

# 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 11 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 3 full-time staff members who are funded by the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority dedicated to support Connecticut’s Coordinated Access Network (CAN) system.**

***Recurring operating expenses* - \$6,685,937**

***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 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 provides 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 continues to meet 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. Strong outreach and technical assistance efforts as well as improvements, 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 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 enable the provision of the full spectrum of housing options for these individuals from emergency shelters, 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. DOH also provides an online opportunity mapping tool that allows visitors to assess neighborhood statistics in each of Connecticut's federal census tracts. Support programs such as the rental subsidy programs, security deposit guarantee 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 2016-2017**

- Through its \$54 million National Disaster Resilience award, DOH launched the planning and environmental review process for four resilient infrastructure projects in the City of Bridgeport and received all necessary HUD approvals with strong community support. In support of OPM, DOH staffed the State Agencies Fostering Resilience (SAFR) Council, working across departments to identify opportunities to institutionalize resilience in state policy.
- As the lead grantee for the federal Section 811 Project-based Rental Assistance grant awarded to Connecticut, the Department of Housing, in collaboration with its interagency state partners, became one of the first grantees in HUD's fiscal year 2013 funding round to have a project under a rental assistance contract. The program, managed by DOH staff, offers project-based rental assistance to extremely low-income individuals with disabilities and is designed to expand the availability of permanent supportive housing units throughout the state.
- DOH legal staff provided educational training sessions 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, including specific areas of interest and factual.
- The Connecticut Balance of State Continuum of Care (CT BOS) was one of 10 communities selected out of 130 applicants to participate in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's new Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program, awarding CT BOS approximately \$6.6 million for youth housing assistance. DOH is the lead agency responsible for implementing this innovative grant.
- DOH created a new rolling admissions round to support the creation of non-time-limited supportive housing for young adults experiencing homelessness. This round includes funding for construction, operating expenses and support services.
- 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 CT statewide PIT count continues to decline. Only 14 Veterans were unsheltered – a 67% decrease from last year.
- The Department of Housing successfully advocated for and led the passage of a law that shields resident's personally identifying information, who participate in DOH programs, from public disclosure. This consumer friendly protection was recommended for passage by the Auditors of Public Accounts.
- DOH increased its presence in the media—leading to positive news coverage of agency accomplishments—by working with the press core to ensure the agency is mentioned on at least a weekly basis in Connecticut print and multimedia publications.
- DOH overhauled the “Press Room” section of its website. These improvements provide an interactive database whereby visitors can access all of the housing related press announcements going back to the Department's creation. The posted content is from both the Governor's Office and DOH.

- DOH continues to use both traditional and emerging tactics to promote its message to the public. This includes regular press interactions as well as social media.
- 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, 3,387 people were identified as experiencing homelessness which represents a 13% decrease in the number of homeless households from 2016. In addition, this number reflects the lowest count in Connecticut since the counts began, illustrating a reduction in Veteran, family and chronic homelessness.
- As of June 2017, there are 6,433 households housed with State Rental Assistance Program (RAP) vouchers and 7,987 households housed under the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program.
- In December, 2016, every chronically homeless household was matched with a housing resource.
- DOH received \$1,066,138 from HUD to expand funding for our rapid rehousing and coordinated access programs.
- DOH rebid all state funded transitional living program to new evidence based, cost efficient homeless service programs. The rebid allows the state to be more flexible and responsive in resolving homelessness throughout the state.
- DOH created a new capital funding round dedicated to creating supportive housing for individuals with a developmental disability. \$20 million was allocated to this IDASH rolling round and by the end of SFY 17 two projects had been selected that would provide supportive housing to over 30 clients of the Department of Developmental Services.
- DOH awarded almost \$11.5 million in Small Cities Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) to 20 Connecticut communities, some of which applied for and were awarded funds jointly. Eleven will fund public housing modernizations, eight will fund housing rehabilitation programs, and one will fund 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 and municipal infrastructure improvements.
- DOH worked closely with municipalities interested in adopting Incentive Housing Zones (IHZ). Since the inception of the IHZ program, 11 municipalities have adopted approved zones, 1 municipality has received “preliminary determination of eligibility” and 2 of them have completed housing projects within their IHZs. Overall 72 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 300 homeowners inquired about the program and completed their initial intake form. Twelve loans have been closed totaling about \$2,026,900. Upon determining that the need for funding under this program was diminished, DOH terminated this program December 2016.
- DOH is also working on establishing a “crumbling foundation testing” program to assist homeowners with crumbling foundation in the eastern region funded by state bond funds.
- DOH continued to administer the Energy Conservation Loan program and the Multifamily Energy Conservation Loan programs through which a total of 274 loans were made from July

1, 2016 to June 30, 2017. This resulted in 270 loans for individual homeowners totaling over \$2,785,106 and 4 Loans for multifamily property owners totaling \$106,138, with the total loan amount at \$2,891,245.

- 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 to assist homeowners, municipalities and small businesses recover from the damages of Superstorm Sandy. DOH has allocated CDBG-DR funds to 6 program areas: Owner Occupied Housing, Multifamily Housing, Economic Revitalization, Infrastructure, planning and public facilities. All of the funding has been committed, and DOH continues to work with local communities, homeowners to complete their respective projects.
- For the CDBG-DR Owner Occupied Housing - Rehabilitation, Mitigation and Reimbursement programs: DOH has expended more than \$50 million of the \$64 million awarded and have completed 130 rehabilitation and mitigations projects, with an additional 70 either under construction or in the final stages of design and we have reimbursed 175 homeowners for their out of pocket expenses incurred rehabilitating their damaged homes.
- As of the last fiscal year, DOH has also completed the replacement of 315 publicly-assisted housing units in two multifamily projects that were damaged by Superstorm Sandy, the completion of the development of 9 municipal mitigation and resiliency plans, and 3 infrastructure hardening projects. There are an additional 23 municipal mitigation and resiliency plans that are currently in the planning stages, 23 infrastructure projects that are under contract and the construction of the first phase replacement units for one of the oldest public housing developments in the state.
- In FY17 DOH implemented the intake of predevelopment loan applications through Sharepoint, thereby enabling all development team members to directly input applications and enhance the linkage with development applications. 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 17 DOH approved 17 loans including numerous loans supporting existing State Housing Portfolio developments.