



CCEH COVID-19 Response Newsletter

Letter from Board Member Mike Lawlor



I don't recall a time when public policy discussions related to at-risk persons in our state was more focused or more passionate. The trifecta of crises: COVID-19, race and budget deficit, is indeed daunting but has presented each of us with a once in a generation opportunity to reboot our state's response to homelessness, not to mention addiction, mental illness and trauma. Let's not let the moment pass us by.

My passion for almost four decades has been understanding and reforming the criminal justice system. I found that the most difficult lesson to learn was that "crime", broadly speaking, is largely the result of our collective inability to address very real social problems. Police, prosecutors and corrections professionals are ill-equipped to respond to many of the challenges coming their way every day.

Change, however, is in the air. Policy makers are struggling on many fronts to develop solutions that address very real problems: mental illness, trauma, substance abuse and homelessness. What many don't realize is that these are often inter-connected. They feed off of one another. The traditional response has been compartmentalized to the point of failure and near system collapse. Our challenge is to help inform those deliberations with our own lived experience and expertise and to do so in collaboration with others who counsel and care for justice involved people every day. In the next weeks and months there will be unprecedented opportunities for each of us to influence the sweeping policy decisions that seem inevitable at this point. Here are three suggestions:

The Yale School of Medicine and the Yale Law School have announced a new enterprise: The SEICHE Center for Health and Justice. A multi-disciplinary approach will allow researchers and clinicians to provide recommendations to policy makers related how existing laws, policies and practices impact health outcomes for justice involved individuals. We know that persons experiencing homelessness cycle in and out of jails and healthcare facilities without the ability to access sustained, effective care. Housing, of course, is central to an impacted person's success, and we have an obligation to add our voice to this discussion. I know this perspective would be a welcome addition to the SEICHE Center's work. Please [click here](#) to learn more on this innovative new center.

My own workplace, the University of New Haven, recently received a grant from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and the Travelers Championship to focus on helping law enforcement understand and respond to the young people of color in a way that promotes success and reduces crime. Our Center for Advanced Policing and the Tow Institute for Youth Justice will collaborate to develop trauma-informed and culturally appropriate training modules for local police in Connecticut. We know that many young people come of age without stable housing and soon find themselves in the criminal justice system. Since police are the gatekeepers to that system, providing them with effective options other than arrest will both reduce crime and increase trust. But, for those options to win the confidence of front-line officers they must be real and accessible around the clock. You can learn more by [clicking here](#) about this new initiative.

The state legislature and Governor Lamont are developing short and long-term plans to address concerns raised in the aftermath of the George Floyd murder and ensuing protests. The latest signals from the capitol point to wide ranging reforms affecting every component of the criminal justice system. I know that many of the people who will be debating and voting on these proposals are not subject matter experts. They will be relying on each of us to provide advice, guidance and support based on our own knowledge of what is broken and how it might be fixed. Reaching out to your local legislator is easier than you think, and I encourage you to do so now. Your first-hand experience, or that of family members and close friends, will help inform and guide the debate. Without a doubt these personal stories are the most impactful form of advocacy with elected officials and other policy makers. The imminent special session, the November elections and the 2021 session of the General Assembly provide you with ample opportunity to help formulate and advance long-overdue changes.

What is most encouraging about reform efforts developing this year is a focus on multi-systemic solutions. Gone are the days when a single bill tweaking a single law, or a series of siloed budget allocations without a mandate for inter-agency collaboration or coordination, is voted on and forgotten. Housing is as much a factor in crime reduction as any other social challenge. If we combine our expertise and advocacy with health care, addiction and education advocates, we will certainly have an impact on the decisions soon-to-be made and on the quality of life for every resident of our state in the years to come.

Yours,

Mike Lawlor

State Expands Housing Assistance for Individuals Re-Entering the Community From Prisons

On June 29th, the CT Office of Policy Management (OPM), in partnership with the Department of Correction (DOC), announced a \$1.8 million contract with the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness to expand a statewide housing assistance program to help stop the revolving door between homelessness and incarceration.

This significant investment builds upon a program created by CCEH, OPM, DOC, Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch, and several non-profit providers soon after the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic. This program was created to prevent returning citizens from being discharged to the streets

during the public health emergency as shelters, halfway houses, transitional housing, and other programs ceased or reduced taking new admissions.

The additional funding adds additional flexible financial and rental assistance, and will also fund case managers/housing navigators in 7 regions across the state's funding based on numbers of anticipated discharges to that geographic area, one full-time position at CCEH for statewide program coordination, fund administration, training, data collection and reporting, program development, and oversight.

Over 500 Households Housed with Diversion and Rapid Exit Funding!



You may recall that in January 2020, the Connecticut Department of Housing (DOH) announced a \$1.15 million award to CCEH to support a statewide effort to end family homelessness that was spurred by last November's grant from Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos' Day One Families Fund. CCEH had intended to use these "DOH Bezos Match" funds to provide flexible financial assistance to divert or rapidly exit families with children from homelessness. In response to the COVID-19 public health emergency and the need to decompress shelters, CCEH and DOH made the responsible decision to make the DOH funding available to individuals as well as family households.

Over the last several months, CCEH, in collaboration with our statewide partners in shelter diversion and with emergency shelter providers, have been working hard to deploy these resources to keep as many families and individuals out of shelter and homelessness as possible. Over the past four months, providers made financial requests to CCEH on behalf of households for security deposits, rental assistance, utility assistance, moving costs, and other flexible needs.

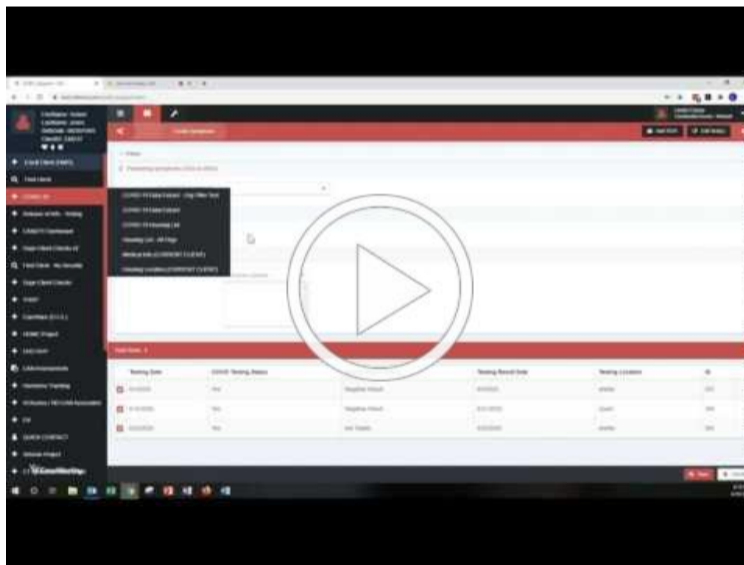
Between February and June 30, the first half of these funds have been expended and have helped to **divert or rapidly exit into housing 551 people in 277 households!** This includes:

- 112 individuals and 96 families (including 122 adults and 165 children) who were diverted from emergency shelter.
- 22 individuals and 47 families (including 54 adults and 76 children) who were rapidly exited from emergency shelters into homes.

Our thanks to the Department of Housing for these funds and the dedicated case managers and providers working with people (often remotely) who have helped so many people to have a safe home where they can stay safe! Onward!

HMIS Update

As many shelter guests transition back to shelter from hotels, testing is more important than ever. Our very own Linda Casey has put together a quick 3 minute video to show how to enter COVID test results in HMIS.



Please feel free to share this video, and if you have any question contact Linda at info@cceh.org.

Resources from the National Alliance to End Homelessness

From the National Alliance to End Homelessness, here is some guidance to support communities planning how to use CARES Act resources:

[The Framework for an Equitable COVID-19 Homelessness Response](#)

[Use ESG-CV to Help Those Currently Experiencing Homelessness First](#)

We Are Looking for be homeful Ambassadors

If you know of any amazing kids who care deeply about ending homelessness, please encourage them to reach out and become *be homeful* ambassadors by filling out this [form](#).

Kids of all ages who want to help by making welcome home signs can send them to:

Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness
c/o the be homeful project
257 Lawrence Street
Hartford, CT 06106

Please also share your signs via the [be homeful](#) Instagram page!



Picture credit: Lily Rosenthal



Picture credit: Lilo Gaul



Picture credit: Emma Vega

How You Can Help

Our providers need your help! This [site](#) includes ways you can join Connecticut's homeless response.

Webinars & Additional Guidance

With information about COVID rapidly evolving, keeping up-to-date is more important than ever. Stay up-to-date by visiting CCEH's COVID Guidance Page, located at cceh.org/covid19.

Spotlight Webinar

[Communities Using Data to Analyze Racial Disparities During the Pandemic](#)

CCEH has partnered with the CT Fair Housing Center, CT Legal Services, and CT Department of Housing to provide you with an "Update on the Status of Evictions in Connecticut During the COVID-19 Crisis."

Upcoming Webinars

[Having a Harm Reduction Approach During a Pandemic](#)

Wednesday, July 15, 2020
2:00 P.M. - 3:00 P.M.

[Addressing Racialized Trauma and Actively Engaging in Anti-Racism](#)

Thursday, July 30, 2020
12:00 P.M. - 1:00 P.M.

Previously Recorded Webinars

[Working with Landlords to Rapidly House Successfully: Recruiting, Engaging and Retaining](#)

[Hotels to Homes: Rapidly Housing from Hotels During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[Addressing Racial Disparities in Homelessness During COVID-19](#)

[Verbal De-Escalation and Crisis Prevention During COVID-19](#)

[Responding to COVID-19: An Inside Look into Connecticut's Homeless Response](#)

[Caring for and Reducing the Transmission of COVID-19 in Shelters and Hotels: A View from the Field](#)

[Shelter to Housing Crash Course: Rapidly Exiting to Permanent Housing](#)

[Responding to Violence in the Home During the COVID-19 Crisis](#)

Please [click here](#) to access our entire webinar catalog.

CCEH in the News

[Facing Pandemic, Student Volunteers Put Mission into Practice](#)

Yale School of Management | July 2020

[EDITORIAL: Remembering David Dudley](#)

Record Journal | July 2020



Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness | 257 Lawrence Street, Hartford, CT 06106

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