

# 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** – 43 including 12 durational staff members who are dedicated to Connecticut's Superstorm Sandy Recovery Program, funded through the federal Community Development Block Grant –Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program and 1 Crumbling Foundations Homeowner Advocate who is funded through the state's Insurance Fund. Additionally, there are 3 more full-time staff members who are funded by the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority dedicated to supporting Connecticut's Coordinated Access Network (CAN) system.

**Recurring operating expenses** - \$7,075,484

**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 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 consolidation of housing and community development programs and staff from multiple state agencies: the Departments of Economic and Community Development, Social Services, Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Office of Policy and Management. With all housing programs within one agency, the Department is able to provide leadership on the state's housing policy goals.

The Department is dedicated to assisting individuals with their housing needs. DOH's Individual & Family Support unit manages a must-answer information and referral line for state residents seeking assistance from one of the Department's support programs or with their unique housing problems. DOH's programs cover the full spectrum of housing options in Connecticut; allowing individuals to access emergency shelter when necessary, and attain permanent supportive housing, affordable rental housing, or affordable homeownership.

DOH engages in 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 information on the agency's policies and programs. In addition, the DOH Commissioner continues to collaborate with local municipal and housing leaders to discuss ways in which the Department's 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, as well as for-profit and non-profit housing developers to meet with Department leadership and staff to discuss their housing issues and needs. Robust outreach and technical assistance efforts as well as improvements, coupled with a streamlined application process, have led to more interest and a greater volume of applications for DOH's highly competitive funding initiatives.

In addition, the agency funds a rental housing locator service, which is free to the public, as well as provides leadership in implementing the coordinated access system statewide, which offers comprehensive assessments and referral services to meet the housing needs of vulnerable individuals and families. DOH also provides an online opportunity mapping tool that allows visitors to assess neighborhood statistics in each of Connecticut's federal census tracts.

## Improvements/Achievements for Fiscal Year 2017-2018

### Office of the Commissioner

- Created the Fair Housing Working Group, with the goal of developing comprehensive pieces of legislation that will increase the stock of affordable housing, break down the barriers to opportunity in Connecticut, and continue the work to end homelessness. This bipartisan group consists of state legislators and public officials, housing policy experts, attorneys, trade organization professionals, housing advocates, and municipal representatives. The Working Group put forward five legislative proposals in the 2018 session of the Connecticut General Assembly.
- Began a statewide conversation on zoning reform. Based on the work of the Fair Housing Working Group, Connecticut has continued the Malloy administration's record of investing in affordable housing development while also working to address systemic issues that affect housing development in general.

- Surpassed agency goal of funding more than 20,000 affordable units.

### **Housing Development**

- The DOH Predevelopment Loan Program continues to accept applications on a rolling basis, making it an accessible source of funds to address prerequisite expenses incurred in the submission of development applications under multiple funding rounds of the agency. This program supports the agency's goal of enabling the best affordable housing developments to advance to the stage where they can obtain all necessary development financing. In 2018 housing authorities and nonprofit developers relied upon this program as they were preparing applications for the rehabilitation of existing state portfolio developments, an ongoing priority of the Malloy administration.
- Since 2011, DOH and the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority have created, rehabilitated, or funded approximately 24,332 units of housing. This represents an investment of more than \$1.42 billion, which has been matched by over \$2.45 billion from other financial sources, including the private sector.

### **Policy, Research, and Housing Support**

- DOH continues to generate permanent, supportive housing units using the federal Section 811 Project-based Rental Assistance Program. This program has been used in both existing and new construction projects. Additionally, it has housed participants of Connecticut's Money Follows the Person program and homeless individuals from the Coordinated Access Network.

### **Individual and Family Support Programs**

- 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 those who are living in places not intended for human habitation. This past year, 3,383 people were identified as experiencing homelessness which represents a 25% decrease in the number of homeless households from 2007. In addition, this number reflects the lowest homeless population in Connecticut since the count began, illustrating an overall reduction in Veteran, family, and chronic homelessness.
- DOH continues to partner with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to maintain an effective end to Veteran homelessness. The number of Veterans identified during the PIT count continues to decline. Only 13 Veterans were found to be unsheltered – a 7% decrease from last year.
- As of June 2018, there were 6,486 households housed with State Rental Assistance Program (RAP) vouchers and 7,491 households housed under the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program.
- DOH received \$1,919,082 from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to expand funding for our permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing, and coordinated access programs.
- DOH rebid funding for the Section 8 and Rental Assistance Program Administrator. As the largest contract that the agency administers, a rebid of these services was necessary to ensure that the agency is being a responsible steward of public funds and that the contractor is best suited to perform the duties that are required.
- DOH allocated funding for capital repairs for homeless shelters during fiscal year 17-18 and approved 19 projects during that same time—all funding is dedicated to improve the overall conditions of homeless

shelters. Projects that added capacity to serve youth, transgender, and family populations were considered a high priority.

### **Community Development and Technical Services**

- DOH has set aside a portion of its 2018 CDBG Small Cities funding for Shelter Diversion and Short-term Crisis Housing for Young Adults. To date, the Department received one application for shelter diversion and youth homelessness and two applications have come in for just shelter diversion for a total funding request of \$1,109,678.56.
- Connecticut has seen a 50% decrease in families entering the homeless system because of the state's diversion program. The goal of homeless diversion is to prevent at risk families from entering the homeless service system.
- DOH has set aside a portion of its 2018 CDBG Small Cities funding for Crumbling Foundations Testing Programs. To date, two letters of intent were received indicating a potential funding request of \$600,000.
- DOH awarded \$10.5 million in CDBG Small Cities funding to 16 Connecticut communities, some of which applied for and were jointly awarded. Ten are funding public housing modernizations, five are funding housing rehabilitation programs, and one is funding a public facilities project. These federally funded grants are used to ensure decent affordable housing, provide services to the most vulnerable Connecticut citizens, and fund ADA compliance along with municipal infrastructure improvements.
- DOH updated the CDBG Small Cities Grants Manual to assist grantees in understanding HUD and State requirements in managing the CDBG Small Cities funded programs and projects.
- DOH continued to administer the Energy Conservation Loan (ECL) program, which was reformatted into a "Health and Safety Plus" model this past fiscal year. These funds are used for important upgrades and repairs to address emergency health and safety concerns such as heat and hot water or roof repair. This work also includes the Multifamily Energy Conservation Loan (MECL) program. A total of 185 loans were made from July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018. This resulted in 182 loans for individual homeowners totaling \$1,780,294.63 and 3 Loans for multifamily property owners totaling \$87,436.09, with the total loan amount at \$1,867,730.72.

### **Superstorm Sandy Recovery**

- DOH continues to implement the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program in a manner that protects homeowners, taxpayers, and the State from fraud, waste, and abuse.
- DOH was awarded over \$159 million of CDBG-DR funds to assist homeowners, municipalities, and small businesses in their recovery from the damages of Superstorm Sandy. All of the funding has been committed and as of the last fiscal year, DOH has expended more than \$115 million under the six program areas: Owner Occupied Housing, Multifamily Housing, Economic Revitalization, Infrastructure, Planning, and Public Facilities.
- Under the CDBG-DR Owner Occupied Housing programs, DOH has expended more than \$56 million of the \$64 million awarded and has completed 140 rehabilitation and mitigations projects, with an additional 35 either under construction or in the final stages of design. Additionally, DOH has reimbursed 183 homeowners for their out-of-pocket expenses incurred during the rehabilitation of their damaged homes.

- The CDBG-DR program also funded the successful completion of 17 municipal mitigation and resiliency planning projects in 12 towns, four (4) infrastructure hardening projects, and three (3) multifamily redevelopment projects comprising over 400 publicly-assisted housing units. There are an additional 15 municipal mitigation and resiliency plans that are currently in the planning stages, one (1) public facility, and 20 infrastructure projects that are either in the design development phase or under construction.

#### **Legal Unit**

- DOH legal staff continued to provide educational training sessions and guidance concerning Connecticut's Rental Assistance Program (RAP) to caseworkers administering the program on behalf of DOH and to social service providers who assist tenants with supportive services in connection with their housing needs. The sessions addressed the obligations of tenants under the program pursuant to regulatory requirements and program administrative rules, possible grounds for termination under the program, and the administrative fair hearing process for RAP participants.
- DOH's hearing officer conducted 57 hearings for individuals whose applications for the Rental Assistance Program were denied or whose existing subsidies were terminated, and issued one decision on the disposition of affordable housing under Connecticut General Statutes Section 8-64a.
- Responded to 41 requests for documents under the Freedom of Information Act.
- Successfully defended an action brought by a RAP participant at the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO), which alleged discrimination in the administration of the program, resulting in the dismissal of the complaint by CHRO.
- Entered into numerous Memoranda of Understanding and Memoranda of Agreement with other state agencies to facilitate and ensure attainment of the state's housing policy goals.
- Continued to template grant and loan agreement documents to maximize efficiency in the contracting process.