



CCEH COVID-19 Response Newsletter

Letter From CCEH Board Member Jennifer Paradis of Beth-El Center



Dear Friends,

I pen this letter today as the Executive Director of an inclusive emergency shelter program but more importantly as a member of the LGBTQ+ community and as a person who experienced homelessness as a queer youth throughout high school and college. Knowing firsthand how quickly one's stability can be lost and how important formal shelter supports are to meeting basic survival needs and realizing one's full potential, I hope to provide context to the proposed changes of HUD's Equal Access Rule and to stand with other leaders in the LGBTQ+ and housing justice community to say: NOT IN OUR NAME.

Homeless service providers, housing advocates, and most importantly people experiencing homelessness during a global pandemic, have recently gained heart-wrenching insight into the details of HUD's proposed changes to what we have all come to know as the 'Equal Access Rule.'

The 2012 ruling sought to ensure that all individuals and families experiencing homelessness would have access to life-saving emergency shelter regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or marital status. This ruling was later amended in 2016 to provide clear protections to transgender and non-binary people, and provided much needed guidance and support to shelter providers on ways in which to provide safe shelter services for members of the LGBTQ+ community. In practice, it affirmed that shelters are places of acceptance and hope, led by informed and competent staff, and helped to ease the fear and apprehension of these extremely vulnerable populations.

And to be clear, this was (and still is) needed. With 43% of people presenting in homeless drop-in centers identifying as LGBTQ+ and 30% of street outreach clients identifying as LGBTQ+, we must do everything in our power to create and maintain open and affirming shelter spaces. Without this, our goals to make homelessness rare, brief and non-reoccurring in our communities are impossible.

Furthermore, trans people and particularly trans people of color remain victims to intersectional, systematic discrimination that increase their risk of homelessness exponentially—including lack of access to healthcare and stable employment free from harassment, greater fracturing of family units, 3.7 times higher likelihood to experience police violence and 7 times greater risk of physical violence when interacting with police compared to cisgender victims and survivors.

Within this context, emergency homeless shelter services provide a unique space in which trans and gender non-conforming people are not criminalized and further marginalized for their very identity. If HUD is successful in finalizing their proposed changes, basic rights to safe and accessible emergency shelter services would be stripped from our LGBTQ+ citizens, leaving admission and service decisions up to individual shelters.

Again, in practice, this means that single-sex shelters or sex-segregated shelters would have the authority to require that someone's gender identity match their biological sex. Furthermore, the proposed changes offer identified measures in which to seek evidence of that information both through vital documentation (needing to show a valid ID with your sex marker matching your gender identity) up to and including much more invasive methods such as "perceived gender identity" where decisions are made based on the shelter's opinion on what are appropriate ways one should display their gender identity. Proposed changes also grant permission for shelters to turn individuals away who do not match new admission qualifications of "biological sex-based" shelters with a referral back to Coordinated Access Networks.

In a country where shelter beds have decreased by 9% in the past five years, such that there is only one bed for every two people who are in need, the most vulnerable will continue to be placed in evermore vulnerable situations. With 40% of our homeless youth identifying as LGBTQ+, this will have an adverse impact on an entire generation to come and debilitate shelters, restricting access to the tools and resources we need to provide safe, low-barrier and non-judgmental programs and services.

A system is only a system if it is proven to work—if the outcomes of your efforts are realized, and if the children, families, and individuals who you built your system for are able to access it free of fear and overcome their individual barriers to achieve a new foundation of promise and security using the path you helped to create.

We are proud of Connecticut's history and constant pursuit of equitable access to emergency shelter services regardless of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and we will continue our efforts to end homelessness across the state. However, these efforts are meaningless if the very people we hope to reach are told by a federal ruling that they are not welcome.

To our LGBTQ+ and homeless community, you are welcome here.

We are all called upon to respond to this dangerous proposal. Today, the proposed rule from HUD will be in the Federal Register, starting a 60-day comment period. Please be on the lookout for Action Alerts from CCEH sharing how to use your voice and experience, and share with HUD and policy makers the importance of safe shelter and fair housing for the LGBTQ community.

Walk with us, for equality and justice for all.

Yours in service,

Jennifer Paradis
Executive Director

Beth-El Center, Inc.

National Study Finds Homeless People Highly Vulnerable to COVID-19

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recently released a new report about the impact of COVID-19 on people experiencing homelessness. The report, which can be found [here](#), examined electronic health records of over 50,000 people experiencing homelessness and confirmed that they have increased prevalence for most medical conditions associated with severe illness from COVID-19. For example, they are much more likely to have chronic respiratory conditions such as serious heart conditions (45%), kidney disease (27%), diabetes (26%), and chronic obstructive lung disease (23%).

CCEH will be hosting a webinar on August 18 at 12noon where the HHS officials who authored the report will present the study findings. Sign up to [receive CCEH's training newsletter](#) to receive updates on how to register.

July CCEH Board Meeting Tackles Racial Justice and Policing

CCEH held its first board meeting of Fiscal Year 20-21, where we welcomed new board members, Michele Conderino, Keith Mello, and Brian Preleski, and also said farewell to David Dudley and State Representative Jeff Currey. We began the meeting by holding a moment of silence in honor of David Dudley. We sent our gratitude and best wishes to Jeff Currey, who stepped off the board due to his learning that he has Stage 5 kidney disease and is in need of a transplant. Learn more about how to be a living organ donor [here](#).

The majority of the board meeting focused on two topics: CCEH's work to advance racial equity and justice in homelessness and ways to improve police (and community) responses to homelessness. CCEH Program Manager Mia Bryant presented on CCEH's work to date to understand and address racial disparities in homelessness, in the delivery of homeless assistance, and in the involvement in public systems. Mia noted how despite the fact that Black, indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) represent only one-third of Connecticut's general population, they represent two-thirds of people experiencing homelessness. BIPOC also experience returns to homelessness following receipt of housing assistance at higher rates, and are more likely to have had criminal justice involvement and school expulsions and suspensions in their histories that contributed to their homelessness. Looking ahead, we hope to look at ways to improve access to housing assistance and housing retention among BIPOC, address the public systems failures that perpetuate homelessness, and improve diversity and equity in the homeless services sector, including at CCEH.

We were also joined by Nikki Smith-Kea of Arnold Ventures who gave a presentation on the need for improved police and community collaborations to reduce arrests and uses of force and improve connections to housing and services for people experiencing homelessness. CCEH board member Tanya Barrett of United Way of CT shared her work to pilot adult mobile crisis teams as a promising alternative approach to responding to people with behavioral health needs, including those experiencing homelessness. CCEH's board criminal justice taskforce, chaired by Attorney Preleski, will focus on informing CCEH's strategy for improving police responses to homelessness, including by advancing non-police first responder models.

Take Action: Tell Congress to Prioritize Homelessness in COVID-19 Relief Bill!



The current moment proves a critical turning point in homelessness, and funding from Congress can decide its outcomes. Upcoming COVID-19 relief bills will soon determine what money is allocated where, and it is vital that we let Congress know how important it is to fund homeless assistance in this dire time.

Please follow this [link](#) to complete a personalized letter to send to your representative. Thank you for joining us in the fight to end homelessness.

HMIS Data Requests and Waiver Functionality

All HMIS data requests can now be made online! Please click here and fill out the details of the data request in this easy-to-use online form. Check it out!

HMIS also now offers the ability to record and track any waivers that have been used during the pandemic. This update includes added "waivers" menu under Case Management where you can view waivers on a per-client basis, added Dashboards, and client Dashboard alerts for expired waivers. For more detailed information please [click here](#).

If you have any questions please contact Linda Casey at lcasey@cceh.org

Get Out the Vote

Make sure your register to vote! People experiencing homelessness should be aware that of their rights to vote. Courts have said that an individual is a resident of a town if they have some nexus to that particular town, and there is an intention to return to that town when absent from it. This could be some town that you have spent time in, slept in, and intend to go back to even if you are not presently there.

You can register to vote online [here](#).

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

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

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

[Components of an Effective Outreach System](#)

Friday, August 14, 2020
11:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.

Previously Recorded Webinars

[Having a Harm Reduction Approach During a Pandemic \(Session 2\)](#)

[Having a Harm Reduction Approach During a Pandemic \(Session 1\)](#)

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

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

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

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

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

CCEH in the News

[During Pandemic, Stable Housing Is More Critical Than Ever](#)

WNPR | July 2020



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

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