individuals to services and supports.**

**Status of Response:**

Outreach workers South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC), Elliot Community Human Services, Veterans Inc, City of Worcester Quality of Life, Worcester Program for Addiction and Recovery (WPAR), Open Sky, Community Health Link (CHL), Family Health Center (FHCW), Aids Project Worcester (APW), Living in Freedom Together (LIFT), LUK Inc meet on a monthly bases to discuss targeted outreach services in the City of Worcester, and continue to engage with chronic homeless individuals in various locations.

**5. Shelter providers should continue to follow best practices, which include “low barrier” access, safe environment, and appropriate diversion through problem-solving conversations.**

**Status of Response:**

Both SMOC’s Greater Worcester Housing Connection, the primary shelter, and Hotel Grace, the winter overflow shelter, serving the city of Worcester and Worcester County, are considered low-threshold. These shelters make minimal demands on their clients, with greater priority placed on safety and harm-reduction. The Crisis Response Working Group has met quarterly for the purpose of discussing access to shelters that are not low-threshold, such as the Veterans’ shelter. The Council’s objective is to assess current practices and propose a plan for shifting these shelters to a low-threshold model. South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC) is also looking to transfer their second floor Single Room Occupancy units (SROs) to another location. They aim to repurpose that space, with half of the floor dedicated to female-only units and the other half reserved for clients in recovery or with no history of substance use disorder. SMOC has had an initial conversation with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to discuss options for transferring their SROs. If approved, this move will allow SMOC to better serve the individual needs of their clients.

**6. The Coordinating Council should explore the establishment and piloting of an early warning system in the community that includes a Housing First Retention Fund, an adequate triage and assessment system of diversion, alternative residential or service referral, and reunification/relocation where appropriate, and rapid re-housing to prevent people from becoming homeless or to limit shelter stays.**

**Status of Response:**

The Crisis Response and the Data and Evaluation Working Groups continue to discuss and have taken steps towards the establishment and piloting of an early warning system in the community that includes homeless prevention funds through supportive services in the City of Worcester.

The City of Worcester has already introduced a Hub/COR initiative with weekly meetings that bring key community, social services, and police agencies together to provide support services to high-risk and chronic homeless individuals. These meetings serve as a platform to collaboratively evaluate and address household needs on a case-by-case basis. In addition, this initiative is increasing cross-functional collaboration between agencies and driving continuous improvement by helping the city identify the methods that are working well.

Following a Housing First model, already in practice, the City of Worcester’s early warning system will include measures of affordable housing. Funds for rapid re-housing will continue to be made

available through the Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance (CMHA), the Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP) through the Community Health Link (CHL), RCAP Solutions, and Community Legal Aid (CLA). Households are connected to these resources through the city's outreach workers and supportive service agencies such as Elliot Human Services, Open Sky and other outreach partners. The Quality of Life and its outreach partners meet on monthly bases to discuss the status of homeless individuals as well as assist each other with documentation regarding homeless/disability documentation for the purpose of presenting clients to the CoC working group.

While the City of Worcester works on building 103 units for chronically homeless individuals, the early warning system will place priority on educating the public about the resources that are available. The Quality of Life task force, for example, completes weekly outreach to places deemed uninhabitable by human standards and connects homeless individuals to services.

### **Housing Supply and Rental Assistance**

**7. The City and Coordinating Council should encourage the production of a variety of housing units that are affordable for people with extremely low incomes, from individual scattered sites to small (e.g., 10-15 units) and moderate-sized (e.g., 25 units) congregate sites, which would include on-site resident managers, to accommodate the various current needs of clients, including special populations, and anticipate the need in future years.**

#### **Status of Response:**

The City of Worcester has conditionally committed a total of \$300,000 in federal HUD HOME funds for projects from two different agencies: South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC) and WHA. These funds will help leverage state funding for the 43 total units proposed.

WHA and its legal instrumentality, Building Futures, Inc. (BFI), is pursuing funding from various state and federally funded programs, including HUD HOME, in the amount of \$200,000 for the construction of 25 studio apartments to house the chronically homeless. SMOC is pursuing the construction of 18 studio apartments for the same purpose.

The Landlord-Tenant Guarantee Program will incentivize landlords to rent housing units to chronically homeless individuals identified by the Support Services Partner (i.e., CMHA/CoC's coordinated entry system) who are placed into rental housing across the City of Worcester using a Landlord Guarantee for 24 months. The Landlord Guarantee will provide up to \$10,000 per unit to cover unpaid rent, property damage and attorney's fees.

**8. The City and the Coordinating Council should assist in identifying sources of capital for the development of housing for the chronic homeless, including the enhancement of a Worcester-based low interest loan fund.**

**Status of Response:**

The following six local financial institutions have committed \$4.5 million to participate as a consortium in capitalizing and administering the Finally Home Loan Fund at a below-market rate: Bay State Savings Bank, Commerce Bank/Division of Berkshire Bank, Fidelity Bank, IC Federal Credit Union, UniBank, and Webster Five. The consortium will evaluate and approve all loan applications and will provide a prorated share of each loan. Webster Five is the lead financial institution and as such will convene the consortium and manage the underwriting and servicing of the loans. The following organizations have committed \$500,000 each to guarantee the loans, enabling the loans to be made at below-market rate: Greater Worcester Community Foundation, The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts, and UMass Memorial Health Care.

**9. The City and the Coordinating Council should assist in identifying and advocating for sources of rental assistance or operating support to ensure the rents are affordable for tenants who have experienced chronic homelessness.**

**Status of Response:**

WHA is amending their Administrative Plan in order to target vouchers for chronically homeless individuals through the efforts of the Housing First Coordinating Council. The CoC is conducting procurement of the rental assistance by increasing supportive services as well as increasing the number of the CoC projects.

**10. The Coordinating Council should review and advice lenders on proposals to access funds from the Worcester-based loan fund established to house the chronic homeless population, with the City offices that already review housing-related projects.**

**Status of Response:**

The Finally Home Loan Fund has opened with \$4.5 million available for loans from the consortium of financial institutions, accompanied by a \$1.5 million loan guarantee pool. Initial inquiries by potential applicants regarding the guidelines and the process for applying to the loan fund are directed to The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts and the Executive Office of Economic Development- Housing Development Division from the City of Worcester will also participate in this process.

The four projects mentioned in the response to Recommendation 1 intend to access short term construction financing through the Finally Home Loan Fund.

**11. The CoC should continue to prioritize its HUD funding applications for Housing First programs and the expansion of the number of permanent supportive housing units, targeting especially those chronic homeless subpopulations that are the most difficult to house.**

**Status of Response:**

The CoC has prioritized a Housing First Approach targeted at the single adult chronic homeless population in its applications to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding in 2019 and 2020. Unit vacancy rates decreased for households without children from 12% in 2017 to 3.33% in 2018 to 1.04% during the first quarter of 2019. This information comes from the Coordinated Entry System (CES) which is part of the Continuum of Care (CoC).

<sup>1</sup> **Safe Haven** - An early Service Intensive Care model to address chronic homeless individuals

<sup>2</sup> **CH Dedicated Beds** – A project aimed at providing housing and supportive services for chronically homeless households.

<sup>3</sup> **DedicatedPLUS** - Permanent Supportive Housing Project (PH-PSH) project where the entire project will serve individuals and families that meet certain criteria and are considered chronically homelessness as defined in 24 CFR 578.3.

<sup>4</sup> **GWHC** – Greater Worcester Housing Connection

<sup>5</sup> **SMOC** – South Middlesex Opportunity Council

<sup>6</sup> **SHP**- Supportive Housing Project with Case Management Supportive Services

<sup>7</sup> **PSH**- Permanent Supportive Housing

<sup>8</sup> **Worcester Housing Plus Support**- Permanent Supportive Housing with Case Management

The Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance (CMHA) Awarded FY18/FY19

FY18 Chronically Homeless projects:

- Genesis Supportive Housing:  
12 beds (Households Without Children)
- GWHC<sup>4</sup> Welcome Home Countywide Supportive Housing Program:  
29 beds (Households Without Children)
- SMOC<sup>5</sup> Greater Worcester Housing Connection SHP<sup>6</sup>:  
16 beds (Households Without Children)
- Green House:  
10 beds (Households Without Children);  
7 CH-Dedicated beds; 3 DedicatedPLUS beds)
- 1. Leighton Street:  
15 beds (Households Without Children: 15 Dedicated PLUS beds)
- 2. South County Homeless Project:  
12 beds (Households With Children: 6 CH-Dedicated beds; Households Without Children: 6 CH-Dedicated beds)
- 3. Supportive Housing for the Disabled:  
18 beds (Households With Children: 18 DedicatedPLUS beds)
- 4. Worcester Area Rental Assistance Project:  
42 beds (Households With Children: 15 DedicatedPLUS beds; Households Without Children: 15 CH-Dedicated beds, 12 DedicatedPLUS beds)
- 5. Worcester Housing Plus Support<sup>8</sup>:  
65 beds (Households With Children: 22 DedicatedPLUS beds; Households Without Children: 25 CH-Dedicated beds, 18 DedicatedPLUS beds)

FY2019 Chronically Homeless projects:

1. Genesis Supportive Housing:  
12 beds (Households Without Children)
2. Greater Worcester Housing Connection (GWHC) Welcome Home Countywide Supportive Housing Program:  
29 beds (Households Without Children)
3. SMOC Greater Worcester Housing Connection SHP:  
16 beds Households Without Children)
1. Green House:  
10 beds (Households Without Children: 7 CH-Dedicated beds; 3 DedicatedPLUS beds)
2. GWHC PSH<sup>7</sup> 2019:  
25 beds (Households Without Children: 25 CH-Dedicated beds)
3. Leighton Street:  
15 beds (Households Without Children: 15 Dedicated PLUS beds)
4. South County Homeless Project:  
12 beds (Households With Children: 6 CH-Dedicated beds; Households Without Children: 6 CH-Dedicated beds)
5. Supportive Housing for the Disabled:  
18 beds (Households With Children: 18 DedicatedPLUS beds)
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42 beds (Households With Children: 15 DedicatedPLUS beds; Households Without Children: 15 CH-Dedicated beds, 12 DedicatedPLUS beds)
7. Worcester Housing Plus Support:  
65 beds (Households With Children: 22 DedicatedPLUS beds; Households Without Children: 25 CH-Dedicated beds, 18 DedicatedPLUS beds)

**12. The City should assist providers by continuing to sustain safety-related code enforcement to preserve safe housing, identifying properties appropriate for developing housing units, and when possible, donate City-owned property. The Coordinating Council should advise the City on regulations and zoning that promotes development of appropriate housing.**

**Status of Response:**

The City of Worcester has been conducting systematic sweeps using Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) in order to sustain safety-related code enforcement to preserve safe housing and identifying properties appropriate for development of housing units. The city annually provides CDBG fund to the Inspectional Services Division. These funds result in systematic inspection of specific low and moderate income census tracts. These systematic sweeps ensure housing units are meeting minimum sanitary and building code requirements.

The Following Items are under discussion:

- Repealing the ordinance that states, “The renting of rooms by a resident family may be allowed in a Residential District to not more than two (2) non-transients provided that no more than 3 persons, who are not within the second degree of kinship, are living in a dwelling unit”. By repealing this ordinance, the City could increase the number of housing units that are available in the City of Worcester.
- The City of Worcester is helping identify parcels for tiny house villages. Please note that this is subject to procurement.

**Support Services**

**13. Providers should assist chronically homeless clients to fully access healthcare, support and case management services through enrollment in an appropriate insurance product, including:**

- **MassHealth’s Community Support Program for People Experiencing Chronic Homelessness (CSPECH);**
- **MassHealth’s CSPECH for Seniors “Senior Care Options” (including Dual Eligibles);**
- **Commonwealth Care Alliance’s “One Care” (for Dual Eligibles between ages 21-64)**
- **Other products that may become available through the new ACO health care system**

**Status of Response:**

Providers assist chronically homeless clients during the Continuum of Care (COC) case conferencing to access healthcare, support and case management through appropriate Mass Health products. Clients from different social services agencies are assessed for homeless chronicity as part of the intake assessment process. Those clients who meet the criteria are referred to one of the MassHealth care management programs in order to receive ongoing support services that will help with housing retention as well as improved health outcomes.

**14. The CoC should continue to offer trainings on a regular basis for provider staff to help orient new staff, provide updates on eligibility and accessing CES, various benefits, and offer opportunities for peer learning on a variety of case management related topics, including accessing health insurance, social security and SNAP benefits, as well as motivational interviewing and engagement techniques. This should include mechanisms to receive ongoing feedback from local providers and clients.**

**Status of Response:**

For the purpose of comparison the CoC has held the following trainings between:

July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 through June 30<sup>th</sup> 2019 and July 1<sup>st</sup> 2019 through June 30<sup>th</sup> 2020.

Please review appendix (A) for a list of these trainings.

**15. The CoC should continue to ensure the full utilization of Community Health Workers, Recovery Navigators, and Certified Peer Specialists in providing culturally specific and person-centered housing stability services.**

**Status of Response:**

Recovery Navigators and Certified Peer Specialists participate in trainings led by The City of Worcester Police Department that aim to teach officers how to recognize and respond to mental health or addiction crisis and homelessness. The city is utilizing these resources in a continued effort to equip police officers with the tools they need to do their job safely and effectively.

Recovery Navigators in the City of Worcester are also engaged in outreach services and provide resources such as support groups, peer interactions, and community services. Certified Recovery Coaches provide strength based support for clients who struggle from addiction of drugs or alcohol and codependency, or other addictive behaviors. Mission Medicated Assisted Treatment (MAT), Worcester Program for Addiction and Recovery, and Eliot Human Services currently use certified

recovery coaches to provide culturally specific and person-centered stability services for persons who are seeking recovery from substance use disorder.

**16. If a gap in support services is identified, the Coordinating Council should evaluate capacity, eligibility, or other policies that prevent resources from being made available to those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. For example, Legal Assistance related to CORI barriers to housing and employment, assistance with transportation.**

**Status of Response:**

The initial objective was to review, discuss and prioritize on the Supportive Services recommendations. Through a group consensus process, recommendation 16 was chosen as a starting place. Over the course of many meetings we reviewed the capacity of the system that serves chronically homeless individuals. Each participating entity identified existing services and gaps.

In concert with this process, significant changes within the Homeless Outreach and Advocacy Program (HOAP) were implemented. Beginning on July 1, 2019: Clients must be Primary Care Patients of the program to receive Case Management and/or Behavioral Health services and the daily triage case management function has been removed. This has created a large gap within the Worcester Homeless Services System. There is no longer a daily, low barrier, open access option for individuals who are in need of general case management services. Prior to July 1, 2019 Triage case management was provided from Monday through Friday from 1p-4p. Homeless individuals had access to Case Managers that could assist with many of their needs. These changes have created a large gap within the Worcester Homeless Services System. There is no longer a daily, low barrier, open access option for individuals who are in need of general case management services.

The working group has discussed many different models and needs within the Homeless Services Continuum. Most importantly there is a need for better service coordination among providers as well as, a low barrier, open access option on a daily basis where triage personnel, recovery coaches, peer specialists and/or case managers can effectively engage, assess, and support the referral process to appropriate care and stabilization services to support the myriad of needs homeless individuals contend with including but not limited to:

- Housing
- Transportation
- Benefits acquisition
- Substance use disorder treatment (e.g. recovery coaching, medication assisted treatment)

- Specialized treatment modalities to address complex trauma (PTSD), Clothing, Primary and behavioral health care

When offered in a low threshold, trauma informed/strengths based environment, these services foster accessibility into the homeless services system of care. Triage case management could be offered through an agency or - more ideally- through a multi service resource center.

### **Housing Stabilization System**

**17. The City should explore the establishment and piloting of a Landlord-Tenant Insurance Fund, which reduces the perception of risk for private property owners and eliminates housing barriers on rental applications.**

#### **Status of Response:**

A Memorandum of Agreement was signed on August 5, 2019, between the City, The Health Foundation of Central MA Fund, Inc., Masslandlords, Inc., and Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance, Inc. to create the Landlord-Tenant Guarantee Program. The City has provided \$25,000 to pilot the program and is currently being solicited to new landlords. This program guarantees landlords who agree to waive certain eligibility requirements such as (CORI, credit history, evictions etc). This fund will reimburse landlords up to a \$10,000 in lost rent, court fees and property damages resulting from tenant behavior. Outreach to landlords through Masslandlords, Inc., the Continuum of Care (COC) and community partners is underway to recruit new landlords.

**18. The Coordinated Entry System should continue to prioritize chronically homeless persons as top priority for access to permanent supportive housing and other resources that can eliminate chronic homelessness.**

#### **Status of Response:**

The CoC has continued to prioritize housing the adult chronic homeless population through an enhanced Coordinate Entry System. Homeless service providers meet biweekly to review the readiness of clients for housing and those approved for housing are placed in a priority queue.

**19. The City should partner with the CoC and Veterans programs to ensure that federal, state and homeless Veteran-specific resources are prioritized for Veterans who experience chronic homelessness.**

**Status of Response:**

A master list for homeless veterans is updated on bi-weekly bases and chronic homeless Veterans are prioritized for subsidized housing programs like, Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Administration Supportive Housing (HUD VASH), Supportive Services for Veterans and their Families (SSVF), Grant Per Diem (GPD), Massachusetts Housing & Shelter Alliance (MHSA) and Emergency Services Grant (ESG) funding. The City of Worcester participates in the Veteran Subcommittee meetings as well as the CoC to discuss gaps in service and coordination of care for homeless veterans.

**20. The Coordinating Council should annually review the sufficiency of permanent supportive housing inventory to attain and maintain a functional end to chronic homelessness.**

**Status of Response:**

The CoC, with the assistance of Housing Supply and Stabilization Working Group, will review annually the sufficiency of permanent supportive housing inventory. In 2018, the Coordinating Council decided that 103 housing units were needed to house chronically homeless individuals in the City of Worcester. This figure was developed in coordination with the Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance’s annual HUD Point in Time Count. Currently, based on the 2019 HUD Point in Time Count, the Coordinated Council continues to pursue the building of 103 units in order to attain and maintain a functional end to chronic homelessness.

The CoC monitoring committee has created a data dashboard which includes the following:

- New Chroninc Homeless Enry by Month
- Living Situation Prior to Entry
- Population outcomes
- Health Insurance Status at Intake
- Total Number of Homeless Persosns – all Household Types
- Total Nr of Homeless Individuals
- Nr of Chronically Homeless Individuals
- Nr of Unsheltured Individuals
- Nr of Unsheltered Chronically Homeless Individuals

The following year the dashboard will be expended to include the housing inventory.

## **Data-Driven System**

**21. All private funders of homeless service providers should require (unless prohibited by law) and help support providers to participate in the CoC's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), which will also feed into the Statewide Data Warehouse.**

### **Status of Response:**

Most of the social services providers of the City of Worcester are participants of the CoC and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). To encourage others to participate in the CoC and HMIS, The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts and the Greater Worcester Community Foundation have agreed to encourage their grantees to participate in the CoC's HMIS.

**22. All funders of homeless service providers should require providers to participate in active case conferencing for all Chronically Homeless individuals for coordinated entry administered by the CoC.**

### **Status of Response:**

The Coordinated Entry System (CES) developed by the Worcester City and County CoC utilizes a clinical case conferencing model in which households are matched to the specific housing and supportive services determined to best meet the needs and wishes of the homeless household. Households' housing and service needs are discussed during brief case presentations and are matched using a consensus process to the most appropriate available housing and services. The CES Working group meets bi-weekly. To date, there have been 24 meetings held in FY19 and 21 unique agencies have attended CES group through September 2019, and include both housing/homelessness agencies and other service agencies.

**23. The City and the Coordinating Council should develop a system to aggregate and report homeless episodes among those released from correctional facilities, behavioral health institutions, and other public emergency services with a goal of providing more intensive and integrated services for people at high risk of homelessness.**

### **Status of Response:**

Mass Health has proved \$7 million for a pilot program in Worcester and Middlesex Counties for supportive reentry called the Behavioral Justice Initiative (BH-JI) for persons incarcerated and soon to be released into the community who will be offered supportive and housing services. Two

agencies, Open Sky and Advocates, Inc., have been awarded contracts to provide support navigators for the program for up to 225 clients in FY19-21.

The Worcester Department of Health and Human Services has created a Reentry Task Force for the purpose of addressing the needs of homeless individuals who exit from correctional facilities with a focus on enabling employment, housing, and education.

In addition to the reintegration efforts through BJ-HI and the Reentry Task Force, the Community Resources for Justice is currently looking into the possibility of building a 30 bed program for individuals who are coming out of incarceration.

**24. The CoC should continue to provide the annual Point in Time Count, quarterly unsheltered counts, as well as quarterly updated estimates from the HMIS, including the number of housing placements, the duration of time it takes to house individuals and their housing retention rates to the Coordinating Council; and regularly update stakeholders in the form of a Status Dashboard.**

**Status of Response:**

The CoC has continued to provide the Annual Point in Time Count, quarterly unsheltered counts as well as quarterly updated estimates from the HMIS, including the number of housing placements, the duration of time that it takes to house the individuals as well as housing retention rates. In addition, the CoC has combined its review with the Data and Evaluation Working Group to develop a dashboard of key tracking data to assist in identifying emergent issues. System Performance Measures were calculated and reported to HUD from data submitted by the CoC Lead Agency. The CoC monitoring and Evaluation committee has developed a preliminary dashboard which was presented at the Housing First Coordinating Council on September 25<sup>th</sup> 2019. Please review the attached appendix (B) on HMIS Calculated Chronic Homeless Data.

**25. The City’s staff should assist the Coordinating Council by developing and implementing an ongoing communications plan to inform the public about the issue of homelessness and the progress being made to achieve and sustain “functional zero.”**

**Status of Response:**

The Coordinating Council will continue to communicate and to inform the public regarding the number of entries and exits from the data that is derived from HMIS. These data will inform us about the progress that the Housing First Coordinating Council is making towards achieving “functional zero”. The first annual report from the Coordinating Council is intended to inform and engage the community in the homeless issues and solutions. An ongoing communications plan to

inform the public about the issue of homelessness and the progress being made to achieve and sustain “functional zero” is ongoing. Continued reporting regarding those who enter and exit the HMIS will help us understand the current trends of homelessness.

**26. The CoC, in partnership with the Coordinating Council, should complete the process to obtain federal recognition for achieving the designation as having attained the benchmarks and criteria for a functional end to chronic homelessness.**

**Status of Response:**

The Housing First Coordinating Council is currently working on increasing supply and service coordination. The process for federal recognition has not begun yet. The City of Worcester will have obtained “function zero” after having attained the benchmarks, which is reached “when the number of persons experiencing chronic homelessness within a community is less than the average number of persons being connected with permanent housing each month”. In achieving this measure, a community has to demonstrate the system and capacity to quickly and efficiently connect people with housing and ensure that homelessness within the community will be rare, brief, and non-recurring.

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<sup>i</sup> **FUNCTIONAL ZERO:** Functional zero is reached when the number of persons experiencing (chronic) homelessness within a community is less than the average number of persons being connected with permanent housing each month. In achieving this measure, a community has demonstrated the system and capacity to quickly and efficiently connect people with housing and ensure that homelessness within the community will be rare, brief, and non-recurring.

<sup>ii</sup> **CHRONICALLY HOMELESS PERSON:** (as defined by HUD) An individual (or family) with a disabling condition who has been continuously homeless for a year or more or has had at least four episodes of homelessness totaling 12 months in the past three years.

<sup>1</sup>Doubled-Up is defined as “Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, or economic hardship.”