

CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING



At a Glance

Seila Mosquera-Bruno, Commissioner

Shante Hanks, 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 – 54 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 - \$28,301,689.45

Organizational structure – Office of the Commissioner, Legal, Individual & Family Support, Housing and Community Development, Architectural & Technical Services, Policy Research and Housing Support, National Disaster Resilience/Rebuild by Design and CDBG-DR Superstorm Sandy, UniteCT

Mission

The mission of the Department of Housing (DOH) is to ensure everyone has access to quality housing opportunities and options throughout the State of Connecticut.

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 operational for the last seven years, DOH is a consolidation of housing and community development programs and staff from multiple state agencies and is the lead agency for all housing matters in Connecticut. 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.

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 2021-2022

Office of the Commissioner

- Implemented an Affordable Housing Technical Assistance Grant, to assist communities in meeting their statutory obligations associated with affordable housing planning under Section 8-30j of the general statutes.
- Implemented targeted investment opportunities and technical assistance grants to a variety of nonprofit housing corporations across the state to emphasize and improve ties to the nonprofit community in order to better serve our citizen and non-citizen clients.
- Utilizing \$123 million under the Homeowner Assistance Fund of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, the Department, in collaboration with the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, initiated the MyHomeCT program. The goal of MyHomeCT is to cure mortgage delinquencies and defaults and prevent foreclosures among eligible homeowners that occurred as a result of

the COVID-19 pandemic. The program also includes assistance for qualified non-mortgage expenses including, but not limited to, non-escrowed real estate taxes and insurance as well as condominium or homeowners' association fees.

- Implemented the Time To Own loan program, a Forgivable Down Payment Assistance loan to help alleviate potential homebuyers' inability to cover the down payment and closing costs required to purchase their first home. Administered by CHFA on behalf of the CT Department of Housing, the Time To Own loan is available to eligible homebuyers in conjunction with a CHFA first mortgage loan.

Housing and Community Development

- In the last year, the Department has created or preserved more than 2,100 affordable housing units. In addition, there are more than 3,539 additional units that are currently under construction, representing state investment of more than \$152,962,830, leveraging more than \$841,929,728 in private investment.
- Continued to modify and improve the new Development Engagement Process, designed to identify projects that are ready for funding, and can be quickly in the ground, while beginning conversations to ensure that a pipeline of viable projects is on the horizon. This has resulted in the creation of an active pipeline of projects and potential projects anticipated to result in more than \$500 million in additional affordable housing activity.

Policy, Research, and Housing Support

- 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.
- Successfully accessed COVID-19 grant opportunities on behalf of the Agency, including \$35.9MM in HOME-ARP, and \$35MM in CDBG-COVID.

Individual and Family Support Programs

- In FY 20-21, continued to expand on its federal resources to provide housing options to the State's most vulnerable households. Specifically, DOH applied to HUD and received 380 Emergency Housing Vouchers, which will provide rental assistance to prevent or reduce homelessness across the state, related directly or indirectly to the pandemic.
- DOH continued to provide over 15,000 rental subsidies to low income households throughout the state through the federal Section 8 Program and the state funded Rental Assistance Program.

Within each of these programs, DOH has been able to expand access to rent subsidies to households with disabilities, including those with mental health, substance abuse and developmental disabilities.

- Continued its nation leading efforts to deconcentrate homeless individuals and families living in shelters, moving approximately 60% of the overall shelter census to hotels. As a result, the number of homeless individuals affected by COVID-19 was minimal. DOH continues to implement additional housing programs to move these households to permanent housing.

National Disaster Recovery/Rebuild by Design and Superstorm Sandy

- DOH continues to wind down the use of over \$159 million of CDBG-DR funds, which were used to assist homeowners, municipalities, and small businesses in their recovery from the damages of Superstorm Sandy. DOH is wrapping up 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 continues to make significant progress under the National Disaster Recovery/Rebuild by Design activities. These activities, centered in Bridgeport, continue to move toward completion, in cooperation with the City and other related partners, to make this area of the state more resilient to climate change.

Legal Unit

- DOH legal staff worked with program staff and agency contractors to address the administration of RAP and the DOH-administered Section 8 program in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and devised mechanisms to ensure continued fairness and due process in denial and termination hearings for the programs in light of pandemic-related restrictions.
- Provided guidance to other state agencies and offices on landlord-tenant law, especially evictions, and provided legal guidance used to formulate gubernatorial executive orders, agency guidance and policies in order to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Responded to a higher than normal volume of citizen inquiries seeking guidance on eviction moratoria, landlord-tenant issues, and general housing related guidance.
- 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.
- Trained all staff in state ethics, continued to provide ethics advice to staff on an as-needed basis.

UniteCT

- Under the federal Emergency Rental Assistance program, provided through both the federal CARES ACT and the AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT 2021, DOH implemented the UniteCT Program, which is administered on behalf of the US Treasury. Funded under a complex set of rules and guidelines, both ERA1 and ERA2 funding have been used by the Department to assist eligible tenant households up to 12 months and/or \$15,000 in rental assistance and up to 12 months of electric arrearage assistance.
- UniteCT is stabilizing CT's rental housing market by financially supporting those households up to 80% of HUD's Area Median Income (AMI), with an emphasis on assisting households below 50% of the AMI.
- Through June 30, 2022, more than \$289MM in rent and electric utility assistance had been paid out, assisting more than 64,000 cases. This program continues to provide necessary assistance to assist in stabilizing the state's rental housing market.