

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 – 46 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 - \$10,570,516.71

Organizational structure – Office of the Commissioner, Legal, Individual & Family Support, Housing and Community Development, Policy Research and Housing Support, National Disaster Resilience and CDBG-DR Superstorm Sandy

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 five 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 2018-2019

Office of the Commissioner

- Continued the work of the Fair Housing Working Group by creating and promoting comprehensive pieces of legislation that seek to increase the stock of affordable housing, break down the barriers to opportunity in Connecticut, and continue the work to end homelessness. This bipartisan group consisted of state legislators and public officials, housing policy experts, attorneys, trade organization professionals, housing advocates, and municipal representatives. The Working Group put forward three legislative proposals in the 2019 session of the Connecticut General Assembly and their work is ongoing.
- Continued the statewide conversation on zoning reform, centered on inclusionary zoning, and local affordable housing planning. Based on the work of the Fair Housing Working Group, Connecticut has continued its record of investing in affordable housing development and

preservation, while also working to address systemic issues that affect housing development in general.

- Had active housing projects under construction in excess of 3,000 units.

Housing Development

- In the last year, the Department has created or preserved more than 2,000 affordable housing units. In addition, there are more than 3,100 additional units that are currently under construction, representing state investment of more than \$131,955,221, leveraging more than \$600,000,000 in private investment.

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.

Individual and Family Support Programs

- In FY 18-19, 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 89 Mainstream Vouchers, which provides rental assistance to 89 households with a non-elderly disabled households, and DOH received \$3,165,683 from HUD for rental assistance to reduce homelessness across the state, including over \$1.7 million dedicated to provide rapid rehousing for victims of domestic violence.
- Instituted the Governor's Challenge on Family Homelessness in the fall of 2018. During this 77 day challenge homeless providers across the state housed or diverted 339 households from homelessness. Within these households were 514 adults and 656 children.
- Completed the System Wide Analytic and Projection Tool (SWAP) analysis which detailed the performance of the homeless service system. Overall the system is performing well, with minor modifications needed to ensure the most vulnerable are being placed appropriately and that they are not returning to the system.
- Collaborated with the Judicial Branch's Court Support Services Division to create a 15 household rapid rehousing program in New Haven for housing unstable probationers.

Community Development and Technical Services

- Connecticut has seen a significant 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 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 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 22 loans were made from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019 totaling \$230,030. The program continues to be active, and is functioning in coordination with a variety of other energy assistance programs.

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. DOH has expended more than \$126 million under the six program areas: Owner Occupied Housing, Multifamily Housing, Economic Revitalization, Infrastructure, Planning, and Public Facilities with over \$ 7.8 million being expended in the last fiscal year.
- The CDBG-DR program also funded the successful completion of 32 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 19 infrastructure projects and one (1) public facility project that are either in the design development phase or under construction.

Legal Unit

- Provided educational training sessions and guidance concerning Connecticut’s Rental Assistance Payments 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 74 hearings for individuals whose applications for RAP were denied or whose existing subsidies were terminated, two hearings on the disposition of affordable housing under Connecticut General Statutes § 8-64a and eight hearings addressing claims under the Uniform Relocation Assistance 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.
- Responded to two requests for Declaratory Rulings under the Uniform Administrative Procedures Act.
- Worked with agency staff to modify and update administrative plans for subsidy programs to address cutting edge policy issues relating to criminal history and formerly incarcerated individuals.
- 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.
- Trained all staff in state ethics, continued to provide ethics advice to staff on an as-needed basis.
- Handled the Freedom of Information Act responsibilities for the agency, which included responding to numerous requests for public records made pursuant to CT's FOI Act.