



Chicago Department of Family & Support Services

# HOMELESS SERVICES DIVISION

2023 PROGRAM PORTFOLIO AND STRATEGIES



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# BACKGROUND



The Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) plays a key role working with community partners to connect Chicago residents and families to resources and supports that build stability, support their well-being, and empower them to thrive. The department's approach is centered in respect and empathy for residents experiencing homelessness and we work to ensure that homelessness isn't normalized by the systems that intersect with our work.

The DFSS Homeless Services Division seeks to create an effective crisis response system that prevents homelessness whenever possible and rapidly returns people who experience homelessness to stable housing. The Division does this by

supporting a range of services and infrastructure for people experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness, which includes prevention programming, providing shelter, outreach and engagement, housing supports, and system planning/coordination efforts. The DFSS Homeless Services Division partners with a network of stakeholders to make instances of homelessness in Chicago rare, brief, and nonrecurring. Our homeless services partners include other city agencies, community-based nonprofits, funders, and more. DFSS funding supports over 50 community organizations to provide services to households experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Our work is informed by collaborative efforts with the Chicago Continuum of Care (CoC) and federal priorities. Our efforts are also guided by the emerging needs and trends of Chicago residents seeking homeless services.

## UNDERSTANDING HOMELESSNESS

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines four categories of homelessness in the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act, which affects estimates of homelessness and who is eligible for various HUD-funded homeless services programs.

## DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

HUD includes 4 categories of homelessness in its definition:

- Literally homeless: a person or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence.
  - Sheltered homelessness refers to those sleeping in shelters or transitional housing.
  - Unsheltered homelessness refers to those sleeping in spaces not meant for sleeping, such as in the street, in parks, or in cars.
- Imminent risk of homelessness: a person or family who will lose their primary night-time residence in 14 days with no subsequent residence identified or resources to obtain permanent housing.
- “Other”: homelessness defined in other federal statutes, such as unaccompanied youth 25 years or younger.
- Fleeing domestic violence: a person or family fleeing domestic violence with no other residence or resources to obtain permanent housing.

Estimates of homelessness and housing instability are much greater when considering households who are doubled up, which is a term that refers to those who are temporarily living with others, such as friends or a relative, out of economic necessity. Many households experiencing literal homelessness have also experienced doubled-up homelessness.

HUD encourages CoCs to prioritize funding projects serving those with the most need, which includes those who are experiencing chronic homelessness.

- Chronically homeless are those who are literally homeless, have a qualifying disability, and have been continuously homeless for 12 or more months, or for 12 months within 3 years and 4 incidences of homelessness.

## CURRENT STATE OF HOMELESSNESS IN CHICAGO

Every year in late January, DFSS and its partners survey and tally the number of residents experiencing homelessness in homeless shelters, encampments, and other unsheltered areas not meant for human habitation (e.g., under bridges, in cars or parks). This Point-in-Time (PIT) Count serves as a one-night snapshot to estimate the number of families, individuals and children experiencing homelessness in Chicago and to provide demographic information and an overview of service needs of those counted the night of. It is an important annual measure that the City and the Continuum of Care (CoC) uses to measure progress towards our systemic goal of making homelessness rare, short-term, and non-reoccurring. It is also used to inform service and resource planning, secure funds from HUD to assist people experiencing homelessness, build public awareness of homelessness, and understand the changing trends of homelessness in the City over time.

## THE 2023 POINT-IN-TIME COUNT

The 2023 Point-In-Time Count was conducted on Thursday, January 26, 2023. Overall, there were 6,139 people identified as experiencing homelessness in this year’s Count with 5,149 people residing in shelters and 990 people staying in unsheltered locations not meant for human habitation.

## Total Residents Experiencing Homelessness 6,139



5,149

Individuals residing in homeless shelters



990

Individuals residing on the street or other locations not meant for human habitation

Prior to 2023, Chicago had seen a gradual decline in the number of people experiencing homelessness in Chicago since 2015, but the 2023 count was increased from 2022. The largest driver of this increase in homelessness was a greater number of people residing in shelters. A major change in this year's Count was the inclusion in the PIT Count of New Arrivals, or asylum seekers arriving in Chicago from the Southwest border, many bused to Chicago from the state of Texas since August 2022. In response, the City opened emergency shelters for New Arrivals and continues to monitor and support individuals and families arriving to Chicago in this evolving emergency. Overall, there were 2,176 New Arrival families and individuals residing in emergency shelters the night of the Count, accounting for 42% of people residing in shelters. There was also an increase in the number of beds used across the general shelter system by Chicago families and individuals. Since 2022, DFSS has been working with shelters to gradually restore bed capacity to pre-COVID-19 levels, while maintaining safe and decent shelter facilities and working to meet the needs of households in crisis. Additionally, the decreased prevalence of COVID-19 cases during this year's Count led to more people residing in shelters and being counted compared to 2022 during the Omicron surge. The shelters with the largest percent increases in bed usage were congregate shelters for single adults.

In contrast, the estimated number of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness decreased from 1,263 in 2022 to 990 in 2023. Chicago has continued to move individuals living in unsheltered locations into housing through the CARES Act investment that expanded rapid rehousing (RRH) efforts in October 2020. Since the expansion in RRH efforts began, over 330 unsheltered households have been housed, including almost 120 individuals in 2022. Additionally, the one-night nature of the Count makes this estimate sensitive to changes in weather and visibility of individuals experiencing homelessness – temperatures for the 2023 Count were in the low teens compared to the mid-thirties in 2022.

People of different races, ethnicities, ages, family structures, and gender identities experience homelessness in Chicago. However, homelessness has disproportionately impacted certain groups of people in Chicago more than others. Black/African American households experience homelessness at much higher rates than other racial or ethnic groups. This has been a consistent trend with PIT Count data for many years, with about 70% to 80% of the population experiencing homelessness identifying as Black/African American even though Black residents only make up about one-third of the population in Chicago. Additionally, males, especially single men ranging ages 41-60 in unsheltered settings have experienced homelessness at higher rates compared to other unsheltered groups. In the past few years families experiencing homelessness has been on the decline, until the 2023 PIT Count where we saw a 9% increase in the number of Chicago families (not including asylum-seeking families) experiencing homelessness and either entering or staying in shelters.





## REASONS PEOPLE MAY EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS

The causes of homelessness vary from household to household and may include multiple contributing factors, such as loss of income, domestic violence, mental or physical disability, family disputes and substance use disorders. All these causes can lead to loss of an affordable or safe housing situation. Experiencing homelessness is also influenced by a variety of historical and systemic factors including racism, economic inequality, and inequitable access to services and opportunities.

When examining the reasons for homelessness and recent 2023 PIT Count survey data, the most common reasons cited by Non-Asylum-Seeking Chicago residents experiencing homelessness were due to family disputes (31%), loss of employment (20%), multiple reasons (16.5%), or eviction or foreclosure (11%). Additionally, the 2023 PIT Count data found that for Non-Asylum-Seeking Chicago residents less than 7% of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness were employed, whereas before the pandemic, during the 2020 PIT Count, that percent was higher with about 10% of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness being employed. The higher rate of unemployment among those experiencing homelessness in 2023 compared to before the pandemic points to the continuing negative economic and personal impact the pandemic had on the unhoused population in Chicago.

## OTHER MEASURES OF HOMELESSNESS

The PIT Count is one of multiple measures used to understand the prevalence of households and individuals experiencing literal homelessness in Chicago. Since the PIT Count does not capture the circumstances of all people experiencing homelessness or those who are doubled

up with family or relatives, the PIT Count estimate is often cited and compared with the 2020 Chicago Coalition for The Homeless' Report estimate.

These estimates vary in the ways they define homelessness:

1. The annual Point-In-Time estimate utilizes HUD's definition of literal homelessness.

This includes: "An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is public or not meant for human habitation; someone living in temporary shelter (including congregate shelter, transitional housing, Safe Haven and temporary hotel/motel stays paid for by charity or government), OR someone exiting an institution where (s)he resided for 90 days or less AND resided in emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately prior."

2. The 2020 Chicago Coalition for The Homeless' Report estimate includes those experiencing literal homelessness as defined by HUD in addition to individuals or families that were deemed to be living "doubled-up" or in temporary situations like couch surfing with relatives or friends.

The 2020 report found that 65,611 people experienced literal or doubled-up homelessness over the course of the year.

Although the PIT Count only focuses on those experiencing literal homelessness according to HUD's definition, understanding the trends and number of individuals and families that are doubled up is important, especially since doubled up homelessness can lead to literal homelessness (as seen by the 2022 PIT Count data and where over 50% of both those experiencing unsheltered and sheltered homelessness reported being doubled up before becoming homeless). Additionally, according to the Illinois State of Homelessness Report, doubled-up homelessness has been on the rise, which underscores the importance of literal homeless prevention programs .

## NEW ARRIVALS

As of September 2023, Chicago has received over 14,000 New Arrivals, including people sent on over 142 buses chartered by the states of Texas and Colorado since August 31, 2022. While the arrival of buses paused briefly in January, approximately 100 to 200 New Arrivals continue to call 311 for shelter assistance on a weekly basis, and buses are once again arriving in Chicago. As of September 12, 2023, there were approximately 7,267 New Arrivals residing in newly established City-run shelters with another 2,000 individuals waiting in police stations and at O'Hare airport. This is a substantial increase even since the 2023 PIT Count, when around 2,100 New Arrivals were residing in shelter. DFSS works with the Mayor's Office, Office of Emergency Management and Communications, Department of Housing, Chicago Police Department, the Department of Public Health, Chicago Public Schools, Assets and Information Assistance and other City departments to stabilize the mission ensuring there are sufficient shelter beds, supportive services, and supplies. An Emergency Operations Center, including DFSS representation, has been established to support and coordinate key strategies to achieve those goals.

Chicago is a Welcoming City, and the goal of the New Arrival's mission is to provide a humanitarian response to meet the basic needs of New Arrivals in Chicago, including shelter, food, and health care, as well as support individuals in navigating to their desired destination or resettling in Chicago. With its partners, DFSS is striving to provide safe accommodation and



supportive services for New Arrivals. The DFSS Homeless Services Division manages the operations of the new arrival shelter mission which has added more than 5,000 shelter beds to the City's homeless system. DFSS is also working with sister agencies to support New Arrivals in resettling in stable housing, to maintain shelter capacity for households who continue to arrive.

As of September 2023, the City has received almost \$43M from FEMA and \$50M from the Illinois General Assembly for the New Arrivals mission. In May 2023, the City Council voted to use \$51M in City funding to care for New Arrivals. The City is continuing to pursue opportunities for additional federal and state funding support for the mission.



*Mayor Brandon Johnson meets with asylum seekers at Piotrowski Park.*

## FEDERAL STRATEGY

Chicago's approach to preventing and ending homelessness is aligned with federal efforts – most recently the Biden-Harris Administration plan ALL INside : The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness – which sets the goal to reduce homelessness by 25% by 2025.

## FIVE GOALS TO IMPLEMENT ALL INSIDE

1. Increasing Affordable Housing Opportunities
2. Strengthening Prevention and Diversion Practices
3. Creating Solutions for Unsheltered Homelessness
4. Helping People Who Exit Homelessness to Find Employment Success
5. Learning from the Expertise of People with Lived Experience

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) is the sole federal agency working with 19 federal partners to help communities collaborate, use resources in efficient and effective ways, and implement evidence-based best practices to prevent and end homelessness in the United States. To date they have highlighted efforts to support specific populations who are experiencing homelessness including: veterans, those who are chronically homeless, families, and youth. USICH is encouraging state and local governments to use the ALL INside plan as a blueprint for their own strategic plans and goals. The plan is built around three foundations: equity, data and evidence, and collaboration; and three solutions.

1. Housing and supports: increasing the supply of and equitable access to affordable housing and tailored supports for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.
2. Crisis response: supporting local CoCs to effectively conduct outreach to unsheltered people, utilize coordinated entry, targeted homelessness prevention and diversion, emergency shelter, permanent housing including rapid rehousing, and wraparound services during and after homelessness.
3. Prevention: focusing on upstream, universal prevention approaches that will require an all-hands-on-deck effort across government to broadly reduce the risk of housing instability for households most likely to experience homelessness.

In Spring 2023 Chicago was selected as one of six jurisdictions to participate in the ALL INside initiative, part of the ALL INside plan focused on unsheltered homelessness, managed by USICH and the White House. Chicago has welcomed a dedicated HUD official to accelerate and support locally driven strategies to reduce unsheltered homelessness.

Chicago also follows the direction of the HEARTH Act, which in 2009 amended and re-authorized the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Program. The HEARTH Act puts great emphasis on system performance measures like reducing the length of homelessness, reducing homelessness recidivism, and reducing the overall number of households experiencing homelessness. It also created a new Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program and Continuum of Care Program. The ESG program built on the success of the Federal Stimulus-funded Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program (HPRP) and emphasizes rapid rehousing and diversion. The ESG Interim Rule also requires area-wide systems coordination, including coordination with other targeted homeless services, system and program coordination with mainstream resources and coordinated entry system.

DFSS works closely with partners at the local and national levels to implement these federal priorities.

## ILLINOIS STRATEGY

Chicago's approach to ending homelessness seeks to align and collaborate with HOME Illinois, Illinois' Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness.

### **HOME Illinois, Illinois' Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness**

In September 2021, Governor Pritzker signed the Executive Order to Fight Homelessness in Illinois. The Executive Order created two new commissions within State government – the Illinois Interagency Task Force on Homelessness, and the Community Advisory Council on Homelessness – and a new position to lead the work, the State Homelessness Chief. DFSS's Commissioner is a member of the Community Advisory Council on Homelessness.

HOME Illinois has four strategies :

1. Build Affordable & Permanent Supportive Housing
2. Bolster the Safety Net
3. Secure Financial Stability
4. Closing the Mortality Gap

In May 2023, the Illinois General Assembly passed a budget that increased state funding for the emergency shelter system by \$51M as part of the HOME Illinois Plan as well as other major investments in homeless-dedicated services and housing.

The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) provides housing, shelter, and homelessness resources in the form of programming and funding for Emergency & Transitional Housing, Homeless Prevention, Homeless Youth, and Supportive Housing. IDHS is a key funder for homeless services in Chicago: DFSS receives over \$9 million annually of Emergency and Transitional Housing funding.



*Illinois Chief Homelessness Officer Christine Haley (left), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Regional Administrator Diane Shelley, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Assistant Secretary Dr. Kimberly McClain, DFSS Commissioner Brandie Knazze (center), La Casa Norte Vice President Larry McKay, former Chicago Department of Housing Commissioner Marisa Novara, and President and CEO of All Chicago Making Homeless History Carolyn Ross*



## LOCAL STRATEGY

### Overview of the Chicago Continuum of Care

The Chicago Continuum of Care (CoC) is a membership-based organization whose mission is to prevent and end homelessness in our city. With a structure and composition that is mandated by the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the CoC strategizes and plans a coordinated, comprehensive approach to providing housing and services for people experiencing homelessness. Chicago receives \$86 million in HUD Continuum of Care funding for homelessness, which is coordinated through the CoC structure.

DFSS is actively involved in the Chicago Continuum of Care (CoC) and partners with the CoC's designated Collaborative Applicant, All Chicago.

The CoC Board is responsible for approval and implementation of all CoC policies and procedures and the strategic implementation plan. The City is represented on the CoC Board by:

- DFSS Commissioner Brandie Knazze (current board chair)
- Chicago Department of Public Health (member)
- Chicago Department of Housing (member)
- Chicago Housing Authority (member)
- Mayor's Office representative (member)

There are several key elements of Chicago's homelessness response system that are managed by the CoC:

- The Coordinated Entry System is a centralized system for people experiencing homelessness to access housing and support services. The Coordinated Entry System has an accessible and navigable set of entry points and involves a universal housing assessment for all persons requesting assistance. Through this system, anyone in need can access appropriate connections to housing and services.
- The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) collects and organizes specific data on people experiencing homelessness, housing programs and homeless services received. Users utilize HMIS to analyze aggregate data and to publish data dashboards. HMIS is also used to create reporting for HUD requirements.
- The CoC has shared Community Standards, which are general program and program model expectations. The standards include best practices, equal access and non-discrimination, privacy, Coordinated Entry participation, and HMIS participation and data collection.

The DFSS Homeless Services Division also engages with a range of stakeholders and partners to ensure that homeless services are informed through key quality improvement processes. A few of our thought partners are listed here:

### Institute on Global Homelessness (IGH) Vanguard Cities Initiative

IGH launched the A Place to Call Home initiative in 2017 with key global strategic partners to begin pioneering work in 13 Vanguard Cities across 6 continents. IGH worked directly with Vanguard Cities on their strategy, measurement, and implementation—and in doing so, helped

them make quantitative and qualitative steps toward their reduction goals. Chicago was one of thirteen cities selected to partner with a number of local, national, and regional organizations across six continents committed to ending street homelessness by 2030. Chicago will continue engaging and working as part of the Vanguard City Network. In this capacity, Chicago will engage with Vanguard City’s United Nations advocacy campaigns and events as well as participate in peer sharing meetings, webinars, and summits.

### UChicago Inclusive Economy Lab

DFSS partners with UChicago Inclusive Economy Lab (formerly Urban Lab) for best practice research, data analysis and evaluation to support performance management and program development of the Homeless Services Division portfolio.

## FUNDING

Annual funding for homeless services through the Department of Family and Support Services comes from 11 funding sources. Annual funding sources for FY24 are detailed below.

FUNDING TYPE	FUNDING SOURCE	ANNUAL FUNDING (2024)
Federal	Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)	\$11,951,270
Federal	Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)	\$7,540,000
Federal*	Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)	\$3,713,740
State	Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Emergency and Transitional Housing (ETH)	\$9,882,000
Local	Corporate City Funding (local dollars)	\$29,090,048
Local	Chronic and Family Homelessness Homesharing Fund	\$13,708,000
Local	Domestic Violence Homesharing Fund	\$1,186,000
Local	Chicago Department of Aviation	\$1,255,902
Local	Chicago Housing Authority	\$170,000
Local	Service Tax/Winter Shelter Fund	\$35,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$77,724,960</b>

*\*Funding awarded to DFSS through the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO)*

Funding to be distributed to delegate agencies to implement the types of programs depicted in the following table will total \$69M. Annual DFSS funding awarded to homeless services programs in 2024 is provided below.

COMPONENT	DESCRIPTION	ANNUAL 2024 FUNDING(APPROX.)
Homelessness prevention	Rental assistance, case management and legal services to prevent households from becoming homeless.	\$1M
Shelter	Emergency housing for families, youth, survivors of DV and single adults.	\$27.5M
Centralized shelter intake	24/7 crisis response and shelter intake, referral, and transportation	\$3.5M
Outreach and engagement	Street outreach, drop-in centers, and housing navigation.	\$9M
Housing supports	Rapid rehousing; supportive services attached to permanent housing for youth, families, veterans, single adults; Flexible Housing Pool; and Youth Transitional Housing	\$27.5M
System planning and coordination	Coordinated entry, convening around planning issues related to the homelessness response system.	\$500,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$69M</b>

Additional multi-year funding for homeless services through DFSS is available through the Chicago Recovery Plan and American Rescue Plan, detailed below:






FUNDING TYPE	FUNDING SOURCE	INITIATIVES	FUNDING AMOUNT
Federal	HOME-ARP	Permanent Supportive Housing supportive services; Tenant Based Rental Assistance; Non-Profit Capacity Building and Operating; Admin and Planning	\$44,000,000
Federal	American Rescue Plan Local Fiscal Recovery Fund	Rapid rehousing; Low-barrier shelter	\$28,300,000
Local	Chicago Recovery Plan Bond	Shelter infrastructure improvements	\$20,000,000
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$92,300,000</b>

# PROGRAM PORTFOLIO

## HOMELESS SERVICES DIVISION PROGRAM PORTFOLIO

The DFSS Homeless Services Division manages contracts with 50 delegate agencies serving clients at 105 sites with over \$60 million in annual funding from 11 different sources, as well as \$50M in Chicago Recovery Plan funding and \$44M in HOME-ARP funding in multi-year funding. This is a massive administrative undertaking and requires the efforts of 20 program staff and a 14-person Homeless Outreach Team.

The primary system components that DFSS funds are:

	1. PREVENTION
	2. SHELTER
	3. OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT
	4. HOUSING SUPPORTS
	5. SYSTEM PLANNING AND COORDINATION

### 1. PREVENTION

First and foremost, DFSS is committed to preventing homelessness whenever possible. This is especially challenging, because neither DFSS nor the City controls many of the factors that trigger homelessness, such as loss of government benefits, eviction, domestic violence, military discharge, foster children aging out, or prison release. Despite the lack of direct control over many of the triggers, DFSS is committed to preventing homelessness whenever possible by helping Chicagoans who are at risk of losing their housing. DFSS supports four prevention delegate agencies and operates its own prevention programming, which is detailed below.

#### Homeless Prevention Call Center

DFSS funds and helped design the Homelessness Prevention Call Center (HPCC), accessed through 311, which is the central point of access for homelessness prevention funds. Call center staff conduct brief intake and refer callers to prevention service agencies. If callers are not eligible for available funds, the HPCC refers to other community resources.

## Rental Assistance

The DFSS Rental Assistance Program (RAP) is a homelessness prevention initiative that provides funding to Chicagoans who are at risk of becoming homeless. RAP helps Chicagoans who have housing right now, but who may become homeless soon because they lost income or had another emergency which prevents them from paying rent. Residents can apply for RAP via a web-based platform and at any of DFSS's six community service centers.

To prevent homelessness among the increasing number of renters facing evictions due to loss of income because of COVID-19, DFSS dedicated COVID response resources to RAP. This included increased staffing through delegate agencies to process applications quickly, expand outreach efforts, and fund administration as well as a new online application portal to reduce barriers to applying for rental assistance. As of August, 2023, 2,747 households have been helped through the Rental Assistance Program.



*Participants obtain information regarding eligibility for subsidized housing from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development at the Garfield Community Service Center.*

## 2. SHELTER

DFSS is the primary funder of shelter beds in Chicago and coordinates citywide shelter referral and placements. DFSS funds and oversees a network of shelter programs totaling approximately 3,000 beds at over 40 facilities operated by 28 different delegates (excluding the New Arrivals shelter system).

DFSS funds a single delegate agency to transport, refer and place residents experiencing homelessness in available shelter beds across the city. By calling Chicago's 311 City Services, residents experiencing a housing crisis or domestic violence are connected to an available shelter bed with a trauma-informed response. The shelter placement process involves significant coordination with individual shelter providers, handling discharge and grievances, and en-



sure that families are appropriately matched and placed intact. DFSS also provides training and technical assistance to maintain shelters' capacity to provide services. Families in need of shelter are connected to the shelter system and resources through the Emergency Homeless Assessment and Response Center (EHARC), opened in 2018.

Supported by best practice research and agency specific pilots, DFSS initiated a systemwide Shelter Diversion Pilot in 2021, to build a network of well-trained diversion experts who are supported by system level infrastructure that includes management, training and access to flexible funds. The goal of shelter diversion is to end a household's experience of homelessness as quickly as possible while empowering them to regain control over their situation. This limits the trauma of homelessness on the individual or family and ensures limited shelter beds remain available for those most in need. During the pilot from October 2021 to December 2022, 1,796 households were screened for diversion, 588 households were enrolled, and 216 households were successfully diverted from entering the homeless system (a 36% success rate of enrolled households).

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, DFSS worked closely with the Chicago Department of Public Health to provide guidance and resources to shelters to reduce spread, minimize risk, and mitigate severity of COVID-19. A key aspect of the public health response was establishing shelter-based service teams to partner with every shelter in Chicago, beginning in October 2020. These teams of nurse practitioners, doctors, nurses, social workers, and allied professionals are organized by two Lead Coordinating Organizations and funded by CDPH to provide trauma-informed on-site primary healthcare, behavioral healthcare, and infection prevention and control services. DFSS supports the work of the shelter-based service teams by identifying partners and reinforcing communications, shelter guidance, and isolation policies.

Most recently, DFSS allocated an additional \$3.7M annually for shelter operational funding beginning in 2023, building on an increase of \$1.5M in 2022. This funding raises all shelter programs to a minimum DFSS funding level of \$22 per bed per night. Additional funding is to support adequate staffing levels, along with living wages and benefits for front-line shelter staff.

DFSS has also allocated funding to open an additional low-barrier shelter, in addition to the existing low-barrier navigation shelter for encampment residents currently operating 40 beds in Pilsen. These low-barrier shelters provide temporary shelter designed to better meet the needs of residents entering from unsheltered locations, including accommodating couples, pets, and belongings, and to help residents move on to more stable housing.



*DFSS staff and volunteers conduct the Point-In-Time Count.*

### 3. OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

The locations where people experiencing unsheltered, or street, homelessness have shifted over time and have resulted in the public's increased awareness of the impact of homelessness in our city. Many locations where Chicagoans experiencing homelessness used to reside unseen are now being developed, and during the COVID-19 pandemic people experiencing homelessness moved into spaces like parks and bus shelters that had less activity while people stayed at home. Life for people experiencing homelessness is incredibly difficult and many seek safety in numbers. Chicago, like other cities across the US, has seen an increase in the number of encampments where people experiencing homelessness congregate. Many of these encampments are in neighborhoods that previously had little to no visibility into the true numbers of people experiencing homelessness in our city.



*DFSS staff and volunteers conduct the Point-In-Time Count.*

DFSS and delegate agencies work to engage individuals living in public spaces in services that will lead to housing or shelter. We do this through street outreach and drop-in center programs. Overall goals are to:

- Reduce unsheltered homelessness through a focus on North Star goals - movement to shelter and permanent housing.
- Ensure public health and safety issues at encampments are addressed (e.g., cleaning, portable restrooms) and encampments don't grow in size.

DFSS funds thirteen street outreach programs operated by delegate agencies and operates its own DFSS Homeless Outreach and Prevention (HOP) team to engage and serve individuals experiencing homelessness and living near railroad tracks, bridges, the Chicago River, viaducts and alleys, Chicago Parks locations, and CTA train station.

With our newly-increased staff capacity, the Homeless Outreach and Prevention (HOP) team is expanding its outreach coordination efforts, including connection to housing through:

- **Encampment Strategy:** DFSS coordinates and partners with delegate agencies and City partners to conduct outreach to homeless encampments monthly and provide sustained social service connections—including offering access a low-barrier shelter, medical attention, and substance abuse treatment to all interested parties.
- **Coordinated Daily Outreach:** Street outreach teams, including the DFSS HOP team and 11 delegate agencies, build rapport with individuals experiencing homelessness to meet basic needs and engage them in services. Coverage is coordinated across the city and includes CTA-dedicated teams and overnight services. DFSS began funding an overnight outreach team in 2018 to create 24-hour outreach coverage. These teams build rapport with homeless individuals to engage them in services. They also utilize the Continuum of Care’s Coordinated Entry System housing assessment tool and work to ensure residents in public spaces have access to housing resources. Each year, the DFSS HOP team and delegate agencies engage 4,700 residents.
- **Connection to Housing:** Outreach teams coordinate with housing providers to host Accelerated Moving Events (AMEs) dedicated for unsheltered residents to rapidly connect individuals to housing. Since 2020, just under 400 households were housed from unsheltered locations through AMEs. Chicago Recovery Plan funding for rapid re-housing continues to support roughly one AME each month dedicated to unsheltered residents, organized by the DFSS HOP team. In 2022, DFSS expanded our partnership to bring legal services, workforce services and MAR-NOW (Medication-Assisted Recovery) treatment outreach to each AME.



*DFSS Outreach team conducts a visit to encampment residents.*

DFSS funds 11 daytime drop-in centers (five youth-dedicated and six adult) operated by delegate agencies that offer residents experiencing homelessness basic need services such as meals, showers, laundry and quiet safe spaces. These centers are staffed to engage residents living in public spaces and help them identify more stable indoor housing.

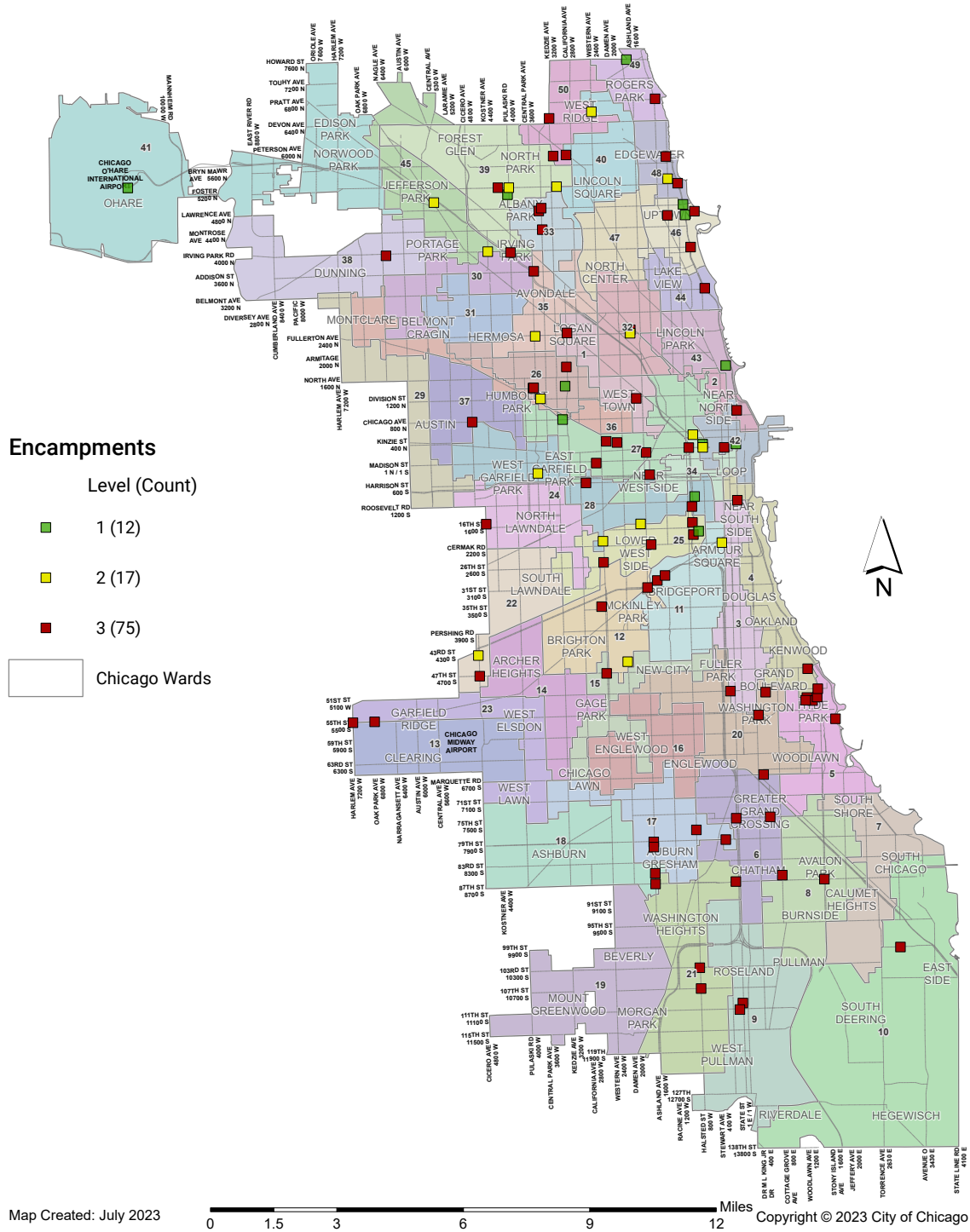
In 2023, DFSS awarded \$2M in CTA funding for expanded outreach services on Red & Blue lines and an additional \$485,920 for expansion of outreach services at O’Hare airport.



In the map below, you can see each of the homeless encampments that the HOP team is engaged with.



## Budget Encampments by Ward



## 4. HOUSING AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

DFSS funds 18 delegate agencies to provide transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, and safe havens. These programs provide housing stability services and subsidies in scattered site housing as well as project-based facilities. 1,500 people are served in housing annually by these delegates. DFSS also funds a Rapid Rehousing Program Coordinator to coordinate rapid rehousing programs providing short- to medium-term rental assistance and supportive services to rapidly move households from homelessness into stable housing.

In 2020, DFSS prioritized a housing response to COVID-19 and dedicated \$35 million to fund the Expedited Housing Initiative (EHI), using ESG CARES Act funding. EHI connected people experiencing homelessness to housing and supportive services as an effective public health intervention to ensure homeless Chicagoans at high risk of serious illness due to COVID-19 could maintain their health in their own home. Through December 2022, EHI housed 1,888 households. To build on EHI's success, in 2023 DFSS received an additional American Rescue Plan Act grant investment of \$27M and \$7.8M in City Corporate funding. With this funding, we have housed 526 households through September 2023, while continuing to support 1,000 households who are already in housing.

DFSS partners with the CoC to continually update and improve the Coordinated Entry System which provides an accessible, efficient path to housing and services for people experiencing homelessness by:

- Using one standardized housing assessment to evaluate the needs of people experiencing homelessness.
- Creating a by-name list of individuals engaged in homeless services.
- Using HMIS as the shared data platform that tracks every point in the homeless system – from entry into outreach or shelter all the way to permanent housing.

The CPS Families in Transition (FIT) Project is an unprecedented initiative to connect families with children enrolled in CPS's Students in Temporary Living Situations (STLS) in the most at-risk communities with permanent supportive housing. The CPS FIT Project is built around a partnership which includes Chicago Public Schools, advocacy groups, service providers, researchers, and DFSS, and has allowed for extensive outreach in the schools, community centers, and shelters. Since the initiative was launched in April of 2017, 125 homeless families have been housed. This means more than 500 formerly homeless individuals have homes of their own. Families were prioritized for housing based on the Coordinated Entry System standardized assessment tool but unlike most homeless resources, this project provides housing for families living doubled up. University of Chicago's Inclusive Economy Lab is conducting an evaluation of the CPS FIT Project and hopes to learn more about the vulnerability of these families and connect them with appropriate services. Chicago is the first city in the nation to design an initiative around data on homeless families from both the school system and the Continuum of Care

The Flexible Housing Pool Program (FHP), an innovative cross-systems mechanism to create new units of housing, began implementation in early 2019. The FHP aims to rapidly connect individuals with complex needs who are frequently using crisis systems (e.g., emergency rooms, shelters, or jail detention) to supportive housing. The FHP delivers these resources in a new model that increases efficiency in housing identification and placement, centralizes the

housing coordination function, applies service delivery best practices, and provides funding flexibility to overcome barriers to housing. This program is unique as it elevates cross-sector partnership which includes Cook County Health and Hospital Systems, County Care, and the Department of Public Health. The FHP solution is rooted in the idea that supportive housing can reduce long-term spending on emergency services while improving outcomes for chronically homeless individuals significantly.

The FHP came to fruition on January 17, 2018, as the Chicago City Council adopted an ordinance authorizing the funding of the FHP program. Under the Ordinance, DFSS and the Department of Planning and Development (now Department of Housing) were authorized to fund the program over the next three years with \$1M per year. The Chicago Housing Authority contributed \$800,000 per year for three years. DFSS is the authorized lead agency for implementation of the FHP and the Center for Housing and Health serves as the FHP Coordination Agency. As of July 2023, 1,168 participants in 691 households have been housed, of which 328 were youth-led households and 363 were adults. The median number of days to housing is 67 days for the adult cohort and 52 days for the youth cohort. Of all participants housed in the FHP to date, 90% remained housed.

In 2020, the City invested an additional \$5 million in the FHP to expand housing interventions for youth experiencing homelessness. Youth-dedicated FHP resources will be used for a non-time limited housing model (a tailored package of housing subsidies and supportive services) with transition to Permanent Supportive Housing as needed, to serve youth experiencing homelessness and previously or currently involved with other systems. The FHP partnered with the Youth Services Division's Service Coordination and Navigation (SCaN) Program, seeking to service ScaN youth that are at the highest risk of violence involvement. As of July 19th, 2023, 343 youth-led households have been housed through the Flexible Housing Pool. Thanks to an additional \$6.6M of ARP funding received in summer 2023, the FHP program will continue to serve up to 88 SCaN youth per year through 2026.



*A volunteer in action during the Point-In-Time Count.*

## 5. SYSTEM, POLICY AND PLANNING INITIATIVES

In addition to contract management and service coordination in our core program areas, DFSS staff lead and participate in system and policy coordination efforts, and data and governance initiatives. The areas of focus for DFSS directly align with the Continuum of Care's (CoC) collective impact implementation structure, which is the structure for how the CoC works toward achieving our collective goals, evolving out of implementation of the City's Plan 2.0. The framework of the CoC implementation structure is action-oriented and each line of work is comprised of time-limited work groups with critical voices and experts from the community convened to achieve specific deliverables. This project management structure requires a high level of cross-sector collaboration, including representation by DFSS Homeless Services staff at the following CoC lines of work.

### **Coordinated Entry Leadership (DFSS Participates)**

The Chicago Coordinated Entry Leadership Team was created to offer oversight and guidance to the Coordinated Entry System (CES) by giving input and direction to shape the CES vision while finding solutions to improve the overall system. This group is facilitated by All Chicago and meets monthly as a team while smaller break-out groups may meet more often as needed. This team is comprised of leaders from the CoC including the Coordinated Entry Lead Entities and can call upon additional critical voices as needed.

### **HMIS Committee (DFSS Participates)**

The HMIS Committee provides recommendations about HMIS Governance decisions to the CoC for adoption and operationalization. The HMIS Committee is involved in making recommendations about various decisions including but not limited to: HMIS Priorities/Workplan; HMIS Lead evaluation and monitoring process; HMIS Lead MOU. The HMIS Committee focuses on systemwide decision-making related to HMIS including but not limited to data privacy and security practices, HMIS vendor management and oversight, and evaluation of the HMIS Lead.

### **Homeless Response System Front Door Services Line of Action (DFSS Co-Lead)**

People encounter the homeless response system through the homeless prevention call center, street outreach teams, accessing shelter, and in many other ways. As individuals seek services, they should receive consistent support that leverages prevention funding, diversion support, and crisis services that are focused on reducing how many people experience homelessness and how long that homelessness lasts. This Line of Action (LOA) focuses on strategies to blend these different buckets of work – outreach, shelter, diversion, homeless prevention, navigation – to make progress toward the CoC's system goals of reducing the time people experience homelessness, reducing the number of people experiencing homelessness, and preventing and ending homelessness all together.

### **Racial Equity (DFSS Participates)**

The Racial Equity Line of Action will identify opportunities for the CoC to address systemic inadequacies in the homeless system, including racial and resource inequities. The Racial Equity Line of Action is responsible for these activities: connecting racial equity initiatives with the CoC Implementation Structure activities; working with the System Analysis LOA to identify gaps and advocate for additional resources to address inequities in preventing and ending homelessness; collaborating with all LOAs to embed racial equity efforts within their work;



working with the System Analysis LOA to audit current funding distribution and identify opportunities to rebalance resources; working with the CoC Board to determine the CoC's approach to addressing racism.

### **System Analysis and Resource Development (SARD) (DFSS Participates)**

Ending homelessness requires a holistic understanding of the system that provides homeless services. There must be balanced investment in prevention, crisis services, and housing with consideration of community priorities and solutions for sufficient resources. The SARD LOA utilizes data developed in the continuum to identify gaps in funding or advocacy to cultivate resources and address long-term, systemic issues.

Additionally, DFSS leads a coordinated City response, particularly focused on unsheltered homelessness, through the Interagency Task Force:

### **The City's Interagency Task Force to Reduce Homelessness**

Launched in 2016 to focus on coordination of homeless services across all agencies to improve delivery and reduce homelessness of individuals and families, the Interagency Task Force has become an important part of the City's efforts. The Interagency Task Force to Reduce Homelessness's purpose is to improve coordination between city and sister departments, increase efficiencies in service delivery, and identify additional resources to devote to these efforts. In 2023, the Interagency Task Force goals are to reestablish regular communications on homelessness between departments and agencies, build a shared understanding of the current state of homelessness in Chicago and to identify a unified goal and set of strategies to collaborate on as a group.

The Interagency Task Force is chaired by the Commissioner of DFSS and includes representation from the following City agencies:

- Chicago Housing Authority
- Chicago Park District
- Chicago Police Department
- Chicago Public Library
- Chicago Public Schools
- Chicago Public Library
- Chicago Transit Authority
- Department of Aviation
- Department of Buildings
- Department of Law
- Department of Planning and Development
- Department of Public Health
- Department of Streets and Sanitation
- Department of Transportation
- Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities



*DFSS staff and volunteers  
conduct the Point-In-Time Count.*

## CHICAGO RECOVERY PLAN

The Chicago Recovery Plan is the City's plan to amplify once-in-a-generation federal funding to create an equity-based investment strategy to catalyze a sustainable economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The funding under the Chicago Recovery Plan (CRP), which includes funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and over \$600 million in local bond funds, is allocated alongside all other available resources in the City budget to maximize this opportunity over the next three-to-five-year funding period.

Investments includes funds to support Chicagoans experiencing or at risk of homelessness and other vulnerable populations by providing capital investment in permanent housing, upgrading available shelter stock, and providing rental assistance and supportive services. The investments are listed below.

### **Rapid Rehousing**

DFSS is investing \$27 million of CRP funding in rapid rehousing, a national best practice program model in line with a "housing first" approach that provides short- to medium-term support for households experiencing homelessness to stabilize in housing. Households are supported in finding a rental unit and receive rental assistance and case management for up to 24 months. CRP funding and supplemental City investments by the end of 2023 will house 1,200 new households and continue to support 1,000 households already in housing.

This investment builds on the success of expanded Rapid Rehousing as part of the COVID-19 response to ensure Chicagoans experiencing homelessness and at high-risk of serious illness from COVID-19 could transition from shelter or street locations and maintain their health in their own home. DFSS prioritized a housing response to COVID-19 and invested \$35 million in ESG CARES Act funding to launch the Expedited Housing Initiative (EHI). EHI was developed in collaboration with the Chicago Continuum of Care (CoC) and advocates like the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. Commissioners from DFSS, CDPH, and DOH serve on the CoC Board of Directors and supported policies that paved the way for the EHI. EHI housed 1,888 households experiencing homelessness between October 2020 and December 2022.

### **Shelter Infrastructure Improvements**

DFSS is partnering with the Department of Housing to make sustainable capital improvements in Chicago's homeless shelter system. DFSS investments include \$20M in CRP funding and supplemental funding from HOME-ARP to fund shelter programs to repair and renovate existing shelter facilities, to transition to more accessible and non-congregate settings, sustain current bed capacity, and replenish bed capacity to pre-COVID levels or beyond. DOH investments include \$30M to acquire new non-congregate facilities for shelter programs.

This initiative builds on learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic which highlighted the risk to health and safety for Chicago residents living in congregate shelter. One-third of all shelter beds in the DFSS-funded system pre-COVID were in shared rooms with over 20 people and shared bathrooms. For the single adult population, over 80% of beds were in shared rooms with over 20 people and shared bathrooms. In response to the pandemic, congregate shelters reduced their bed capacity or "decompressed" to allow for distancing in line with public health guidance.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the City also leased space in hotels to provide people experiencing homelessness with non-congregate shelter. At the program's inception, hotels were used for people at high risk of complications or serious illness from COVID-19 infection. According to research conducted by the University of Chicago Medicine, Lawndale Christian Health Center, and the Chicago Department of Public Health at these hotels during the pandemic, non-congregate sheltering significantly reduced COVID-19 incidence, improved self-reported mental health symptoms and certain health measures such as blood pressure, and more than half of program participants moved on to longer-term housing after the intervention.

### **Rental Assistance Program (RAP)**

The DFSS Homeless Division, and Division of Human Services, provides funding (a combination of CSBG & ESG funds) for Chicagoans who are at risk of becoming homeless. RAP helps households who have housing right now, but who may become homeless soon due to a loss of income or had another eligible emergency which prevents them from paying rent. The ESG funding allows up to 6 months of past due rental assistance, and the CSBG funding allows for 3 months of rental assistance (past due or going forward) within a calendar year from the date of approval. Since January 2023, 3,555 households have applied for RAP and 1,54 households received funding to help prevent homelessness.

### **Low Barrier Shelter**

The Homeless Services team has allocated \$500,000 of ARP Local Fiscal Recovery funds for low barrier shelter beds through 2026. This funding will enable an organization to open and operate a new emergency, low-barrier shelter to connect more residents experiencing unsheltered homelessness to shelter and supportive services. Respondents are also required to provide supportive services appropriate for single men, single women, and/or adult couples who are experiencing unsheltered, literal homelessness who often have complex needs and have faced barriers to entering or remaining in general shelters. DFSS is working to procure an organization for this contract and hopes to select an applicant by early 2024.

### **Tenant Based Rental Assistance**

\$6 million has been set aside as part of the HOME-ARP to pilot a Tenant Based Rental Assistance program. The program will serve 75 households annually with rental assistance, security deposit assistance, utility deposits, and utility payments, for households who have previously qualified as homeless, are currently housed due to temporary assistance, and need additional housing assistance to avoid a return to homelessness. Since this program is new to the City of Chicago, DFSS is currently researching program models and best practices to create a new RFP for this program by next year.

### **Related Initiatives**

**Stabilization Housing:** The Chicago Department of Public Health is investing \$12M to pilot a stabilization housing program, providing short-term housing paired with healthcare services for persons who are high utilizers of emergency response services.

**Permanent Supportive Housing:** The Department of Housing is leveraging CRP and HOME-ARP funding to develop 220 new units of Permanent Supportive Housing for households experiencing homelessness, including and along with returning residents, doubled-up households, and survivors of gender-based violence

**Supportive Services:** Once selected, the new PSH will be provided funding to ensure they are able to provide supportive services to residents. The HOME-ARP project has designated \$10 million in supportive services to assist PSH providers. DOH proposals requested a supportive service plan from applicants. Once selected by DOH, DFSS will work with applicants to develop budgets to disburse these dollars.

**Note:** Any project funded through the HOME-ARP is a HUD investment and involves a multi-phased approach. While the goal is to operationalize the service listed above as soon as possible, HUD's investment will run until September 30, 2030.



*DFSS staff conduct the Point-In-Time Count.*



# MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

## DATA COLLECTION

DFSS, the Chicago CoC, and other government funders utilize the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) as the primary data platform for the homeless system. HMIS serves as the shared data platform that tracks every point in the homeless system – from entry into outreach or shelter all the way to permanent housing.

The CoC's Dashboard to End Homelessness publicly displays data from HMIS to transparently depict how people experiencing homelessness access services and move to housing, allowing DFSS and community partners to act on the data and improve our strategies to prevent and end homelessness. (<https://allchicago.org/how-we-are-ending-homelessness/data-analytics/hmis/chicagos-dashboard-to-end-homelessness/>)

DFSS and the CoC also use the annual Point-in-Time (PIT) Count to capture a one-night snapshot of homelessness across the city in sheltered and unsheltered locations. The PIT Count is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and locally led by DFSS. PIT data is one source used to understand the scale of homelessness as defined by the McKinney-Vento Act, and track trends over time in demographics and service needs of the population experiencing homelessness.

Other estimates of homelessness in Chicago will differ from the PIT Count due to:

- Differences in time period: the PIT Count captures the number of people experiencing homelessness in one night, but more households experience homelessness over the course of a month or a year.
- Differences in definition of homelessness: the PIT Count captures the number of people meeting HUD's definition of homelessness, in line with HUD reporting guidance—but many more households in Chicago are doubled-up or experience other forms of housing instability.

Based on HMIS data, PIT data, and Housing Inventory Count (HIC) data, the CoC System Analysis and Resource Development Line of Action also recently endorsed projections of housing need for planning purposes within the CoC. Based on data on number of households experiencing homelessness (chronic and non-chronic), available homeless-dedicated housing resources, and annual turnover of units, the CoC estimates that Chicago needs an additional 2,637 Permanent Supportive Housing slots and 3,851 rapid rehousing slots to meet the level of need. With the Department of Housing and other partners like CHA, DFSS can use our data to confidently share the projected number of housing units we need to significantly reduce homelessness and collaborate with them to create real change.

The availability of sophisticated data gives DFSS the opportunity to test new strategies – like the encampment pilot and monitor in real-time the impact of these strategies.

## MEASURABLE GOALS

The DFSS Homeless Services Division seeks to create an effective crisis response system that prevents homelessness whenever possible and rapidly returns people who experience homelessness to stable housing. The Division does this by supporting a range of services and infrastructure for people experiencing (or at risk of) homelessness including prevention, shelter, outreach and engagement, housing supports, and system planning/coordination efforts. The Homeless Services Division also works closely and collaboratively with the Chicago Continuum of Care (CoC), the CoC's designated Collaborative Applicant (All Chicago), the CoC's Coordinated Entry System, other City agencies, and community-based organizations to coordinate across the broader ecosystem of homeless services in the City towards the ultimate aim of preventing and ending homelessness in Chicago.

DFSS is committed to working with its partners to build and advance equity goals, with the recognition that identifying and addressing systemic racism and inequity within homeless services, programs, and policy is critical to our goal of preventing and ending homelessness.

DFSS is also committed to moving beyond measuring how many people received services to focus on whether Chicagoans are better off after receiving services. As part of this outcome-oriented approach, DFSS has implemented a strategic framework that guides how the Department measures, reports, reviews priorities, and outcomes to drive contracting, decision-making, and greater collaboration. The Homeless Services Division has worked with partners and stakeholders to develop an outcome-driven framework and program models that help determine a program's success. By setting target metrics for program models, the Homeless Services Division uses those data targets and thresholds to inform our work with delegates and discussions with DFSS leadership related to engagement numbers, numbers served, and outcome metrics by delegate programs. Below is an overview of some of those key target metrics by program model:

- Prevention Programs: 100% of households will remain in permanent housing after crisis intervention.
- Street Outreach and Drop-In Centers: 50% of total households will engage in case management.
- Shelter: 60% of total households will complete a Coordinated Entry System (CES) Assessment.
- Rapid Rehousing: 73% of total households will exit to permanent housing.



*DFSS staff and volunteers conduct the Point-In-Time Count.*

Based on the target metrics above, the Homeless Services team tracks program outcomes based on the different program models we fund and support. Below is an overview of some of our 2022 program outcomes based on some of our key program models:

- Prevention Programs: 97% of clients remain in permanent housing after crisis intervention.
- Street Outreach: 97% of total households engaged in case management.
- Shelter: 67% of total households completed Coordinate Entry System (CES) assessment.
- Rapid Rehousing: 86% of households exit to permanent housing.

As previously described, DFSS's primary responsibility is maintaining the complex homeless services and shelter system. We partner with our CoC for federal funding and update our system as required by federal mandates. We are guided by national best practices as we lead these system-wide transformations and are building off successful pilots to implement best practices system-wide. In addition to our DFSS performance goals and metrics, DFSS aligns with the following CoC System Goals, which are highlighted below. We meet with All Chicago and other CoC partners to discuss the system level goals and the Homeless Services Division ensures that these system goals are tracked and analyzed across our Delegate Agencies over-time. Data reports on these goals are available at <https://allchicago.org/hmis/data-reports>.

1. Reduce the number of persons who are homeless, overall and for identified subpopulations.
  - a. The number of people on the Active List.
  - b. The number of people who are newly experiencing homelessness.
  - c. The number of people who enter CoC permanent housing projects.
  - d. The number and destination of people who exit the CoC.
2. Reduce the time persons experience homeless.
  - a. Average days a person experiences homelessness prior to moving into CoC housing.
  - b. Average days between referral to a project and move into CoC housing.
3. Projects committed to the Coordinated Entry System will use only that system to fill their units.
  - a. Percentage of units committed to using Coordinated Entry that were filled using that system.
4. Increase the earned income and/or other income of adults served in the homeless response system.
  - a. Number of adults engaged in Chicago's homeless response system who increase their earned income during the year.
  - b. Number of adults engaged in Chicago's homeless response system who increase their benefits income during the year.
5. Increase persons who exit street homelessness to enter sheltered destination.
  - a. Number of people who exit a street outreach project who enter a sheltered destination, either to shelter or to housing.

## PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The HEARTH Act and its subsequent regulations moved communities towards measuring homeless system performance as opposed to just individual program performance. The federal system performance measures are:

- Reduce length of homelessness (<30 days).
- Reduce rates of return to homelessness.
- Grow jobs and income for people experiencing homelessness.
- Reduce the number who become homeless for the first time.
- Reduce the overall number of homeless in Chicago.
- Thoroughness in reaching homeless population.

In 2014, the Continuum of Care (CoC) established standard performance measures for the program models consistent with the Plan to End Homelessness. The CoC started a process to refine their performance metrics in 2019 and this process continues. Individual program performance remains important; however, Chicago's updated Community Standards and Program

Models Chart (both available at <https://allchicago.org/continuum-of-care/standards-and-monitoring/>) strives to demonstrate how each program model and its performance contributes to the outcomes of the overall system. The CoC Board of Directors approves annual system goals to drive system performance. The DFSS Homeless Services Division uses these measures in contracts and scopes of services with delegate agencies and these measures are reflected in our divisional strategic framework performance dashboard.

Simply stated, for Chicago to significantly reduce the number of individuals experiencing homelessness and achieve our system performance goals, our homeless system requires the following:

- Resources and services to assist people in resolving a housing crisis without entering the homeless system.
- A homeless response and rehousing system that operates as efficiently as possible when people become homeless.
- Adequate housing stock at the back end of the system so that more people exit to housing than enter the system each month.

## ACTIVE CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

In 2018, DFSS launched Active Contract Management (ACM), a set of strategies developed by the Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab focused on improving client outcomes by holding regular, collaborative meetings with delegate agencies to:

- Identify key performance metrics and frequently review real-time data.
- Generate insights on performance trends and uncover shared challenges.
- Brainstorm and test possible solutions and spread best practices.

To date, DFSS Homeless Services Division has used this approach to partner with shelter programs serving single adults and families with children to increase flow from shelter to housing and began convening street outreach programs for ACM conversations in 2022. The Division also uses ACM work to inform our work with Street Outreach delegates as well as our Centralized In-Take delegate. The Division values using reliable and relevant data for this work to ensure compliance, inform trends to be monitored, evaluate program results and performance, and adjust program delivery and policy to drive improved results.



# 2023 AND BEYOND

## OPPORTUNITIES

### **Membership on the CoC Board of Directors**

The CoC Board of Directors is poised to play a high-level role in driving resources and policies to effectively reduce homelessness. The City has five leadership seats on this Board and should ensure that the commissioners of DFSS, the Department of Public Health (CDPH), the Department of Housing (DOH) and the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), as well as Mayor's Office leadership continue to play this role on the CoC Board. The City's Interagency Task Force to Reduce Homelessness should align its work and priorities with that of the CoC to strengthen rather than duplicate CoC efforts.

### **Reducing Unsheltered Homelessness**

Chicago has several upcoming opportunities to strengthen and expand our approach to reducing unsheltered homelessness, building on the City's coordinated encampment strategy. In February 2023, HUD awarded the Chicago CoC \$60 million, to be awarded over 3 years, as part of national awards to communities across the country to address unsheltered homelessness. Funding will be awarded to agencies for programs submitted as part of Chicago's comprehensive application to HUD to expand and enhance services to support people moving from unsheltered locations to shelter and housing.

The City should continue to partner closely with the CoC to ensure implementation of new programs to coordinate and build on existing strategies and resources. Chicago was also selected as one of six jurisdictions to be part of a new national initiative called ALL INside managed by the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness and the White House. Chicago recently welcomed a dedicated federal official who will work to accelerate and support locally driven strategies to reduce unsheltered homelessness.

### **Working with Partners to Develop a New Housing Plan**

Partnership between DFSS and DOH positions the City to clearly articulate and fund a homelessness housing priority and development plan, using the roadmap developed by the joint City and Continuum of Care workgroup. Additionally, with funding from the Chicago Recovery Plan, DOH and DFSS will invest in the creation of 225 new units of permanent supportive housing. This partnership model can be leveraged to create additional units as new funding becomes available.

### **Weaving Equity into Homeless Services Policy**

In 2021, the City's Office of Equity and Racial Justice launched an inaugural effort to have all departments establish an annual Racial Equity Goal. DFSS has committed to identify inequities in service delivery and develop strategies to address them in collaboration with delegate agencies, clients, and people with lived experience. For the Homeless Services Division this means applying the Government Alliance on Race and Equity's Racial Equity Toolkit to the Community Development Grant Application (CDGA) RFP process and applying an equity lens

to program and system outcomes. The division's focus on equity includes race, gender, sexual orientation, family composition, physical ability, and age, as well as elevating to voices of Chicagoans with lived experience of homelessness. In addition, DFSS is actively engaged with the CoC racial equity line of action. This ensures equitable opportunities for those who need services, and equitable opportunities for community-based organizations to compete in the RFP process.

## CHALLENGES

### **Affordable Housing Deficit**

The solution to homelessness is affordable housing. There is not enough housing stock for extremely low-income Chicagoans (< 30% Average Median Income) to significantly reduce the trajectory of Chicago's homeless numbers. The National Low-Income Housing Coalition found that the Chicago-Naperville-Elgin metro area has a deficit of 234,668 affordable housing units. To begin to address the gap, DFSS, DOH, CHA, and the Mayor's Office should establish shared permanent housing goals that involve measurable commitments and shared accountability structures. This should include both permanent and temporary housing with support services to assist households experiencing homelessness. Based on CoC projections, Chicago needs an additional 2,637 permanent supportive housing slots and 3,851 rapid rehousing slots to meet current need.

### **A Vulnerable Homeless Services Workforce**

The homeless services system relies on a vulnerable workforce to sustain its crisis response system. Street outreach programs report challenges hiring due to low pay and high-stress work. Of four outreach delegate agencies needing to hire in 2021, only 1 filled their open positions. Shelters have raised concerns to DFSS about not being able to afford sufficient full-time staff or provide a livable wage, leaving a portion of staff working part-time without health insurance or working multiple jobs. DFSS has increased annual homeless shelter operational funding by \$5.2M since 2021, raising baseline funding for programs to \$22 per bed per night, and increased operational funding for street outreach programs by \$1M. Additional funding continues to be needed to support adequate staffing levels and equitable and living wages for front-line staff.

### **Long Wait Times**

Households in need of shelter are experiencing long wait times for shelter beds or may be turned away due to lack of available beds. This challenge is due to limited shelter bed availability on any given day, effects of the New Arrivals influx which has stretched system capacity and competing urgent needs. Since the City's delegate agency responsible for responding to shelter requests is also responsible for responding to other urgent needs through 311, including senior well-being checks and extreme weather and fire response, the average wait time has increased as the number of requests has increased. More resources are required to increase both delegate capacity and the bed availability necessary to decrease wait times. Additional funding resources are needed to increase the overall number of shelter beds to, at minimum, pre-covid capacity, and for improved technology that enables data to be shared across platforms.

### **Limited Definition of Homelessness**

There are multiple definitions of homelessness across federal agencies that fund homeless

services and housing. The number of people meeting the range of definitions far exceeds the available resources which results in prioritization. DFSS and the CoC receive funding based on those who fit HUD definition of homelessness, which does not include households living doubled up with friends or family nor does it include newly arrived asylum seekers from the southwest border. The housing projections established by the CoC are based on data for households meeting the HUD definition due to restrictions of funders and as a means to prioritize limited resources. This is an ongoing tension throughout the community that has increased since the arrival of thousands of migrants from the southwest border. DFSS acknowledges that households living in double up situations, and newly arrived asylum seekers are often extremely vulnerable and not dissimilar from those entering the shelter system. Flexible funding that is not dependent on the HUD definition of homelessness would help the City to address the emergent and shifting needs of the un-housed population in Chicago.

### **A Federal Funding Cliff is Anticipated in 2025**

CARES Act and American Rescue Plan Act funding brought an opportunity to scale programs and test new approaches, but this funding is time limited. Sustainability planning will be critical as DFSS determines what programs/approaches can continue beyond CRP funding. Resources are needed to maintain rapid rehousing efforts which are aligned with the best practice of “housing first” and to support our ongoing efforts to develop dignified, accessible, non-congregate shelter spaces. Additionally, identifying resources to maintain health partnerships is critical to ensuring that gains made as part of the COVID response continue. The Homeless Services Division at DFSS continues to look for new funding opportunities that could fill the gap for essential programming, while also advocating for sustainable funding from both state and federal sources.





# ADDENDUM

## LIST OF DELEGATE AGENCIES

A Little Bit of Heaven  
A Safe Haven Foundation  
All Chicago Making Homelessness History  
Breakthrough Urban Ministries, Inc.  
Casa Central Social Services Corporation  
Catholic Charities  
Center for Changing Lives  
Center for Housing and Health  
Christian Community Health Center  
Connections for Abused Women and their Children  
Cornerstone Community Outreach  
Covenant House Illinois  
Deborah's Place  
Equitable Social Solutions  
Family Rescue  
Featherfist  
Franciscan Outreach  
Good News Partners  
Heartland Alliance  
Housing Opportunities for Women  
Howard Brown Health Center  
Ignite Org.  
Inspiration Corporation  
Kids Above All Illinois (formerly ChildServ)  
La Casa Norte  
Lawyers Committee for Better Housing  
Legal Council for Health Justice  
Lincoln Park Community Services  
Margaret's Village  
Matthew House  
McDermott Center Db a Haymarket Center  
Mercy Housing  
Metropolitan Family Service  
Neopolitan Lighthouse  
New Moms, Inc.  
North Side Housing and Supportive Services, Inc.  
Olive Branch Mission  
Primo Center for Women and Children  
Renaissance Social Services  
Sarah's Circle  
St. Leonard's Ministries  
The Boulevard of Chicago Inc.  
The Inner Voice  
The Night Ministry  
The Salvation Army  
The Thresholds  
UIC  
Unity Parenting and Counseling, Inc.  
WM Initiatives LLC  
YWCA

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