Dear Friends,

One of my roles at CCEH is to train school staff to identify signs of homelessness among students they encounter and providing them with tools to help based on resources available. Earlier this summer, I recorded this video message speaking directly to students experiencing homelessness. My advice—the same advice I always give—is to find a trusted adult and talk to them about their situation. But as I recorded the video, I could not help but think that, for so many students, following this advice is easier said than done. And if finding and speaking with a trusted adult was hard in regular times, it seems monetarily hard now in the time of COVID-19.

Students experiencing homelessness and housing instability are more disconnected than ever. If it was difficult before to convince a student struggling outside of school to open up, face masks and strict guidelines for how people interact within school settings only make it more complicated than ever to develop the levels of trust necessary to break through the personal trauma students are experiencing. On top of that, students in districts which adopt distance-learning models will be required to confront personal crises as they are asked to study from homes they do not have. Imagine that.

So what can school district staff do to reach students experiencing homelessness and help them through their housing crises? As always, the first step is identifying who needs the help in the first place. Identifying students facing housing instability or homelessness may be challenging but there are steps you can take. For example, some districts have established websites with resources for students experiencing homelessness. Many schools are doing outreach to students through social media such as Facebook and Instagram as well as local radio and print media to make sure students experiencing homelessness are aware of their rights under the McKinney-Vento Act to have their educational needs met regardless of their housing status. School district staff can also have staff visit local hotels, motels, campgrounds, big box parking lots, and Park and Ride commuter lots to identify families and youth experiencing homelessness. Some districts have even developed formal partnerships with food distribution sites to offer school staff an extra avenue for connecting with students facing food and housing instability and some are working with statewide social service agencies that administer SNAP.

Districts should also work to equip staff with the skills to adopt a cross-team approach to monitoring student attendance with the aim of identifying students who may have challenges participating due to general housing instability and/or lack of WIFI for distance-learning. Each district in Connecticut can use student attendance teams which convene counselors, social workers, teachers, and admins to jointly identify signs of homelessness and housing struggles and link students facing housing struggles with the McKinney-Vento liaisons (the official point person within each district charged with making sure that homeless students’ rights are upheld). Additionally, School districts can coordinate with Head Start programs, preschools, Family Resource Centers, and their own school based health centers as points of outreach to educate about homeless assistance. since they are often in touch with families facing homelessness.

Mobile hot spots and charging supplies are critical to help youth in unstable housing situations stay connected, but helping homeless students succeed means going beyond simply helping them stay connected to distance learning. In some areas of the state, McKinney-Vento, resource officers, motivational officers, and social workers work in close collaboration with their local Coordinated Access Networks (CAN) and Youth Engagement Training Initiatives (YETIs), which are in a position to connect students facing homelessness with housing assistance. Although there is no formal data sharing arrangements for these relationships yet, we invite and encourage McKinney-Vento liaisons and others committed to addressing student homelessness to attend regional outreach and housing matching meetings to identify housing solutions for students and their families. Schools can have allies in shelters, drop-in centers, cooling centers and youth serving agencies that connect with broader homeless outreach networks.

Will this cost money? Of course. The good news is that there is some funding available for schools who need extra staffing to support students experiencing housing crises during the pandemic. There is Title I, Part A funding available nationwide specifically directed to districts to help level the playing field for low-income families with respect to connection and success with school district. In addition, the CARES Act recently released $100 million for districts and 11.1 for administration for this purpose.

Finally, we know that we don’t have all the answers so will be working with the State Department of Education to convene an interactive McKinney-Vento training at our Annual Training Institute the week of October 5-9. We hope you will join us for this important opportunity to share the challenges your district is facing and learn from a collective response. If you would like to participate in a discussion of this nature prior to October please let us know as well. We are here for you as you support youth in our community in navigating these extremely challenging times.

Yours truly,

Carl Asikainen
Youth Systems Coordinator

https://em-ui.constantcontact.com/em-ui/em/page/em-ui/email#details/activity/ead1b87-a08f-4f1c-96d3-a4e507bc2f95
Equal Access: Please Share Your Testimony

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has proposed changes to the Equal Access Rule that drastically undermine protections for transgender and gender non-conforming people served by HUD programs. These changes would remove provisions to the Equal Access Rule that ensure that transgender and non-binary people have equal access to shelter accommodations based on their gender identity and do not face invasive and discriminatory questions or requirements when entering a program. On August 20th from 3:30 P.M. to 5 P.M. CCEH, the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity, and the LGBTQ+ Health and Human Services Network will be hosting a Facebook Live conversation about the importance of safe shelter and fair housing for the LGBTQ+ community. To access the event, visit the [Commission’s Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/cceh)

As part of the event, we would like to share the stories of people directly impacted by HUD’s proposed changes to the Equal Access Ruling. If you identify as transgender or LGBTQ+ and have experienced housing discrimination as a result, or if you are a provider who is worried about what this legislation will mean for you or your clients, please send a short (1-2 minute) smartphone video no later than **August 17 by noon** to [info@cceh.org](mailto:info@cceh.org). Alternatively, if you would like to testify during the virtual hearing, you can also email [info@cceh.org](mailto:info@cceh.org).

Speakers Wanted: 2020 Annual Training Institute

CCEH’s Annual Training Institute is scheduled for October 5-9 and we are looking for panelists. Sponsored by Bank of America, this year’s ATI will be a week-long virtual event with presenters focused on racial justice, criminal justice, and economic justice in the face of COVID-19. We are especially interested in speakers with expertise on topics including (but not limited to):

- The role of municipalities in addressing homelessness
- Approaches to addressing family and youth homelessness during COVID-19
- Engaging those with lived experience in shaping system improvements
- A statewide approach to housing unsheltered individuals
- Overcoming barriers to re-housing people with criminal records
- Building a grassroots movement around ending homelessness

Other possible workshop topics may include:

- How to strengthen the CAN system workforce
- Meeting the housing needs of clients leaving hospitals, inpatient and institutional settings
- Addressing homelessness within communities of color and non-English speaking communities
- Approaches for identifying and address homelessness among minors
- Designing an “upstream” system of homelessness prevention for households not yet on the verge of homelessness
- “Housing as a Right” legislation and other proposed policies
- Increasing accountability of institutional and inpatient systems to avoid discharges to homelessness
- Increasing tenant protections and reduce barriers to housing
- The role of data in our system
- The role of the private sector in addressing homelessness
- The role of faith-based communities in addressing homelessness
- The role of law enforcement in addressing homelessness
- The role of healthcare systems in addressing homelessness
- The role of legal aid in addressing homelessness

Please note that we are actively looking for speakers who can bring a race equity lens and personal lived experience to discussions of these subjects.

If you would like to nominate somebody you know to serve as a panelist during the ATI, please send your nominations to [info@cceh.org](mailto:info@cceh.org).

Now Hiring for Re-Entry Project Coordinator

The CT Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH) seeks a Re-Entry Project Coordinator to work on a short-term contract basis to provide project management and coordination for a statewide housing program for individuals exiting incarceration and re-entering the community.

CCEH serves as the intermediary and coordinating entity over this program and works closely with state agencies and non-profit subcontracted providers to implement this program. In this role, the contracted individual will be responsible for:

- Assisting in administering and tracking funds as needed to prevent discharges to homelessness and establishing sustainable housing solutions for clients re-entering communities from incarceration.
- Interfacing and facilitating the flow of information between DOC, CSSD, and regional provider agencies. Monitoring the progress of housing
solutions for each referral:
- Providing technical support for provider staff accessing funding.
- Assisting in the compliance and implementation of best practices for provider agencies; including helping to schedule and conduct trainings and meetings.

The Project Coordinator will complete the majority of their work on a remote basis. This contracted position will initially be for a 3-month period with the possibility of a longer-term extension.

Interested applicants should submit cover letter and resume through indeed.com.

Applications without a cover letter will not be considered.

Click here to read the full job description.

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**HMIS List of Participating Agencies**

An up-to-date list of participating CT HMIS agencies is now available as a report within HMIS.

This will assist staff to confirm which agencies are active. The Release of Information (ROI) that each client signs references participating agencies, yet the list was difficult to find online and was not always updated. This feature will allow access to the most recent agencies participating in the CT HMIS.

Please click here to access the full details.

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**2020 Point-in-Time Report**

Last week we shared the results of the 2020 Point-in-Time Count. However, the state was hit by a storm and most of us lost electricity. We hope you all have gotten back to normal by now and will like to take this opportunity to share the results again because they are a reflection of the hard work you all do.

This year’s PIT Count identified 2,904 people who were homeless on the night of the count. This included 1,947 individual adults and 305 family households including 560 children. This year’s Count documented a decrease in homelessness across most populations. Please note that this year we will publish the results of the Youth Outreach and Count in a separate report. Of course, these results represent a snapshot of life before COVID-19, but are nonetheless important in offering a snapshot just before the current storm we are weathering.

We would like to thank our funders, the Connecticut Department of Housing, the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, and the Melville Charitable Trust, and all of our dedicated regional coordinators who made this year’s PIT possible, including Access Community Action Agency, BHcare, Capital Region Mental Health Center, Catholic Charities of Fairfield County, Columbus House, The Connection, the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Connecticut Department of Veterans’ Affairs, Emerge, Hartford Healthcare, Insprica, Journey Home, Mid-Fairfield AIDS Project, Recovery Network of Programs, Salvation Army Waterbury, Supportive Housing Works, United Way of Southeastern Connecticut, and Windham No Freeze. A special thank above all to the more than 600 people who turned out to participate in the Count on one of the coldest days of the year. We are truly grateful!

Click here to read the full report.

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**Member’s Corner:**

*We Want to Hear From You!*

CCEH invites all our members to please submit any news items to be displayed on our Weekly Digest.

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https://em-ui.constantcontact.com/em-ui/em/page/em-ui/email#details/activity/ead61b87-a08f-4f1c-96d3-a4e507bc2f95
If you have any information you would like to share with the coalition please send the text and photos to Allan Vega at avega@cceh.org.

Apply for COVID-19 Relief Funds Now

CCEH is extending the deadline for applying for COVID-19 funds to August 21st at noon. Your agency can apply for a grant from the COVID-19 fund here.

As a thank you for your efforts to keep people safe during COVID-19, we are inviting all CCEH member agencies providing direct service to homeless populations to apply for a grant from CCEH's COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund. This funding is intended to reimburse regional providers for the purchase of supplies including PPE, food, toiletries, clothing, and coverage of gaps in staffing, as well as additional costs including flexible emergency assistance and unsheltered outreach expenses. We will be distributing a total of $100K from the fund to CCEH member agencies who submit requests for eligible expenses not reimbursed through other sources.

If your agency is not a current member, you can join here before submitting your application. Click here for a full list of current CCEH members.

Thank you again for your incredible work during the pandemic!

Take Action: COVID-19 Relief Bill

The Senate passed the latest COVID-19 relief bill, but it fails to include an extension for the eviction moratoria or funding for homelessness and housing.

As final negotiations for this bill with the House begin, we need YOU to take action and help your vulnerable neighbors experiencing housing instability, as well as the local homeless service providers doing their best to respond to the effects of COVID19.

Contact your elected officials here and urge them to include funding for housing vouchers, rental assistance, and Emergency Solutions Grants!

Feedback Requested on Challenges in Voting

CCEH is seeking feedback on challenges clients faced in voting during the primary elections or may face in registering to vote or voting in the upcoming election. If you have feedback to share on this issue, please email your comments to info@cceh.org.

Please note that CCEH's website includes specific guidance on how to make sure clients receive information on their voting rights. We are trying to figure out if there is additional guidance that would be useful to providers and clients so your input will be highly valued.

CCEH Seeking 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!

Artwork by: Caroline Baim

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**

**Components of an Effective Outreach System**
Friday, August 14, 2020
11:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.

**How Vulnerable is the Homeless Population to COVID-19? Results from a National Study**
Tuesday, August 18, 2020
12:00 pm - 1:00 pm

**Reading Between the Data**
Thursday, September 3, 2020
11:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.

**Previously Recorded Webinars**

- **Addressing Racialized Trauma and Actively Engaging in Anti-Racism**
- **Update on the Status of Evictions in CT During the COVID-19 Crisis**
- **Having a Harm Reduction Approach During a Pandemic (Session 1)**
- **Having a Harm Reduction Approach During a Pandemic (Session 2)**
- **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.

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**CCEH in the News**

- **Few qualify for state housing assistance – and a crisis looms**
  CT Mirror - August 2020
- **Survey: Homeless count continues to decline in CT**
  CT Post - August 2020

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

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