DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Homeless Management Information Systems Administrator

Request for Proposals

RFP# DMHAS-SWS-HOUSING-HMISA-2025

ADDENDUM 1

The State of Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services is issuing Addendum 1 to the **Homeless Management Information Systems Administrator Request for Proposals.**

 Addendum 1 contains:

A. Changes to the Procurement Notice – Please note that a change has been made to Section I.B.6. (Eligibility), Section VI.G (Equal Employment Opportunity) and Section VI.I (Proposal Content Checklist).

1. The Department of Housing conducted a review of the current HMIS. The results of the comprehensive review are attached below for consideration. See Attachments A, B, and C.

2. Section I.B.6 Eligibility is hereby deleted and replaced with the following:

> **6. Eligibility.** Private provider organizations (defined as non-state entities that are nonprofit, 501c3) and municipalities are eligible to submit proposals in response to this RFP. Individuals who are not a duly formed business entity are ineligible to participate in this procurement.

3. Section I.C.2.a Service Expectations table #76 is hereby deleted and replaced with

> 76. Ensure access to reports and reporting tools to enable CoC-funded and non-CoC funded projects operating within the identified geographic area to run project-level performance reports on the applicable systems performance measures as defined by HUD

4. Section VI.G Equal Employment Opportunity is hereby deleted.

5. Section VI.I Proposal Content Checklist is hereby deleted and replaced with the following:

<u>Proposal Content Checklist</u>

☐ **Cover Sheet** including required information:
☐ **Table of Contents**
☐ **Executive Summary: high-level summary of proposal and cost**

☐ **Main proposal and with relevant attachments.** Proposers should use their discretion to determine whether certain required information is sufficiently captured in the body of their proposal or requires additional attachments for clarification. Additional attachments may include (bullets below are examples only):

- o Organizational Requirements
- o Services Requirements/Scope of Services
- o Staffing Requirements
- o Data and Technology Requirements
- o Subcontractor – (as applicable)
- o Financial Requirements
- o Budget and Budget Narrative (Include startup cost)

B. Questions and Answers – The following are DMHAS responses to the questions received during and after the Bidder's Conference.

1. **Question:** What would be the number of awards you intend to give (approximate number)?

   Answer: One

2. **Question:** What are the estimated funds that are estimated to be allocated for this contract?

   Answer: $1,070,960.00 per year

3. **Question:** What is the work location of the proposed candidates?

   Answer: There is no specific work location.

4. **Question:** Is this a new contract or are there any incumbents? If there is an incumbent, could you please let us know the incumbent name and pricing and are the incumbents eligible to submit the proposal again?

   Answer: There is a current provider acting as the lead HMIS agency. The RFP is open to any eligible applicant, including the current provider.

5. **Question:** Are there any pain points or issues with the current vendor(s)?

   Answer: No, there are no pain points. The State of CT requires procurement of programs and services.

6. **Question:** Could you please share the previous spending on this contract, if any?

   Answer: All funds were fully expanded for each contract year.

7. **Question:** Is there any mandatory subcontracting requirement for this contract? If yes, Is there any specific goal for the subcontracting?

   Answer: There is no requirement for subcontracting, however the vendor must be able to perform all required duties as listed in the RFP.

8. **Question**: Can we submit the good faith efforts if we are unable to find a subcontractor?**Answer**: There is no requirement for subcontracting, however the vendor must be able to perform all required duties as listed in the RFP.

9. **Question**: How many positions were used in the previous contract (approximate)?
    Answer: Applicants can request a Freedom of Information Act request.

10. **Question:** How many positions will be required per year or throughout the contract term?
    Answer: The respondent should outline the staffing for the project based on the funds available. There is no required number of positions.

11. **Question:** If the resources we provide at the time of proposal submission are not available at the time of a potential contract award could vendors replace them with equally qualified resources?
    Answer: The selected vendor will need to provide all duties as outlined in the RFP when the contract begins.

12. **Question:** Can we provide hourly rate ranges in the price proposal?
    Answer: A proposed budget is required with the submission of the RFP; this should include the proposed hourly rates, not a rate range.

13. **Question:** Is it entirely onsite work or can it be done remotely to some extent? Do the services need to be delivered onsite or is there a possibility for remote operations and performance?
    Answer: The providers can work remotely.

14. **Question:** Are resumes required at the time of proposal submission? If yes, do we need to submit the actual resumes for proposed candidates or can we submit the sample resumes?
    Answer: If there are people identified in the application those resumes should be included. If the agency does not have a specific staff member identified, a job description can be submitted.

15. **Question:** Could you please provide the list of holidays?
    Answer: Holidays are determined by the vendor.

16. **Question:** Are there any mandated Paid Time Off, Vacation, etc.?
    Answer: The selected vendor will determine the paid time off, vacation, etc. for its employees. Connecticut has three separate laws to help eligible workers who need to take leave from their job due to their own medical condition or a care situation involving a family member. Connecticut Leave Programs

17. **Question:** What does "Individuals who are not a duly formed business entity are ineligible to participate in this procurement."

    Answer: The proposer must be a duly registered business with the State of Connecticut or the state of their residence.

18. **Question:** After the first year, you're expecting to wrap up the HIC PIT current contract. Is it part of this contract or will that continue to be a sperate contract that sort of walks besides this one?

    Answer: Once this is evaluated and people are under contract, we will determine whether we'll roll both contracts into one, or if we will need to complete a Request for Proposal for it. That decision has not been made.

19. **Question:** Page 5 Annual Funding Source – is the recently awarded ODFC HUD grant for $150k going to be rolled into this annual funding?

    Answer: Not at this time, but there may be an opportunity to discuss increased investment with the new lead what if it is needed

20. **Question:** In reference to only entertaining one proposal per lead agency, if lead agencies are competing, can they submit a proposal using the same systems administrator?

    Can the same System Administrator be written into two competing Lead Agency applications?

    Answer: Yes, applicants can use the same system administrator.

21. **Question:** If non-profits are applying with subcontractors, is it acceptable to have that as a reference? The subcontractor's expertise in work?

    Can any of the Letters of Reference be from projects that the named sub-contractor(s) have performed in the past 4 years (that will be working with the lead agency)?

    Answer: Letters of reference can be for both the applicant and their sub-contractors.

22. **Question:** In reference to the forms that need to be submitted that are available in Biznet or CTSource, do you still want those to be submitted as part of this proposal or do you look to the state warehouse for those documents?

    Answer: Please submit those documents with your proposal as hard copies.

23. **Question:** Can I have clarity on the equal opportunity employment form and what that is in reference to?

    Answer: We are no longer using the equal opportunity employment forms.

24. **Question:** Can you say more about the tables on page C.1.c, pages 11 and 12, and C.2.a, pages 12 – 25 and how you expect us to interact with those tables?

   Answer: Those tables are for your own reference and use. You do not need to include these in the proposal submission. All questions in the table should be addressed in the response.

25. **Question:** Will this slide deck be available after this session?

   Answer: Yes, we will send the slide deck to everyone in attendance who we have the email address for.

26. **Question:** For the budget, is the administrative rate predetermined like the Federal DeMinimis or what's the admin?

   Answer: Yes, this was based on the HUD DeMinimus.

27. **Question:** Page 5 Annual Funding Source - section 3 - is there a list of the processes of the Connecticut Homelessness Response System" that need to be ensured able to function?

   Answer: Agencies that have State and Federal funding which require submission of an Annual Performance Report (APR) need to have access to functioning reports at all times.

28. **Question:** Page 5 Annual Funding source - section 4 - is there additional funding to extend the work of the existing system administrator during the transition?

   Answer: No

29. **Question:** Page10 - Current System Coverage and Scope - the DATA is missing; will this be supplied?

   Answer:

Current System Coverage and Scope			Notes
Continuums of Care	2	#	
Other Federal Partner Projects	56	#	
State of CT DOH	252	#	231 DMHAS
Current Software Provider for State	Case Worthy		
Current System Administrator for HMIS	Nutmeg Consulting		
Active End User Count	1059	#	
Active Agency Count	125	#	

Active Program Count	1375	#	
Active Client Count	43,747	*	
Service Transactions Count	908,418	*	Total number of services created in CY2024
New Clients Created	24,763	*	Clients (unduplicated) Created in CY2024 (unduplicated)
New Client Enrollments	53,521	*	Enrollments Created in CY2024
Clients Exited	31,374	*	Clients (unduplicated) Exiting from Enrollments in CY2024
# Total *In 12 months			

30. **Question:** Page 13 - Service Expectations - Oversight and Planning #2 - is the intent to have this seat (or 2 seats) provide administrative support to the DSB?

Answer: Yes

31. **Question:** Page 13 - Service Expectations - Oversight and Planning #3 -If the DSB board gives a directive that is currently not funded by the contract, will they be providing funding options or would we work with them to remove other deliverables in order to implement?

Answer: DSB does not have the authority to change the contract deliverables, additional funding may be provided if there are requests outside of the contract deliverables.

32. **Question:** Page 14 - Oversight and Planning #10 -- is there a list of minimum data / reports that are needed, or will that be determined by collaboration with the DSB and the recipients?

Answer: That will be determined in contract negotiations and through the work with DSB.

33. **Question:** Page 17 - #29 - does the 100 % HMIS Participation apply to any organization or only those funded by Federal, State or Municipal agencies?

Answer: Those funded using Federal and State dollars.

34. **Question:** Page 21 - #55 - Are there guidelines that describe what is a HIGH, MEDIUM, LOW priority request?

Answer: This will be determined in collaboration with DSB.

35. **Question:** Page 25 - #76 the "(insert link) " is missing to identify spm's, will that be supplied?

Answer: The HUD website no longer has this information listed.

36. **Question:** Is it expected that the Lead Agency will pay the CaseWorthy license costs from the contract budget?

    Answer: The funding available is inclusive of tasks that the Lead Agency will be responsible for.

Recommendation for Re-envisioning the Homeless Management Information System in Connecticut

As Connecticut attempts to end homelessness, it is critical that the state's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) keeps pace with these changes and facilitates, instead of hinders, providers ability to adequately serve their clients.

Current Landscape

At its core, an HMIS should facilitate structured data collection to comply with HUD's data collection, management, and reporting standards; additional case management features are useful but not essential for purposes of reporting and compliance. These case management features, however, are crucial for shelter providers to provide agile and responsive services to clients. The Connecticut HMIS has been customized to add these non-core features to make HMIS more useful for direct service providers during daily operations and providers have implemented other commercial software, such as Smartsheet, for additional needs. While these tools provide critical features for collaboration, case management, and automation, the lack of integration between HMIS and these other tools has led to duplication of workflows, increased strain on capacity, and a degradation of data quality among providers within both of Connecticut's two Continuums-of-Care (CoCs).

Recommendation

After assessing the current landscape of HMIS and related software solutions, it has become clear that the system no longer meets the operational requirements of providers on the ground. Therefore, we recommend issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to identify and engage HMIS software vendors that can better serve your needs and help you achieve your long-term goals. A well-developed RFP will provide the state with an opportunity to ensure that HMIS remains an effective tool that continues to meet both the reporting and management goals of homeless service providers. This competitive process will provide stakeholders with an opportunity for competitive analysis and market exploration that has not occurred in Connecticut in over a decade.

We recommend issuing two RFPs: one for the HMIS lead agency and one for the HMIS software vendor. Organizations may respond to either RFP individually, both, or form a partnership with another organization to provide these services. While both RFPs can be developed in parallel, we highly suggest that the HMIS lead agency be selected first and play a role in the selection of the software vendor.

We do not recommend excluding the incumbent vendor and implementation partner from this RFP; if they can demonstrate they provide the best product and service at the appropriate price point, they might be a fitting partner moving forward.

We are currently developing in-depth documentation of the issues users identified through our interviews and the ideal features; however, we want to highlight the major issues that inform our recommendation. While the core focus of our investigation centers on the technical requirements of an ideal HMIS software platform, we additionally highlight the needs of a lead agency in driving governance and decision making processes.

Key Considerations for Issuing the Software Vendor RFP

1. Reporting and Compliance: The baseline requirement of an HMIS platform is to be fully capable of generating HUD-mandated reports for purposes of funding and compliance. The platform will need to be compatible with current HMIS data standards and have the ability to generate all required summary reports with additional ability to assess the data quality within those reports.

2. Case Management: Any new HMIS platform should offer enhanced functionality, such as mobile access, robust reporting tools, and seamless integration with other platforms used by your organization.

The ideal solution should be customizable to suit providers' individual needs and give them freedom of choice in managing their reporting and case management workflows. Smartsheet is currently serving as a workaround for limited user-defined customization and the lack of system integration has caused user frustration and disjointed reporting capabilities. The next system must present a compelling case to integrate Smartsheet or demonstrate built-in functionality to replace it.

3. User Interface and Performance: The existing HMIS software has shown several performance issues, such as slow response times, limited scalability, and difficulties with data integration. These challenges create inefficiencies in service delivery and can hinder staff productivity. User feedback has indicated that the system's interface is difficult to navigate which contributes to frustrations and data entry errors which produce data quality issues making it more difficult to track progress.

The RFP should include explicit performance metrics to ensure a smooth user experience and a clear understanding from the outset how HMIS will integrate existing and future software solutions. Additionally, the evaluation process should include metrics to assess the intuitiveness and ease of achieving key workflows within the platform.

4. Vendor Support: The ideal vendor provides a reliable software solution and additionally offers strong customer support, ongoing training, and a commitment to innovation. The RFP process will allow you to evaluate multiple vendors, ensuring that the selected partner is well-aligned with your long-term strategic goals and offers the necessary support for smooth implementation, ongoing maintenance, and proactive partnership.

Key Considerations for Issuing the HMIS Lead Agency RFP

1. Governance Capability: To fully address the challenges faced due to varying degrees of data capability by providers on the ground, there must also be a comprehensive unification of system governance and decision-making processes.

An ideal candidate for the HMIS lead agency will have both strong ability to facilitate and drive conversations and decisions with CoC providers statewide. We have met with the members of the newly-chartered Data Strategy Board (DSB), a group of users and funders focused on identifying governance changes that will make the system more efficient. Their work involves establishing clear roles, responsibilities, and accountability for how the HMIS is managed and ensuring that key stakeholders are empowered in decision-making. The ideal HMIS lead agency will seamlessly drive the work of the DSB and develop additional governance processes around requests for training, system upgrades, research, and collaboration with other public and private entities across the state.

2. In-house Technical Capability: Current staffing challenges at the existing HMIS lead agency has led to a degradation in technical capacity and the agency has relied heavily on an HMIS Administrator, a third-party organization that manages the current software platform. This has led to both increased complexity as responsibilities are delegated between organizations and a lack of clarity as to roles.

An ideal candidate for the HMIS lead agency will demonstrate strong in-house capability to address the needs of the CoC providers (including requests for customization, training, etc), understand HUD compliance requirements, work with the software vendor on technical issues, and generate actionable data insights. The lead agency will need to ensure that staff across all locations are equipped with the necessary skills, resources, and infrastructure to efficiently collect, manage, and analyze data.

Next Steps

While conducting an RFP for a new HMIS is a critical step toward improving service delivery, it is not a standalone solution. We recommend working with the DSB to develop a comprehensive RFP that incorporates our forthcoming findings on users' desired features and includes the appropriate measures to manage the vendor for user satisfaction and cost effectiveness.

We plan to finalize our findings in the coming weeks, culminating in a series of deliverables that effectively communicate how users' perceptions and expectations of the current system should inform the next iteration of HMIS.

In parallel to this effort, we recommend developing a plan for bolstering state-wide data capacity. While this capacity has historically been informally split among multiple organizations, we envision a revitalized data capacity, with appropriate staffing, housed within DOH but with strong connections with providers and researchers that serves to promote data quality

improvements, expand knowledge-sharing across the enterprise, and provide expanded data capabilities to meet funder and provider needs. This plan should additionally consider how HMIS data can be integrated, shared, and used in actionable and real-time ways with other administrative data, such as those from P20 WIN, Connecticut's longitudinal data system. This enables data stored in HMIS to be augmented and used to drive service delivery for clients in other areas such as access to healthcare, workforce training, and benefits.

To this end, we also propose building in the option to stand up a data warehouse that will allow for current data from both the Caseworthy system and from Smartshet to be migrated over and saved. The advantage of a data warehouse is multifold and has been implemented in multiple CoCs across the nation. First, it is a way to integrate HMIS data with Smartsheet data in a single environment - which is a current pain point. Second, it allows the state and CoC providers to control the flow of data and reduce any future vendor lock-in should vendors change again in the future. Third, it lays the foundation for integrating non-housing data.

Cost of Implementation

The cost of developing a well-structured, agile HMIS platform with the requisite staffing to ensure seamless service delivery and continued growth is not trivial. Key considerations include startup costs of integrating any new vendor into the Connecticut ecosystem, data migration, training and technical support, and any required baseline customization.

The budget will also have to account for ongoing costs, which include both staffing capacity at the HMIS lead agency, maintenance support from the HMIS software vendor, and licensing costs to the CoC providers.

Finally, the budget will have to account for expanded data capacity, both at DOH and related organizations, that will ensure increased use of the data in actionable and responsive ways to generate both service improvements and drive insightful policy.

While we can estimate that the ongoing costs may be extrapolated from the current annual budget allocated for HMIS (approximately $1.1 million), we will need to consider the additional startup costs and also account for differences in baseline costs of the various platforms. We will also need to consider the cost of expanding data capacity in terms of staffing at key agencies.

Option 1: Retain existing Caseworthy solution
- This option assumes no changes are made to the existing software solution or how it is utilized by the CoCs. This assumption maintains the number of users and pricing of all aspects.
- This option does not require any startup or data migration costs.

Option 2: Revert to stock Caseworthy solution
- This option assumes the CoCs agree to remove certain customizations that have been added to Caseworthy over several years.

- We are unable to make any cost estimates for this option at this time because it is difficult to ascertain the added cost of creating and maintaining these customizations.

Option 3: Standalone migration to a new software vendor
- This option assumes that the new platform will perform additional functions that are currently being served through Smartsheet, which would lead to cost savings because Smartsheets would be discontinued.

Item	Description
Start Up Costs, Data Migration	Data is migrated from the existing Caseworthy platform to the new HMIS platform.
Compliance and reporting costs	The costs associated with running reports for HUD and other funders.
Licensing costs	The costs associated with licensing for users, including the modules that the users are subscribed to.
Maintenance costs	The costs associated with training, technical assistance, and capacity to maintain system uptime.

Option 4: Migration to a new software vendor and additional data warehousing/staffing capabilities:
- This option includes the line items from Option 3, but with the consideration that the software procured from a new vendor might change in price conditional on if current usage of Smartsheet is retained.

Item	Description
Startup Costs, Data Migration	The startup costs include developing a data warehouse (a comparable can be Boston, which developed their warehouse for ~$500,000). Data is migrated from both the existing Caseworthy and Smartsheet systems into the data warehouse.
Data Warehouse staffing	We envision 1-2 FTEs, with the requisite data backgrounds, who will manage the data warehouse on behalf of the state and CoC providers.

While it is difficult to ascribe exact figures to the total cost of implementation, we can roughly estimate that there is a fixed cost to data migration (approximately six months of baseline contract) and any warehouse as well as an ongoing licensing cost. The following table presents a rough estimate of possible costs for the four scenarios.

The cost of Option 1 (retain existing solution without adjustment) is based on our understanding of the FY25 total budget for the HMIS implementation, approximately $1.1M.

	First year	Ongoing
Option 1: retain existing solution without adjustment	**~$1.1M**	**~$1.1M**
Option 2: revert to stock Caseworthy solution	TBD	TBD
Option 3: New system without external data warehouse	0.5x (data migration) + 1x (licensing) = 1.5x cost or **~$1.6 million**	1x (licensing) **~$1.1 million/yr**
Option 4: New system with external data warehouse	0.5x (warehouse) + 0.5x (data migration) + 1x (licensing) = 2x costs or **~$2.2 million**	0.5x (warehouse) + 1x (licensing) = 1.5x or **~$1.6 million/yr**

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this recommendation in further detail, please do not hesitate to reach out.

HHSR Steering Committee Meeting

Monday, Feb 3, 2025

Connecticut
Department of
HOUSING

Welcome Deputy Commissioner Julian Pierce!
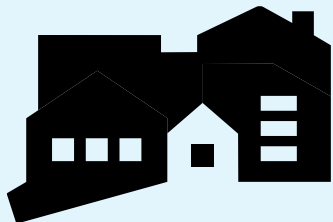
Agenda

1) Welcome and introduction of new Deputy Commissioner

2) HHSR Activities 2024 Recap

   o HHSR Framework White Paper to the Interagency Council in October

   o Workgroup Updates

      ▪ HMIS Workgroup Recommendations

      ▪ Homeless System Hubs

      ▪ Any Other Workgroup Updates?

3) Commissioner Comments and Updates

4) Interagency Council Update

5) Advisory Council Meeting Update

6) Next Project Steps

      ▪ 2025 HHSR Workgroup Planning

7) Questions/Feedback??

HHSR Project Scheduling

Interagency Council on Homelessness (IACH)	*State of Connecticut Commissioners*	In-person	2nd Tues Bi-Monthly
Advisory Council (AC)	*Statewide Advocacy Stakeholders*	TBD	Quarterly
HHSR Steering Committee (HSC)	*DOH Retreat Participants*	Virtual	1st Week of month Bi-Monthly

HHSR Workgroups

- ❑ Diversified Housing Blueprints
- ❑ Preventions/Crisis Interventions
- ❑ Workforce Development and Homeless System Funding
- ❑ Operations/Digital Transformation
- ❑ Hub Operations Subcommittee
- ❑ PWLE Subcommittee
- ❑ HMIS Reboot Subcommittee

*Membership include Steering Committee Members and SMEs
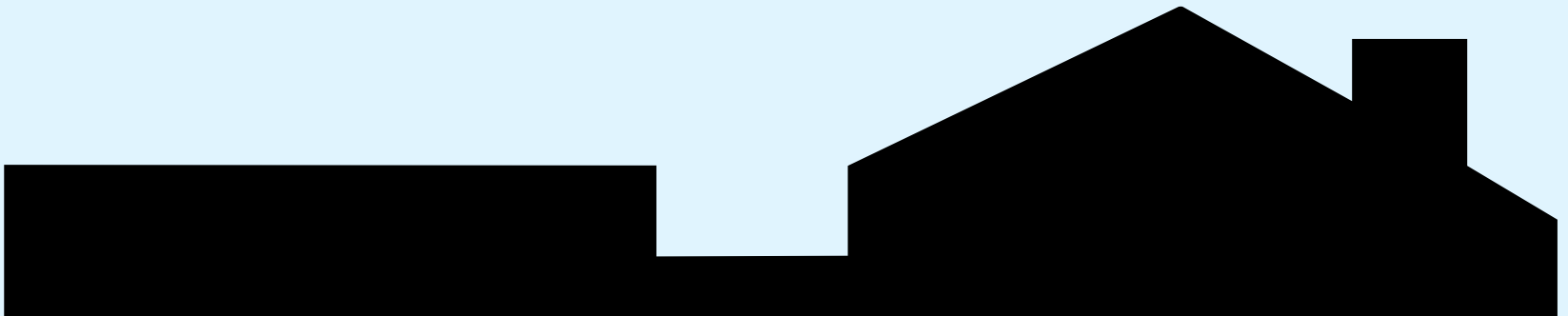
WHAT ARE HUBS?

HUBs seek to decrease the number of people newly experiencing homelessness by quickly offering accessible, flexible, person-centered supports to allow households facing a housing crisis to maintain or quickly reconnect with housing. Hubs provide on-site housing support and allows for walk-in services.

Where households cannot be diverted from literal homelessness, HUBs work to connect households to initial homeless response system resources such as outreach and emergency shelter.

- **Person-Centered Approach: In-person, well-trained staff skilled at engagement, committed to person-centered planning, and effective in helping people access needed resources to empower households to address their housing challenges.**

- **Linkage To Community Resources: Provide an effective entry point (knowledge of resources, "warm" handoffs, leveraging partnerships) through which households can quickly connect to community resources most relevant to avoiding entry into homelessness.**

- **Community-based covering regional locations statewide**

- **Accessible to all populations within its service area**

- **Provide direct, immediate access to staff by phone 8 hours per day weekdays (M-F)**

- **Provide 8 hours a day of walk-in access at least five days a week.**

HUB Locations

1. **Friendship Service Center (FSC) – New Britain**

2. **St. Vincent DePaul Mission of Bristol - Bristol**

3. **Mercy Housing and Shelter – Hartford**

4. **Community Health Resources (CHR) – Manchester**

5. **New Opportunities – Meriden & Middletown**

6. **Mental Health Connecticut – Torrington & Waterbury**

7. **Access Community Action Agency - Danielson**

8. **New London Homeless Hospitality Center (NLHHC) – New London**

9. **Thames Valley Council for Community Action (TVCCA) – New London**

10. **Thames River Community Service Inc (TRCS) - Norwich**

11. **Always Home Inc – Mystic/Stonington**

12. **Alpha Community Services YMCA (ACSY) - Bridgeport**

13. **Catholic Charities - Danbury**

14. **Pacific House - Stamford**

15. **Homes with Hope - Norwalk**

16. **UWGNH - Liberty Community Services & Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen- Reopening this month – New Haven**

Attachment B

Fairfield CAN

Greater New Haven CAN

Meriden/Middlesex/Wallingford CAN

Waterbury / Litchfield CAN

Central CT CAN

Greater Hartford CAN

Eastern CAN

● **Currently Operating Hub**
● **In Progress Hub**
● **Proposed Hub**

HUB OPERATIONS & SERVICES

CORE
Category A - available at all HUBs

- Hours of Operations – Mon thru Fri   8 hours per day
- Separate Hub Office
- Walk-in Appts
- Outreach / Mobile Services
- Diversion Services
- Reporting/ Smartsheets
- Evening Hours (possibly one night per week)
- Housing Navigators
- Computer Access
- Shelter Location/Access
- Satellite/ Spoke Sites
- Transportation
- Multilingual
- Youth Services HUB

EXPANDED
Category B – highly desired at all HUBs

- Clinical Services
- Workforce Support
- DSS Support / Benefits DSS Navigator
- Community Partner Relationships
- SSDI/SOAR Training/ Resources
- DOC/Reentry Services
- Recovery Navigators

FLEXIBLE
Category C – options varying between HUBs

- Flexible/ Emergency Funds
- Hot Meals
- Showers/ Basic Needs
- Laundry
- Warming Centers
- Healthcare Access
- Respite Services
- Mailing Addresses/ Services
- Weekend Hours
- Pets

Questions?
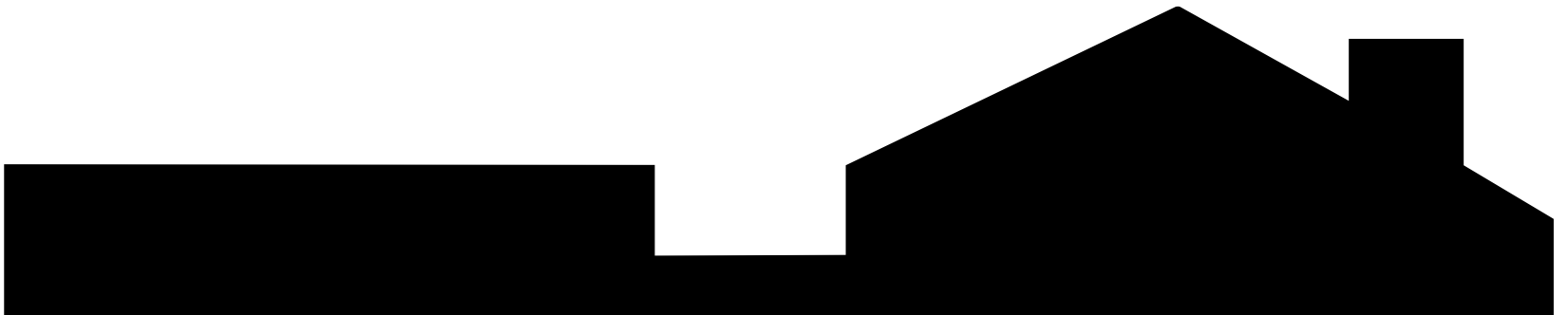
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Department of
HOUSING

Thank you.

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HOUSING HOMELESS SYSTEM REBOOT (HHSR)

BACKGROUND

In January 12, 2024, Governor Ned Lamont announced the establishment of the Connecticut Interagency Council on Homelessness responsible for collaborating on a multi-agency approach that strengthen the state's homelessness prevention and response efforts. The council consist of leaders of state agencies that are responsible for housing and intervention support services. It built upon existing efforts already undertaken by several state agencies, including the Department of Housing, the Department of Social Services, and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

Governor Lamont specifically asked the council's members to uplift the voices of those closest to the issue of homelessness and consider the personal experiences and recommendations of those facing barriers to housing across the state. Additionally, he asked the council to establish an advisory committee for practitioners and advocates to provide ongoing feedback to state agencies. Governor Lamont appointed Housing Commissioner Seila Mosquera-Bruno to serve as the council's chairperson. Leaders from the following agencies are core members of the council:

- **The Department of Housing**
- **The Department of Aging and Disability Services**
- **The Department of Children and Families**
- **The Department of Correction**
- **The Department of Labor**
- **The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services**
- **The Department of Social Services**
- **The Department of Veterans Affairs**
- **The Office of Policy and Management**
- **The Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch**
- **The Connecticut Housing Finance Authority**

Additionally, leaders from the following offices will serve as ad hoc members:

- The Department of Economic and Community Development
- The Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection
- The Department of Public Health
- The Office of Early Childhood
- The State Department of Education
- The Department of Transportation
- The Department of Higher Education

The three main goals of focusing are:

1. **Strengthening current programs**: The council will apply specific knowledge of individual programming to unite policies across state agencies in a way that considers the whole individual – from refining recommendations on improving health and human services for people experiencing homelessness to strengthening housing stability and creating more affordable housing across the state.
2. **Improving the effectiveness of the homelessness response system**: Perspectives of all state agencies will be considered in sharing and planning new approaches to help connect people experiencing homelessness to services more effectively. This includes immediate assistance for people experiencing homelessness, such as support for emergency shelters and investments in housing stability.
3. **Meeting the demands of housing**: The council will collaborate on maximizing the use of funding for housing assistance, increasing the supply of permanent supportive housing, improving the effectiveness of rapid rehousing, and evaluating and finding solutions for expanded access to safe and affordable housing for all with an interagency approach of tailoring support to each individual's specific needs.

Activities:

Nov 2023
• DOH Commissioner coordinated statewide Housing Provider Roundtables
• Facilitated the first inaugural DOH Housing Conference in Hartford

Jan 2024
• Conducted the Housing& Homeless System Retreat with homeless providers and partners (Steering Committee)
• Developed the framework for the Interagency Council and council efforts

Feb 2024
• Project planning and strategy for discovery and education
 • Interagency Council on Homelessness initial meeting
• Formed stakeholders Advisory Council – Stablished quarterly meetings
• Steering Committee retreat – Stablished four-workgroups
    1) Operation Policies
    2) HUBs - Homeless Response and prevention
    3) Housing Blueprints/Development
    4) Technology – HMIS (data collection) and Matrix (Universal application)
    5) Workforce development and Capacity building

Mar – Sept 2024
• Monthly Workgroup sessions including & PWLE
• Monthly Interagency Council meetings
• Coordinated collaborative meetings with CAN Leadership and Continuum of Care
• Evaluation of the Homeless System Hubs pilot programs
• Nationwide homeless system and interagency council research and meetings
• Hired Consultant to evaluate and make recommendations about the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

2

Connecticut Department of HOUSING

OPPORTUNITIES:

The **Operations Workgroup** identified 10 policies and/or processes that could be changed for efficiencies while processing and housing homeless individuals.

- ✓ *DOH staff made those revisions*

Hubs (serving a designated geographic area within its CAN region)

Provide walk-in or by phone services five days a week to individuals and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Provide and manage access to the next-step homeless response system resources -- diversion and or emergency shelter.

The need for flexible resources for diversion was identified:
- ✓ UniteCT worked with Hubs to access security deposits
- ✓ UniteCT worked with Hubs to connect homeless individuals with job centers and enrolled them in job training
- ✓ Hubs staff were given access to Matrix housing applications

Technology

HMIS system - This system has not only been challenging for users but also to obtain useful data. Everyone agreed that we needed an expert to evaluate the system.

- ✓ DOH provided funding to hire technical experts to evaluate the system
- ✓ Evaluation was conducted and recommendations were given

CHALLENGES/RECOMMENDATIONS

HUBs

- Increase capacity of Hubs, standardize service delivery and expand to add additional Hubs to cover other areas that are in need of these services. Explore opportunities to co-locate within other state agencies.
- Coordinate training/educational/job opportunities with Workforce Development Boards.
- Flexible Funding for direct financial assistance such car repair, daycare, transportation, etc.

Housing Blueprints/Development

A significant challenge identified in addressing homelessness is the difficulty in housing individuals with complex needs, such as severe medical or substance use disorders. Traditional supportive housing often lacks the necessary specialized care to accommodate these individuals.
The recommendation from providers is to build at least 250 SROs statewide that includes medical, and substance use disorder services within the site.

- DOH is committed to providing funding to develop these units and to coordinate with other agencies, hospitals and mental health clinics.

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Technology: HMIS & Matrix

HMIS - Based on the evaluation of the system and the users, it is clear that we need a different platform that is user friendly and allows for collecting data that can be used to run efficient programs and eliminate many processes and duplication of work. In addition, the current HMIS lead agency is not interested in continuing to provide services.

- RFP for a new lead agency to house the existing HMIS
- RFP for new software solution to replace HMIS

"We recommend issuing two RFPs: one for the HMIS lead agency and one for the HMIS software vendor. Organizations may respond to either RFP individually, both, or form a partnership with another organization to provide these services." (Bernstein, D. DOH Consultant)

Matrix Rental Solutions - DOH contracted with Matrix to provide a universal rental application solution where tenants can apply to multiple landlords at no cost. Similarly, landlords can list their units at no cost and receive potential tenants' pre-application package that includes: credit & background information.
Next steps:

- Lists all supportive housing units available
- Train service providers to work with their clients to view & apply to the supportive housing units
- Engage affordable housing developers to list units in Matrix
- Engage private landlords to list their units in Matrix

Workforce development and Capacity building

- Explore working with the Workforce Integrated Performance System (WIP) and continue opportunity for professional development
- Coordination between DOL and service providers
- Professional development for service provider staff