

Connecticut Department of Housing



At a Glance

EVONNE M. KLEIN, Commissioner

Nick Lundgren, Deputy Commissioner

Established – June 2012 via Public Act 12-1; fully implemented and funded July 2013

Statutory authority - Conn. Gen. Statutes Sec. 8-37r

Central office – 505 Hudson Street, Hartford, CT 06106

Number of employees – 47 including 15 durational staff members who strictly work on our Superstorm Sandy recovery effort, which is funded through the federal Community Development Block Grant –Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program.

Recurring operating expenses - \$5,837,894

Organizational structure – Office of the Commissioner, Housing Development, Individual & Family Support, Community Development and Technical Services, Policy & Research and Housing programs, and CDBG-DR Superstorm Sandy

Mission

The mission of the Department of Housing (DOH) is to foster a Connecticut where affordable housing, in strong, vibrant, and inclusive communities, is accessible to individuals and families across the state and that homelessness is truly a thing of the past.

Statutory Responsibility

Under the provisions of Conn. Gen. Statutes Chapters 50, 124b, 126a, 127c, 128, 129, 130, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137c, 137e, 138b, 138c, 138e, 138f, 138h, 138i, 138j, 298, 319i, 319y, 319uu, 412, 439, 541, 588x, 825, 828, and 833a, DOH is the lead state agency on all matters relating to housing and is responsible for advancing strategies and administering programs that promote the development, redevelopment, and preservation of housing for very low, low and moderate income families, community revitalization as well as financial and other support for our most vulnerable residents.

Public Service

Fully formed in July 2013, DOH is a compilation of housing and community development programs and staff from multiple state agencies: the Departments of Economic and Community Development, Social Services, and Mental Health and Addiction Services as well as the Office of Policy and Management. With all of these programs consolidated within one agency, the Department provides leadership for all aspects of the state's housing policy and planning and the coordinated implementation of the state's housing agenda.

DOH strives to provide public outreach and educational workshops to inform the public of its funding opportunities and assistance programs. Department staff hosted and participated in workshops and constituent fairs around the state, providing in-depth explanations of the agency's policies and programs. In addition, the DOH Commissioner has traveled to about half of the communities in the state to meet with local municipal and housing leaders to introduce the Department and discuss ways in which its initiatives can revitalize their neighborhoods and increase the provision of affordable housing for their residents.

The Department's open door policy encourages municipal leaders, public agencies, community groups, advocates, local housing authorities and other for-profit and non-profit housing developers to meet with Department leadership and staff to discuss their housing issues and needs. Strong outreach and technical assistance efforts as well as improved processes, such as a streamlined application process, have led to an influx in interest and applications for DOH's highly competitive funding initiatives.

Most importantly, the Department is dedicated to assisting individuals with their housing needs. DOH's Individual & Family Support unit manages a must answer information & referral line for state residents seeking assistance from one of the Department's support programs or with their unique housing problems. DOH's programs enable the provision of the full spectrum of housing options for these individuals from emergency shelters, transitional living programs, to permanent supportive housing, affordable rental housing, and affordable homeownership. In addition, the agency funds a free rental housing locator service and provides leadership in implementing a new coordinated access system statewide that offers comprehensive assessments and referral services to meet the housing needs of vulnerable individuals and families. Support programs such as the rental subsidy programs, security deposit guarantee program, eviction and foreclosure prevention program, and homeowner rehabilitation programs enable individuals to maintain and improve their housing. DOH continues to discuss and realize improvements to these support programs.

Improvements/Achievements fiscal year 2014-2015

- DOH awarded almost \$12.2 million in Small Cities Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) to 22 Connecticut communities, some of which applied for and were awarded funds jointly. These federally funded grants are used to ensure decent affordable housing, provide services to the most vulnerable Connecticut citizens, and fund ADA compliance and municipal infrastructure improvements.

- DOH worked closely with municipalities interested in adopting Incentive Housing Zones (IHZ). Since the inception of the IHZ program, 9 municipalities have adopted approved zones and 2 of them have completed housing projects within their IHZs. Many more municipalities received technical assistance funding to determine the feasibility of developing zones in their communities. Some are close to final zone adoption and approval.
- To assist shoreline owners interested in protecting their homes and businesses from future storms, DOH established a fund, envisioned by Governor Malloy, to provide low-interest loans to property owners in coastal municipalities to finance or refinance property elevations and retrofitting for flood protection activities. Over 200 homeowners have inquired about the program and have completed their initial intake form. Four loans have been closed totaling about \$500,000. There are over 20 applicants who are at the various stages of the application review.
- DOH provided funding for the annual homelessness Point in Time (PIT) Count, which provides data on individuals staying in emergency shelters and transitional housing programs, as well as living in places unintended for human habitation. This past year, it included the first count of “youth” homelessness, to identify the differing needs of that population group.
- DOH successfully completed an update on the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice 2015, which is intended to enable the state to more quickly overcome the barriers to full and equal access to safe, decent, affordable housing in economically vibrant, diverse communities throughout Connecticut.
- DOH applied for and was awarded \$4.1 million in federal project-based subsidies under the Section 811 PRA Program, which is targeted to provide rental subsidies in support of service-enhanced housing opportunities for persons with disabilities. This assistance will be targeted at the chronically homeless, participants in the Money Follows the Person program, and individuals under the autism waiver through the Department of Developmental Services.
- DOH awarded \$30 million under the Affordable Homeownership round to fund 17 applications that will create homeownership opportunities for eligible individuals and families across the state. The successful applicants in this affordable homeownership round include new construction and rehabilitation projects and programs that finance the construction, purchase, or rehabilitation of homeownership units, critical improvements necessary for accessibility for owner-occupants, and owner-occupied small multi-family properties and programs that help bring homeownership within reach of moderate income individuals and families.
- As of June 2015, there are 5,135 residents housed with State Rental Assistance Program (RAP) vouchers and 7,515 residents housed under the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program.
- DOH contracted with three non-profit housing agencies that provide mobility counseling services statewide to assist rental subsidy recipients, who are disproportionately people of color, make housing decisions with full information about school performance, crime rates, transportation options, and other relevant community data.
- DOH continued to enhance its Predevelopment Loan Program through the transition to a web-based application process. DOH now accepts Predevelopment applications utilizing the DOH/CHFA Consolidated Application submitted through the state’s Biznet portal. The Predevelopment Loan Program is directed to housing developers seeking assistance with predevelopment costs incurred in connection with the provision of housing for low and moderate income persons and families. It supports the goal of enabling the best affordable housing developments to advance to the stage where they can obtain all necessary financing. In FY 15 DOH approved 20 loans totaling approximately \$4.6 million.

- Consistent with Governor Malloy's \$300 million commitment to revitalize the state sponsored housing portfolio (SSHP), DOH awarded nearly \$18 million to rehabilitate 452 affordable rental units in 8 SSHP developments.
- A rolling predevelopment loan fund was set up for SSHP properties in the amount of \$2 million and \$705,536 was awarded for predevelopment costs related to the potential rehabilitation of 4 SSHP developments. Costs include architectural design, environmental studies, and other early stage development expenses. As part of the effort to provide technical assistance to the SSHP properties owners, 3 firms were deployed to 15 properties resulting in submission of four applications in the 2015 funding round.
- Also in 2015 DOH set up a SSHP critical needs fund of \$3 million for properties that were identified in the capital plan as having critical needs prior to their capital funding transaction year. Applications will be received on a rolling basis. To date 14 applications have been received and 4 have been approved totaling \$1.4 million.
- Another SSHP property was awarded funding through the 9% Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program and DOH provided gap financing in the amount of \$6.5 million from the SSHP funding.
- In total, the commitment to the SSHP revitalization initiative in FY15 was approximately \$30 million.
- During CY14, DOH completed 1,443 units of housing and over 902 units so far in CY15 with over 3,600 currently under construction.
- During the fifth round of the state's Competitive Housing Assistance for Multifamily Properties (CHAMP) initiative, DOH awarded over \$25 million to 6 affordable and mixed-income housing development proposals. These projects will create or rehabilitate over 500 units of affordable housing and will leverage over \$52 million of non-state funds. CHAMP 5 recipients are required to create a preference for homeless veterans for at least two of their proposed units. The Department provided up to 30 rental assistance vouchers for this purpose. These vouchers were targeted to units restricted to households earning 30% of AMI or less. This requirement is one example of DOH helping lead the effort to achieve Governor Malloy's goal of ending veterans' homelessness in the state by the end of 2015.
- DOH invested nearly \$33 million in 8 affordable and mixed-income housing developments during the 6th round of the state's CHAMP initiative. This investment will provide for the creation or preservation of over 730 units of affordable and mixed-income housing units and will leverage over \$123 million of non-CHAMP funds.
- The CHAMP 7 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) was issued and 16 applications were submitted by June 10, 2015. These applications requested over \$60 million in CHAMP funds. Under the CHAMP 7 NOFA, all applicants were required to provide a minimum of 2 units for veterans at or below 25% of area median income as well as to provide at least 1 fully accessible handicapped unit.
- The State of Connecticut continues to implement the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program in a manner that protects the homeowners, taxpayers and the State from fraud, waste and abuse. DOH was awarded over \$159 million of CDBG-DR funds in three tranches to assist homeowners, municipalities and small businesses recover from the damages of Superstorm Sandy. In FY 15, DOH obligated all CDBG-DR funds with the exception of \$4 million for planning activities to restore damaged infrastructure. A NOFA, directed to applicants seeking assistance for the planning costs to improve resiliency of infrastructure and public facilities will be released in September 2015 for the available Planning funds.
- For the CDBG-DR owner Occupied Housing Rehabilitation program, DOH received applications from 932 homeowners. All applications were reviewed to determine program

eligibility and eligible homeowners in the highest priority levels were assigned to 7 highly qualified architectural and engineering firms to complete the design development and construction oversight. DOH has obligated over \$44 million to assist eligible homeowner repair Superstorm Sandy damaged home and mitigating these homes to avoid future storm damages.

- DOH awarded over \$15 million in CDBG-DR to supplement the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) 9% LIHTC funding to replace 315 public assistance units that were damaged by Superstorm Sandy.
- Under the Second Tranche of CDBG-DR Funds the State allocated \$30,000,000 for infrastructure activities. On December 29, 2014, the state announced the 21 projects in 11 communities that were successful in receiving soft letters of commitment for the restoration and adding resiliency of their existing infrastructure facilities. To date, we have committed all available infrastructure funds to 13 municipal partners for the restoration and adding resiliency to their existing infrastructure.
- DOH awarded \$25 million to supplement the CHFA 9% LIHTC funding awards to build and rehabilitate 367 rental units, 298 of them affordable, in 6 housing developments. These 6 projects are leveraging \$65 million in non-state funds.
- DOH was able to help create and implement a system of 8 Coordinated Access Networks (CANs) that are responsible for coordinating shelter intake, the rapid rehousing program, and carrying out the state-led initiative to end veteran homelessness by the end of 2015 and chronic homelessness by the end of 2016.
- Under Governor Malloy's leadership, the state allocated 50 RAP vouchers specifically for veteran use.
- DOH created a joint Request for Proposal (RFP) with DMHAS for permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless individuals that resulted in the creation of 176 new housing units.
- DOH rebid Emergency Shelter Services (ESS) and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding for the first time in 30 years to support shelters across the state and moved the program to an evidence based model to ensure effective use of funds.
- DOH added additional rapid rehousing funding to help homeless individuals and families obtain housing.
- Working with the "211" system, DOH provided funding for the Cold Weather Protocol initiative, which gave the CANs additional funding to shelter homeless individuals during the extremely cold winter.
- DOH utilized the Community Investment Account (CIA) to provide funding for numerous programs aimed at ending homelessness.
- To encourage a timely and innovative approach to creating smaller scale scattered site affordable housing units, DOH conducted a Housing Innovation round which awarded over \$8 million in funding to 11 affordable housing developments. These developments range in size from 2 to 29 units and will create 131 units of housing and leverage nearly \$16 million in non-state funds.
- DOH worked collaboratively with other state agencies in an effort to resolve certain barriers to affordable housing. For example, DOH engaged with DEEP to help resolve specific issues related to water and sewer infrastructure.
- A full-time, agency specific, Public Information Officer (PIO) was added to the Department. Previously the Department of Housing and the Department of Economic and Community Development shared PIO responsibilities. The addition of an agency-specific position will allow the Department to maximize its media presence and improve its public outreach initiatives.

- DOH implemented a statewide opportunity mapping tool and published this on the state's website. The opportunity map is an innovative tool that can be used by both developers and members of the general public to research specific census tract information in Connecticut and evaluate them based on their economic competitiveness, educational opportunities, housing costs, and several other factors.
- DOH continued to administer the Energy Conservation Loan program and the Multifamily Energy Conservation Loan programs through which a total of 329 loans were made between July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015. This resulted in 201 loans for individual homeowners totaling over \$1,460,703.18 and 128 Loans for multifamily property owners totaling \$219,023.00, with the total loan amount at \$1,679,726.