

Creating Homes, Strengthening Communities, and Improving Systems: Implementing Philadelphia's Plan to End Homelessness

Summary of Achievements, 2005-2017

In 2005, Philadelphia adopted "[Creating Homes, Strengthening Communities, and Improving Systems](#)," a 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness, and set off on a course to "prevent and eradicate" this traumatic experience for the people of our city.

To the degree that the 10-Year Plan set specific goals: we achieved them. We have made incredible progress in how we deliver housing and services to people at risk of and experiencing homelessness. Even without a formal roadmap in recent years, Philadelphia's homeless assistance system never lost our sense of direction and has continued to move forward along that path set out by the Plan.

Our community's recent accomplishments include:

Creating Homes

- Grew supply of Permanent Supportive Housing by 98%, though recent analysis indicates we still need another 2,000 units to address local needs
- Increased local resources and made them go further by funding innovative program models
 - Shallow Rent Subsidy for people receiving SSI
 - TANF funded rapid re-housing (partnership with State)
 - Respite model shelter (smaller, more specialized model)
 - Master lease for people with very long-term experiences of chronic homelessness
 - Housing4Youth Collaborative

Strengthening Communities

- Expanded day-time/ drop-in services for people experiencing homelessness.
- For example, on SEPTA, Homeless Services, and Project HOME, have collaborated to expand the Hub of Hope into an 11,000-square-foot permanent site in the concourse. Beginning in January, this engagement center will offer year-round services: medical and behavioral health attention, legal services, showers, and laundry. It is expected to be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. during the week, with some weekend hours, year-round. Meal services will be available Friday through Sunday. If nothing else, people will have a comfortable place to sit and feel safe, staffed largely by Project HOME and volunteers.
- Expanded access to substance use disorder treatment services, leading nationally on opioid housing
- Established the Philly Homes 4 Youth Coalition to lead efforts to address youth homelessness
- Created [Shared Public Spaces Public-Private Workgroup](#) to renegotiate how we use our public spaces so we can all enjoy them safely, and ensure that all are treated with dignity and respect, including co-creating solutions that constructively address panhandling, chronic street homelessness and food access

Improving Systems

- Aligned housing and services to achieve an effective end to Veteran homelessness in Philadelphia in December 2015
- Expanded the options available to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness by growing the inventory of rapid rehousing opportunities, tripling prevention resources, and dedicating resources to the needs of youth ages 18-24
- Developed more effective street outreach strategy, increased number of outreach teams, and established regular communication mechanisms among teams and with other partners (e.g., police)
- Through the 100-Day Challenge, established dedicated team working on housing people experiencing chronic homelessness, housing 415 people since July 2016
- Designed [Coordinated Entry and Assessment-Based Housing Referral System](#), a community-wide process for streamlining access, assessment, and referral for people experiencing homelessness
- Revised [policies and procedures for OHS-contracted Emergency Housing](#) to ensure focus on providing housing first, housing focused, person-centered, and prioritized resources to those who are most vulnerable
- Reduced harm to children experiencing homelessness through Building Early Links for Learning (BELL) - a privately funded partnership led by People's Emergency Center to enhance the developmental friendliness of homeless services, increase enrollment into high quality early childhood education, and design of a Head Start program tailored to homeless families
- Kept individuals experiencing street homelessness alive in extreme weather with increased number of beds and homeless café spaces available through Winter Initiative, and in response to the Opioid crisis, supported the Office of Emergency Management with operation of a warming center during an FY18 15-day [Code Blue](#)
- Adopted new identity as Office of Homeless Services (formerly Office of Supportive Housing) to provide clarity about mission and responsibilities; launched new website to improve access to information; launched regular communication and social media strategy
- Reorganized Office of Homeless Services staffing structure to align with the needs of the service provider community
- Established participant comment line that is staffed Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm, with option to leave messages after hours, providing greater accountability and transparency by committing to investigate all complaints and feedback

Creating Homes, Strengthening Communities, and Improving Systems: Implementing Philadelphia’s Plan to End Homelessness

In June 2004, Mayor John F. Street asked his Task Force on Homeless Services to create a ten-year plan to end homelessness in the City of Philadelphia. In the fall of 2005, the collective efforts of over 325 stakeholders produced the [Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness: Creating Homes, Strengthening Communities, and Improving Systems](#). These stakeholders included representatives of government agencies, homeless service providers, housing providers, other nonprofit leaders, community development corporations, advocates, philanthropic organizations, and individuals who had experience with homelessness in this city. The Ten Year Plan prioritized the creation of permanent supportive housing and independent housing for people experiencing homelessness.

In January 2008, Mayor Michael A. Nutter began his tenure and pledged to support the *Ten Year Plan*. In May of that year, he established a Ten Year Plan Advisory Committee with a public and private sector co-chair and recalibrated the Ten Year Plan.

Philadelphia’s *Ten Year Plan* had eight original goals, consolidated into seven during the recalibration, and further defined over time. This report details the progress made to move Philadelphia towards those goals from October 2005 through June 2017.

Goal 1: Open the “back door” out of homelessness—ensure that all Philadelphians have a decent, safe, accessible and affordable home.

Objective: Increase resources for development and management of permanent affordable and supportive housing

In 2017, Philadelphia’s homeless system was extensive, encompassing a network of nearly 70, mostly nonprofit, providers and public sector partners. Compared to 2005, significantly more resources are being directed toward what people really want and need—permanent housing. The Housing Inventory Count that Philadelphia submits to HUD enumerating homeless-dedicated housing showed 98% growth in the supply of permanent supportive housing, from 3,118 year-round beds in 2005 to 6,179 year-round beds in 2017. This includes units provided through the Blueprint partnership with Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA), detailed below. Further, more types of housing opportunities are now available to help persons experiencing homelessness resolve their housing crisis: the system includes more than 5,774 emergency or temporary beds in the traditional shelter/transitional housing model, but also a growing supply of rapid rehousing resources – temporary subsidies and services that support permanent housing.

In total, new housing opportunities created (see descriptions below) from 2005 to 2017 include:

- 1,444 “Blueprint” subsidized units for single adults;
- 2,111 “Blueprint” subsidized units for families with children;

- 1,072 Housing & Urban Development – Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers;
- 1,553 net HUD Continuum-of-Care funded units (1,184 units funded in 2005 to 2,737 in 2017);
- 41 households housed through Philadelphia’s Housing Trust Fund (HTF) Rental Assistance Program from 2007-2009;
- Over 100 households served through the HTF’s Utility Arrearage Assistance Program;
- 2,913 households provided rapid re-housing assistance from 2009 through FY2017.

In May 2008, Mayor Nutter launched the City/PHA Blueprint Partnership. Each year, PHA dedicates 200 “Blueprint” housing opportunities to individuals experiencing long-term street homelessness and 300 housing opportunities to families staying in emergency and transitional housing. Through Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS), Office of Homeless Services, and the Department of Human Services (DHS), Blueprint housing subsidized by PHA is combined with Medicaid-financed case management services delivered by local community-based providers. Between September 2008 and January 2017, [Blueprint housed 1,401 single adults](#). Review of service data indicates that 89 percent remained housed for at least one year in their unit and many persons have now reached over five years in Permanent Supportive Housing.

In 2008, Congress revived the HUD-VASH program and began providing new funding for this collaborative effort of HUD and VA, which combines HUD Housing Choice Vouchers (rental assistance administered by public housing authorities) with VA supportive services such as health care, mental health treatment and substance use counseling to Veterans who are eligible for VA health care services and are experiencing homelessness. Among VA homeless continuum of care programs, HUD-VASH enrolls the largest number and largest percentage of Veterans who have experienced long-term or repeated homelessness. This resource played a key role in Philadelphia’s success in reaching an effective end to Veteran homelessness, as detailed below.

Objective: Streamline the application process for permanent housing

Permanent Supportive Housing is an evidence-based model used in both the Blueprint and HUD-VASH collaborative efforts, which has an overall 90% success in preventing a return to homelessness, even for people coming directly off the street. In order to streamline access to this important resource, the Supportive Housing Clearinghouse (Clearinghouse) was established with 200 housing opportunities in January 2012, through a partnership between the Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disability Services (DBHIDS) and the Office of Homeless Services. This effort matches housing opportunities to homeless and chronically homeless individuals and families in need of permanent supportive housing, and households leaving temporary residential mental health and addictions services programs funded by DBHIDS. Households served by the Clearinghouse include those who are referred directly from Homeless Services’ emergency housing, transitional housing, and rapid re-housing programs, as well as those who are referred through DBHIDS and Philadelphia’s Department of Human Services (DHS). Today the Clearinghouse manages more than 1,700 units, boasting a 97 percent success rate in preventing a return to homelessness for families and 88 percent for singles – even for those who

had experienced long-term street homelessness exacerbated by serious mental illness, substance use disorder and/or dual diagnoses.

In early 2018, Homeless Services is in the process of implementing the phased-in launch of a [Coordinated Entry and Assessment-Based Housing Referral System](#), which we refer to as “Sea Breeze” (CEA-BHRS). For over 20 years the City has operated centralized intake sites for City-funded emergency housing and street outreach that is accessible 24 hours/day, 365 days/year and covers all of Philadelphia. Additionally, through the Clearinghouse, Homeless Services has managed referral processes for all ESG- and many CoC-Program funded projects for many years. CEA-BHRS builds on these existing practices to further streamline and standardize a process that assesses household needs to better link them to the appropriate resources to end their housing crisis.

The CEA-BHRS process includes a standardized phased assessment, with each phase only including questions needed to refer a household at that point in the process. The assessments will build on each other to limit as much as possible the number of times people have to repeat their stories. To determine severity of service needs, all households will be assessed with the Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT). The CEA-BHRS process will then prioritize those who are in most need of assistance. Philadelphia’s multiple current referral processes will be combined into one referral management system, through which all projects funded by Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) or the Continuum of Care (CoC) Program will only fill vacancies through the CEA-BHRS process. The city’s Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) will be the system utilized to manage all data related to CEA-BHRS and produce electronic referrals, ensuring privacy protections of all participant information.

At a minimum, all housing projects included on Philadelphia’s Housing Inventory Count (HIC) will be part of CEA-BHRS. There is a longer term goal of integrating affordable housing and other mainstream resources available to households experiencing or at-risk of homelessness into the coordinated entry process.

The other significant development in the City’s inventory of safe, accessible homes has been investment in Rapid Re-Housing, the state of the art for reducing the duration of emergency housing stays once people become literally homeless. Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Philadelphia received \$23.5 million in Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) funding over a three year period to assist persons at risk of becoming homeless or those who were currently homeless. (This includes direct federal funding and funding from the state’s HPRP allocation.) Philadelphia sub-contracted with service providers to provide direct financial and housing stabilization. This assistance included time-limited rental assistance and security/utility deposits to quickly move households out of emergency housing and back into the community. Over a three year period, Philadelphia expended \$ 11.2M on Rapid Rehousing and assisted 1,385 households with an average of \$6,000 over a 12-month period to end their homelessness. Of those served, only 13% returned to emergency housing within 2 years after receiving assistance. The remaining funds prevented experiences of homelessness for thousands more households (see below).

In subsequent years, the CoC has expanded its commitment to rapid rehousing annually, increasing the number of CoC-funded rapid units from 32 in 2014 to 67 in 2015 to 124 in 2016 and 182 in 2017. Federal Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and State ESG also support rapid rehousing programs, and Homeless Services has [piloted another program](#) using State TANF funds. The system uses rapid rehousing as a bridge into long-term housing as well as a way to immediately exit homelessness into housing. Rapid rehousing programs in Philadelphia have an 85% success rate in preventing a return to homelessness, and in FY18, OHS received \$500,000 in new funds from the Mayor and City Council to provide this support to another 50 families. The availability of these funds has reduced family shelter stays and shelter beds.

In 2005, Philadelphia established a [Housing Trust Fund \(HTF\)](#), a dedicated source of local revenue used as a key funding tool for the development of new affordable housing opportunities, for preservation of existing housing and for homelessness prevention. During its first 10 years, the HTF raised nearly \$109 million and invested \$7.4 million in addressing risk of homelessness for 12,888 persons in 2,713 households. Most of these dollars prevented homelessness (discussed below), but two HTF-funded programs resolved the experience of sheltered homelessness of households. An HTF Rental Assistance Program extended support for 41 families moving out of transitional housing by subsidizing their housing for three years, from 2007-2010, with the proportion of rent paid by participants increasing until, at the end of the three years, each participating household was paying 100 percent of the rent. An HTF-funded Utility Arrearage Assistance Program provided assistance to over 100 households living in emergency and transitional housing for whom utility arrearages posed a significant obstacle to obtaining permanent housing.

Goal 2: Close the “front door” to homelessness—implement successful prevention strategies.

***Objective:** Design, fund, and implement strategies to better identify and assist populations at-risk of homelessness*

As noted above, during the first 10 years of operation for the Philadelphia Housing Trust Fund established in 2005, it raised nearly \$109 million and invested \$7.4 million in addressing risk of homelessness for 12,888 persons in 2,713 households. More than 2,500 of these households were assisted through four programs that combined outreach, financial assistance and supportive services to prevent homelessness: the Housing Retention Program, providing emergency assistance for low-income households in danger of becoming homeless due to foreclosure, eviction or utility shut-off; the Homeless Diversion Program that provided rental subsidies to 50 homeless families from October 2007 and June 30, 2009, while a case manager assisted them in finding employment and procuring stable housing; and the Utility Emergency Services Fund, providing grants to low-income families in danger of utility shut-off.

As noted above, Philadelphia received \$23.5 million in Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) funding over a three year period from 2009-2012. During that period, 4,828 households comprising 10,844 persons received financial assistance with back rent, utilities, or security deposit to

prevent their homelessness, with only 3.5% entering emergency housing after receiving assistance. Since that time, Homeless Services has continued to provide homelessness prevention assistance beyond those funded by the HTF, through its Emergency Assistance and Response Unit (EARU) with Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) funds. Services include eviction prevention through rental and security deposit assistance.

In total, in FY16, Homeless Services assisted 824 households with preventing an experience of homelessness. However, demand for homelessness prevention services vastly outpaces the available resources. During that same period, 5,999 individuals sought assistance. In FY17, 760 households were prevented from experiencing homelessness. In FY18, Homeless Services dedicated a portion of its Emergency Solutions Grant funds to homelessness prevention. In total, leveraging a substantial increase in HTF allocation to these efforts, Homeless Services has tripled prevention resources available. As part of the CEA-BHRS efforts noted above, Homeless Services has made these prevention/diversion resources available at its centralized emergency housing intake sites.

Objective: *Address the complex needs of at-risk children and youth in a comprehensive and holistic manner*

In June 2016, Homeless Services, supported by Rapid Results Institute, launched the nation's first ever 100 Day Challenge to End Youth Homelessness, part of the larger 100 Day Challenge described below. The Youth Team continued to work toward a second set of 100 day goals in October 2016 and changed its name to Philly Homes 4 Youth in May 2017 in recognition of the long-term nature of the collaborative engagement. The Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Workgroup has developed a set of recommendations for improvements to transition and discharge planning for youth aging out of foster care and to re-entry/ discharge planning for youth involved in the juvenile justice system. The group is currently discussing these recommendations with the City Department of Human Services (DHS). Homeless Services is also working closely with DHS to better understand the experience of families and youth who touch both the homelessness and child welfare systems and design new pilots to reduce homelessness among youth aging out of foster care and accelerate court-ordered family reunification.

Objective: *Ensure all Philadelphia students receive the education they need for independent adulthood.*

On May 19, 2015, Philadelphians voted overwhelmingly (80 percent) to create the Philadelphia Commission on Universal Pre-Kindergarten. Its charge: propose a universal Pre-K program that provides quality, affordable, and accessible services to three- and four-year-olds throughout Philadelphia. Following the release of the Commission's recommendations, in June 2016, the Philadelphia City Council approved a 1.5-cent-per-ounce tax on sweetened and beverages, the first such tax imposed in a major U.S. city. The City plans to invest \$210 million over five years to create 6,500 locally-funded pre-K seats by Fall 2020. The first 2,000 seats were created in January 2017 at 88 pre-K programs across the City.

Goal 3: Ensure that no one in Philadelphia needs to live on the street.

Between 2008 and 2014, Philadelphia saw a 20% reduction in the number of unsheltered homeless persons counted living on the streets (from 457 in 2008 to 361 in 2014) on one night in the last week of January. Unfortunately, that number has increased for the subsequent years, to 670 in 2015, 705 in 2016, and 956 in 2017, a trend also seen for the Continuums of Care of the 50 largest cities as a group. Some, though not all, of these increases can be attributed to refining and improving the methodology of the Point in Time count. The [opioid crisis](#) has also had a significant impact. The City continues to take a multifaceted approach to ensuring that no one needs to live on the street, continually learning from our successful efforts.

Objective: Expand Street Outreach

The work begins with Street Outreach. Outreach is conducted with a priority on connecting people living in encampments directly to permanent housing wherever possible. If available, a permanent housing unit or subsidy is offered prior to offering shelter or transitional housing. DBHIDS funds outreach, which is staffed by seven organizations and managed through the Project HOME Outreach Coordination Center. Two additional organizations have teams focused on outreach to youth at risk of and experiencing homelessness: the Synergy Project of Valley Youth House and a team at Covenant House PA. Outreach teams provide services throughout Philadelphia, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Outreach workers are sensitive to the unique challenges of homeless individuals. The outreach teams work to build trusting relationships so that these individuals will accept placement in an appropriate setting where they can obtain treatment and housing services to stabilize their lives. For those unwilling to go to congregate housing, the emergency drop-in "overnight cafes," which were first established in 2006 and expanded in 2008, provide an alternative, low-demand option for escaping the elements and receiving a cup of coffee or soup.

Additionally, for many years, the Philadelphia Police Department has had a special detail assigned to individuals experiencing homelessness, including those occupying encampments. Beginning in the spring of 2010, the City began conducting periodic "service days" to try to identify and assess the needs of individuals living on the street. [Crisis intervention training](#) for law enforcement has been a key strategy, helping to ensure that encounters with individuals in encampments do not escalate, particularly for those individuals who may be experiencing a substance use disorder or behavioral health diagnosis.

To engage stakeholders, the City holds quarterly "combined outreach meetings" with a broader set of partners, and monthly "focus meetings" for outreach teams. The quarterly outreach meetings provide an opportunity for entities involved or interested in outreach activities (i.e., behavioral health providers, law enforcement, hospitals, homelessness service providers, faith-based organizations, city staff, etc.) to discuss strategies and challenges. Key stakeholders have included the Philadelphia Police Department, business district representatives, Office of the Mayor, Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health, and the state of Pennsylvania. During the monthly "focus" meetings, a smaller group of providers spend an entire day reviewing the focus list of individuals with the highest needs, identifying available housing

and service interventions, and dividing up the list for targeted outreach. The city also conducts numerous trainings to engage new stakeholders and educate providers and community members on the importance of using a low-barrier, Housing First approach.

Objectives: *Expand low-demand and subsidized housing opportunities for chronically homeless single individuals; increase Housing First opportunities; extend homeless café operations.*

In the summer of 2016, Homeless Services, on behalf of the Philadelphia Continuum of Care (CoC), led the 100-Day Street Homelessness Challenge, which brought together both public and private sector stakeholders to identify shared goals and actions for a 100-day plan to address the needs of individuals in Philadelphia who are experiencing homelessness. The Team housed 339 chronically homeless individuals during the 12-month period ending August 2017 chronically street homeless individuals, nearly one a day, facilitated by their development of a unified By-Name list of people experiencing chronic street homelessness.

No one has died due to exposure to the cold since January 2015, thanks in part to the over 300 additional beds brought online each winter. Homeless Services added 450 emergency and respite beds for the 2016-2017 Winter Initiative (December 1 – March 31), 50 more beds than the 2015-2016 Winter Initiative, piloting the respite model first employed during the Democratic National Convention’s “housed not hidden” effort. This a small temporary housing program with direct placement by outreach. These respites are promising as a new way to get better results for people experiencing street homelessness.

Additionally, since 2012, the Hub of Hope has proved a successful and targeted intervention to provide additional support in the subway concourses during the winter months. The initial pilot project was born of a multi-agency public-private partnership among the City of Philadelphia, the Mental Health Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania (MHASP), Project HOME, and Public Health Management Corporation, along with a number of supporting agencies. The project was designed to serve people where they already were, co-locating physical and behavioral health (“integrated health”) services with housing-focused case management. Since its pilot year in 2012, the Hub has had over 25,000 visits and facilitated 1,224 placements into emergency and longer-term housing and treatment programs around the city. During the winter of 2016-2017, Street Outreach and Hub of Hope placed a total of over 333 people into treatment, safe haven, emergency and permanent housing. The Hub had over 800 case management visits and 110 medical and psychiatric evaluations.

More broadly, the City has expanded the Housing First inventory for homeless individuals with serious mental illness and/or substance use disorder and developed options for those with alcohol use disorder with no immediately observable mental illness. While an emphasis is placed on permanent housing, housing options are also available for individuals who may want recovery or treatment supports prior to entering permanent housing, such as the [Journey of Hope \(JoH\)](#) program, which provides treatment stays of six months to one year, followed by placement in permanent housing. In 2007, JoH was born of collaborative efforts between DBHIDS, the Office of Addiction Services (OAS), and Homeless Services to

transform six inner city substance use disorder residential treatment programs to take an innovative approach to the chronic homelessness of those with substance use disorders. Unlike traditional treatment, JoH offers low-demand, long-term treatment stays of six months to one year and serves individuals with histories of homelessness who are living with substance use or concurrent disorders (mental health and substance use). Each site incorporates motivational interviewing techniques, cognitive behavioral strategies, behavioral modification, psycho-educational seminars, and other evidence-based practices into their innovative modified therapeutic community settings.

As of January 2017, Philadelphia had:

- 124 Journey of Hope (JoH) beds
- 266 Office of Addiction Services (OAS) Recovery House beds, with 50 under development
- 168 DBHIDS-funded Safe Haven beds
- 85 CoC-funded Safe Haven beds
- 1,437 PSH beds dedicated to the chronically homeless population, with another 105 under development, including 450 using a fidelity Housing First model.

Day programs and homeless cafés provide additional places for people experiencing homelessness to go during daytime hours, as well as personal care opportunities, meals, and peer support. The City also plans to open several “engagement sites” to quickly assess and triage individuals experiencing homelessness, and is hoping to continue strengthening relationships with faith-based organizations, which play a vital role in the homelessness crisis response system.

Like many large cities, Philadelphia is exploring strategies to address the growing trend of opiate use disorder, particularly among the young adult population. Pathways to Housing PA received HUD funding for 60 new Housing First units in the 2015 CoC competition, all of which are dedicated to people with opiate use disorders, thanks to a service match made possible by Community Behavioral Health. Homeless Services dedicated 15 of the permanent supportive housing units newly funded by the Mayor and City Council to homeless Opioid users, bringing the total dedicated beds to 75, half of whom entered treatment.

New Objective: Address the needs of youth experiencing homelessness

Although not identified as a target in 2005, unsheltered youth represented the subpopulation for which Philadelphia saw the greatest increase in unsheltered persons counted in January 2017, in part because of improved methods of counting. Philadelphia participated in University of Chicago Chapin Hall’s [Voices of Youth Count \(VOYC\)](#) in August 2016 and has since adopted the VOYC methodology for conducting Philadelphia’s Youth Counts. As noted above, Homeless Services continues to work with public and private partners toward adoption of promising models for addressing youth homelessness and implementation of strategies to make our system more youth-friendly, utilizing principles of Positive Youth Development and trauma-informed care. Homeless Services plans to pilot a Transition Age Youth Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Assistance Tool (TAY VI-SPDAT) used at entry points, youth

street outreach, Runaway and Homeless Youth funded programs, a youth emergency housing program, and strengthen system-wide data sharing agreements to facilitate cross-system collaboration.

Already, using new funds appropriated by City Council, Homeless Services funded a first-ever collaborative with five providers: The Attic Youth Center, a haven for LGBTQ youth, Covenant House PA, Pathways PA, Valley Youth House, and Youth Service, Inc. (YSI). The collaborative has expanded the capacity of the homeless youth system by 12% by providing 25 new crisis beds and 25 rapid re-housing beds. In addition, they are providing 24-hour crisis day care for the children of 2 participants, job training and employment support for 75 homeless youth, and specialized counseling and mentoring services for 40 LGBTQ youth.

Objective: Make shelters a more dignified place for emergency housing, not a destination

Towards the goal of making shelters a dignified point for crisis response, not a destination, Homeless Services revised Emergency Housing Standards in 2009 and put new standards in place again in July 2017. The principles guiding the newest standards are:

- Housing First;
- Housing Focused;
- Prioritized;
- Person-Centered; and,
- Strength-Based.

In January 2009, the Family Service Provider Network (FSPN) launched an initiative in partnership with the City to meet the challenge of better serving children and youth experiencing homelessness. Dr. Donald Schwarz, Deputy Mayor for Health and Opportunity and Philadelphia Health Commissioner formed the Children's Work Group (CWG). The CWG was asked to develop and implement cross-agency strategies to prevent children from becoming homeless and to address the needs of children in emergency, transitional and permanent supportive housing programs.

The scope of the group's charge was to:

- Identify standards for placement of children into emergency housing
- Assess the current state of child wellness and children's services in agency programs
- Engage the public-private sector for resources to fill gaps in services
- Make recommendations for policy and procedural changes
- Prioritize strategies for the implementation of new policies

Its members divided into five subcommittees:

- Behavioral Health Training
- Early Intervention
- Counting Kids – Report Card

- Education
- Department of Human Services

Most of these groups developed recommendations for action to improve the lives of children and youth experiencing homelessness. The behavioral health subcommittee prioritized topics for a training curriculum, identified who needed training, explored costs and funding, and piloted training for Homeless Services provider staff, using \$60,000 in City General Funds for 2012-2013. The early intervention subcommittee focused on best practices in parenting programs and developed a new user-friendly, empowerment-based, comprehensive parenting training curriculum that incorporated evidence-based practices, trauma-informed care, attachment theory, principles of Effective Black Parenting, and self-care practices. Following positive outcomes of a pilot, Homeless Services funded the Family Care Training, leading to its implementation at over 27 homeless and transitional housing sites throughout the city. The Counting Kids subcommittee worked to identify what data were available, with a special focus on children three and under, held focus groups with participants and providers, and produced a report and a Practical Strategy for Action.

As quality pre-K moves towards universality in Philadelphia, the [Building Early Links for Learning](#) (BELL) Project is working to increase enrollment of children experiencing homelessness in high quality early education program and to enhance the developmental friendliness of emergency housing sites. Through this effort supported by a grant from the William Penn Foundation, Homeless Services has partnered with Public Health Management Corporation, People's Emergency Center, developmental scientists, and emergency and transitional housing providers to improve the experience of young children entering the homeless system. In 2016:

- 19 emergency and transitional housing facilities were assessed on the areas of health and safety; wellness and development; standards and training; programming; and food and nutrition.
- \$19,000 in grants have been awarded to these sites to improve or create a child-friendly environment within the housing facility. Purchases have included rocking chairs, floor mats, safety aid kits, electrical socket covers, diaper changing tables, and toddler chairs and tables.

In 2014, Philadelphia providers and advocates acted as part of a nearly 80-member, state-wide coalition organized out of Pittsburgh to garner support for House Bill 2204, the homeless infants and babies' bill, which became law in October of that year. HB 2204 amended the Early Intervention Services Act of 1990 to add a sixth category of risk to prompt automatic tracking of an infant or toddler by state early intervention services. During the advocacy campaign, Joe Willard of People's Emergency Center noted that an estimated 6,000 Pennsylvania infants and toddlers, from birth to 3 years-old, experience homelessness each year, a trauma that could lead to low learning capacities, developmentally inappropriate behaviors, and physical and mental health problems. Evidence shows that children who access early intervention services tend to improve their ability to achieve academically when in formal schooling. "Homelessness impairs normal, healthy development of infants and toddlers despite the best efforts of parents. We should do everything in our power to help these children get the supports and

services they need to have the opportunity for a full and healthy life....The sooner the better,” said Liz Hersh, then Executive Director of the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania.

Goal 4: Fully integrate all health and social services to aid in preventing and addressing homelessness and Goal 5: Create the political will, civic support and public and private resources to end homelessness.

Objective: City-wide planning to coordinate systems and services

The foundation of Philadelphia’s successes in addressing homelessness lies in collaboration between Homeless Services and DBHIDS and the integration of services needed by formerly homeless households. DBHIDS has been able to achieve savings from its administration of a single-payer system for Medicaid behavioral health care, overseeing Community Behavioral Health’s (CBH) services for approximately 600,000 Philadelphia Medicaid enrollees, and reinvest in system improvements, including services for persons with lived experience with homelessness.

As of 2017, DBHIDS provides \$12.5 million in match for supportive services in 39 CoC-funded permanent supportive housing (PSH) projects with 1,437 units. CBH’s Community Support Services (CSS) Team monitors, coordinates, and provides residents of PSH a single point of access to behavioral health services, including Targeted Case Management, Behavioral Health Special Initiative case management, Assertive Community Treatment, mobile psychiatric rehabilitation, tenant services coordinators, and certified peer specialist services. The CSS Team assembles the appropriate package of services for each participant in advance of referral to a housing opportunity through Homeless Services’ Supportive Housing Clearinghouse. Participants in CoC/DBHIDS co-funded projects enroll in Medicaid as part of housing entry. This partnership has resulted in an 88% - 91% success rate for individuals and a 97% success rate for families in Philadelphia’s PSH. DBHIDS also provides case management in city-contracted emergency housing and, as described above, funds the city’s street outreach teams and hundreds of Journey of Hope and Safe Haven beds.

The Homeless Services-DBHIDS collaborative efforts have been particularly successful. Since the *Ten Year Plan* was finalized in 2005, stakeholders have continued to work together to implement its strategies. Various “McKinney Committees” convened by the City, composed of members of the public and private sectors, advocates, and providers of housing and services to homeless individuals and families, have played important roles in managing the local competition for HUD funding. The McKinney Public/Private Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) set priorities and quality standards and provided policy and ranking guidance to the annual application process to ensure competitive McKinney submissions. SPC membership was determined by the City to achieve balance of stakeholders and HUD-specified groups. Following the Ten Year Plan process, in 2006, “assigned” members were formally affirmed (appointed) by the Mayor’s Task Force to End Homelessness. Prior to the release of the local Requests for Proposals, the SPC reviewed information about need, developed strategies to manage

renewal costs, approved methods of measuring quality, and determined priorities for the local competition. Additionally, the Supportive Housing Program (SHP) and Shelter Plus Care (S+C) New and Renewal proposal review committees assisted the City with the assembly of Philadelphia's Consolidated Application for McKinney funds, in close collaboration with staff of the Division of Housing and Community Development and the Redevelopment Authority regarding new homeless housing development projects.

Since 2014, the Philadelphia Continuum of Care (CoC), an inter-agency planning body, has formally coordinated and implemented a community-wide response to addressing homelessness in the city of Philadelphia. Homeless Services staff support the work of the CoC. CoC membership is open to all stakeholders interested in its purposes, including nonprofit homeless assistance providers, victim service providers, faith-based organizations, government, businesses, advocates, public housing agency, school district, social service providers, mental health agencies, hospitals, universities, affordable housing developers, law enforcement, and individuals currently or formerly experiencing homelessness. An Advisory Committee includes CoC members interested in providing input and advice to Homeless Services and the CoC Board about fulfillment of HUD requirements and funding decisions, as well as broader implementation and policy issues impacting homelessness (e.g., emerging trends, service gaps). Standing CoC subcommittees include Nominating/Governance Subcommittee, Quality Improvement and Evaluation Subcommittee (QIES), and HMIS Data Subcommittee.

The CoC Board holds responsibility for approval of all CoC policies, procedures, and program funding decisions. Board members represent The City's Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services (DBHIDS); the City's Division of Housing and Community Development (DHCD); the Mayor's Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity (Philadelphia's Community Action Agency); the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA); Philadelphia VA Medical Center; four nonprofit homeless assistance providers; four individuals currently or formerly experiencing homelessness representing single males and single females, families, and youth; two community stakeholders; and, as non-voting Ex-Officio members: Homeless Services, the Chair of the CoC Advisory Committee, and as of 2016, a representative of the Young Adult Leadership Committee.

Philadelphia knows taking a collaborative approach can work. In 2011, Homeless Services, DBHIDS, the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA), the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and service providers Project HOME, Bethesda Project, Horizon House, Mental Health Association, Homeless Advocacy Project, and Pathways to Housing PA participated in the 100,000 Homes Campaign. Following a 3-day outreach blitz in which 300 volunteers identified and assessed over 500 individuals living outdoors using the VI (Vulnerability Index), a collaborative team, assisted by a HUD CoC award of 50 rental subsidies, committed to engaging and housing individuals on the basis of their vulnerability scores, one by one. This process resulted in 250 individuals in Philadelphia becoming housed.

Philadelphia built upon that success by [“effectively ending” Veteran homelessness](#) in our city. The City received significant resources dedicated to meet this Federal goal including thousands of HUD-VASH vouchers and millions in Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) rapid rehousing resources. With

technical support from initiatives such as an August 2013 Rapid Results Veteran Bootcamp, the 25 Cities Initiative, and the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness, a dedicated team formed, adopting the name “Philly Vets Home 2015.” This team met weekly for years, coming together to track progress, build relationships, and problem solve.

In the early months of 2014, the Philly Vets Home team created a living, breathing by-name list of veterans experiencing homelessness in Philadelphia, enhancing their ability to coordinate efforts to address the needs of specific individuals. A specialized Veterans Outreach and Navigation Team (VONT) began meeting biweekly for case conferencing to coordinate outreach, engagement and assistance for identified homeless veterans on the by-name list. On December 14, 2015, the US Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), HUD, and VA confirmed that the City of Philadelphia effectively ended homelessness among Veterans. The infrastructure and systems built by the coalition of the VA and its federal and community partners ensure that any Veteran experiencing a housing crisis in Philadelphia will get the support they need to quickly obtain a permanent home. The Philly Vets Home Team continues to work together to sustain this achievement.

With this win on Veteran homelessness and the USICH goal of ending chronic homelessness by the end of 2017 on the horizon, in June 2016, the Philadelphia CoC embarked on a "100-Day Street Homelessness Challenge" focused on addressing street homelessness for individuals who are chronically homeless, individuals who are non-chronically homeless, and youth/young adults. A Leadership Team and three subpopulation-focused Community Teams developed Implementation Plans. As noted above, the 100-Day Chronic Team has housed 339 chronically street homeless individuals, nearly one a day during their first year, facilitated by their development of a unified By-Name list, and the 100 Day Youth Team, renamed Philly Homes 4 Youth, continues to collaborate to build a system that works for youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

In 2016, Mayor Jim Kenney created the Health and Human Services (HHS) Cabinet, bringing together five agencies within the Managing Director’s Office responsible for serving the most vulnerable individuals in Philadelphia. The agencies include the Department of Public Health, DBHIDS, DHS, Homeless Services, and the Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity (CEO). The Cabinet’s mission is to foster the health and well-being of Philadelphians from a healthy start to a safe and supported future. [Together We Thrive](#), the Cabinet’s Guiding Framework, looks at the state of the city regarding poverty, housing, addiction and behavioral health and family stability and childhood trauma. It provides background, strategies and action steps to ensure people are healthy, safe and supported. Over the next three years, the Cabinet will be focused on three primary goals:

- Providing a healthy environment and high-quality physical and behavioral health care
- Keeping Philadelphians safe and secure in their homes and communities
- Ensuring the most vulnerable residents are able to stabilize their lives and that individuals and communities support each other

Mayor Kenney also created a [Shared Public Spaces Work Group](#) to develop sustainable short and long term efforts to (1) ensure safety, respect, and dignity for all in the public areas we share—parks, transit stations, plazas, streets; (2) constructively address panhandling, chronic street homelessness, and food access; and (3) expand alternatives—housing, jobs, and services—accompanied by a code of conduct. The four subcommittees began working in December 2016 on:

- Code of conduct to establish clear sets of expectations for behavior in shared spaces with the tools and engagement to support it;
- Strategizing about and implementing real solutions to chronic street homelessness;
- Improving access to indoor meals and improving dignity and safety of meals when served outdoors;
- Developing and implementing messaging, public information, and communications around shared public spaces—for businesses, residents, and visitors.

As with any high-cost, low-vacancy housing market, ensuring a pipeline of affordable permanent housing units is an ongoing challenge. The community has been working to create public-private partnerships to assist individuals in encampments, which has initially been met with positive responses from both the Mayor and the business community.

Objective: *Strategic use of data to track needs, document outcomes, and develop appropriate and effective programs*

In 2008, the Nutter Administration created PhillyStat to bring transparency to government performance in the delivery of services for City residents. Over time, the scope of the program evolved within its mission of increasing organizational effectiveness and bringing alignment in plans, processes, decisions, people, actions and results that bring improved value to Philadelphia residents. PhillyStat meetings between city and department leadership included the Mayor, the Mayor’s Chief of Staff, department heads, and leaders of OIT, Human Resources, and other operating agencies with the goal of aligning city-wide performance strategies, increasing departmental accountability, and better understanding progress towards achieving departments’ goals.

Transition to a new HMIS since 2014 has challenged efforts to take a data-driven approach within the homeless services system, but capacity continues to grow. Organizations have been inputting data into the new HMIS since mid-2016. The implementation of CEA-BHRS will further allow greater understanding of the needs of the population experiencing and/or at-risk of homelessness in Philadelphia. CEA-BHRS represents a strategy shift, from asking “Should we accept this household into our program?” to asking “What housing/service assistance is best for each household & quickly ends their housing crisis permanently?” In the former model, each organization or program used a different assessment process, and the system produces uneven knowledge about available homeless housing and service interventions, so that needs and services may not be well-matched. In the latter, the standardized assessment process used by every program for every participant allows a coordinated

referral process across the CoC and provides accessible information about available homeless housing and service interventions.

The Homeless Death Review process established by the City in 2009 to review and assess every homeless decedent, the first of its kind in the country, serves as a model for data-driven change and improvement. The Philadelphia Homeless Death Review Team (HDRT), which meets quarterly, includes representatives from universities, hospitals, and managed care organizations, as well as homeless service providers and representatives from other publicly funded services.

The initial 2009-2010 data reviewed by the team indicated that 94 percent of the homeless decedents encountered one or more homelessness-related service systems during their lifetime, with more than one-half interacting with three or more. Just over one-third came into contact with at least one system in the last 30 days of their lives.

The review process is designed to identify changes to policy, protocol, or programs that may prevent future deaths and guide our strategy to end homelessness in Philadelphia. HDRT members, their discussions, and the findings of their meetings have influenced the City's decisions to:

- Increase the number of treatment beds specifically designated for people experiencing homelessness
- Continue the expansion of Housing First inventory
- Open Philadelphia's first medical respite program
- Help provide supporting evidence for continued funding of the city's Winter Initiative
- Implement the Healthy Baby Initiative in city-run shelters
- Increase focus and outreach to newly identified homeless hot spots and attention to individuals experiencing homelessness who are hard to find (e.g., living in abandoned homes)

Recently, the HDRT [reported findings](#) on the deaths of 269 persons who were homeless in Philadelphia at the time of deaths between 2011 and 2015.

- The average age of death for a homeless decedent was 49 years
- Less than two percent of decedents died of hypothermia (an average of one decedent per year)
- 60 percent of decedents were "street homeless" at the time of death
- 25 percent of decedents were unknown to Philadelphia's homeless or outreach service systems
- 87 percent of decedents had a known history of a substance use disorder
- 51 percent of decedents had drugs and/or alcohol as a primary or contributory cause of death
- 68 percent of decedents had a known history of mental illness, with 61 percent of the overall decedents having co-occurring diagnoses
- 58 percent of decedents had no health insurance coverage at the time of death

The report included recommendations for continuing along our established path, as well as ideas for strengthening relationships between Homeless Services, DBHIDS, and hospital systems, particularly

Emergency Departments. It also suggests strengthening the discharge policies and procedures of those leaving jails, especially for those with a history of a substance use disorder.

To support broader collaboration between agencies, the City's CARES Integrated Data System supports City departments' internal analytics, research, and planning by integrating and storing City departments' data on participant demographics, participant relationships, case history, case manager(s), service Provider(s), dates of services, and more, all from 1997 to the present. Departments can then request data matches and receive de-identified client level or aggregated datasets about people engaged with multiple city systems, to be used for external and internal reporting, grant applications and deliverables, program planning, and cross-system quality improvement projects.

Goal 6: Build human capital through excellent employment preparation and training programs and jobs at a livable wage and Goal 7: Support families and individuals to promote long term independence and prevent their return to homelessness.

The [Homeless Advocacy Project's \(HAP\) SSI Outreach Access & Recovery \(SOAR\) Project](#) is designed to quickly secure federal disability benefits for vulnerable men, women, and youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. These individuals are too sick to work and urgently need stable Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability benefits. Since 2007, the Project has maintained a 98% approval rate while rapidly securing SSI benefits for more than 1,800 individuals in an average of only 52 days, which enables them to resolve their homelessness by renting a room, qualifying for housing, or moving in with family or a friend with funds to contribute to the household. SSI claims for homeless individuals outside of the SOAR Project are approved only 10% to 15% of the time.

The success of this program has led to its expansion. In 2009, HAP partnered with the Philadelphia Department of Human Services to expand SOAR for disabled youth transitioning from foster care and treatment facilities, thereby avoiding discharge to the streets. In 2013, HAP launched a SOAR Re-entry program to secure a stable income stream for disabled prisoners participating in Philadelphia's Mental Health Court, so that they can obtain stable housing and other supports, decreasing the likelihood of recidivism. SOAR initiates representation "behind the walls" so that benefits can be activated upon release.