A Message from Our CEO

Dear Friends,

As many of you know, one of the many ways that CCEH ends homelessness is by raising and providing financial assistance to help divert and rapidly exit individuals and families from shelters. Every week, we receive and fulfill over a hundred requests to help households cover rental security deposits, first month’s rent, utility payments or arrears, and even car repairs. In doing so, we help dozens of households to avoid long-term homelessness.

I, along with other managers at CCEH, directly review requests and sign checks. It is one of the rewarding aspects of my job. It is also one of the most frustrating aspects of my job. Let me explain why.

Every financial assistance request we receive from homeless services providers comes along with case notes that explain the household’s story of housing crisis and how these funds are being used to resolve that crisis. I read every case note that I come across. Every single story is a story about someone in need. As I sign each check, I say in my head a prayer that this financial assistance will truly give that household a new start. I try to feel hopeful for that family.

Every single story is also a story of injustices. Of some person or family that has been harmed and wronged. Let me share a few of the stories just from last week.

The first was the story of an elderly man who lost his housing when he found himself having to make the terrible choice between paying for his daughter’s funeral and his rent. With the assistance of a housing specialist, he was able to find a new apartment that he would be able to afford but the landlord was demanding two months security deposit due to a criminal record for an offense which happened who knows how long ago.

In the same sitting, I read the story of a young man who had become physically and cognitively disabled when he was hit by a fast-moving car a number of years back. “He is very sweet but he just wants to live alone,” explained the frontline worker who was supporting him in finding housing. He was living in shelters until COVID-19 hit and is living in a hotel now but we knew this was only a temporary solution. I was heartened to learn that his worker had been able to support him in finding a first-floor apartment with services close by as he had had issues with navigation and memory.

Finally, I read the story of a recently incarcerated woman who had been sleeping on the streets for two months due to COVID-19. Imagine returning from prison only to find yourself on the streets. Imagine trying to pick back up the pieces of your life at a time when society has been upturned, when jobs are scarce, when doors are closed, and when connections with family and friends are limited. “Client is a very ambitious woman who is trying to overcome the various obstacles she has been faced with,” explained her worker. I know that a security deposit is only one of the many things she truly needs.

These stories show us that homelessness is not a personal failure, but instead the outcome of failed systems, flawed policies, and unfair laws. No one should have to choose between burying one’s loved one and paying the rent. No one’s criminal record should be a permanent stain that makes one have to face denial for housing or pay more to obtain housing. No person with a disability should ever experience poverty and homelessness, or be failed by the lack of protections and an adequate safety net. No person should leave prison or jail only to fall to the streets.

We at CCEH will continue to work with our coalition to raise and provide direct financial assistance to help these individuals and families when we can. But we can and will do so much more. Earlier this year, we launched our Housing Equals Justice advocacy campaign, committing ourselves to fighting and reversing the systems failures, the flawed policies, and the unfair laws that perpetuate homelessness. We want to change laws so that people are not denied or charged more for housing based on a criminal record without regard to the time of, or the specific circumstances of, the offense. We want to address the system failures that allow more people to leave institutions and fall into homelessness. We believe that if our criminal justice system decides to isolate and separate a person from their homes, their social supports, and their livelihood through incarceration, the criminal justice system should be obligated to assist that person to re-enter society. We need to strengthen our safety net and protections for people with disabilities so they can have the assistance and reasonable accommodations they are obligated under the law. We need to make housing a human right.

We ask you to join us in this fight and stay tuned for more actions we will take to advance our Housing Equals Justice campaign. Ending homelessness means not only helping those that are currently homeless to obtain housing, but also addressing the root causes that lead to and perpetuate it.

Yours truly,

Richard Cho
CEO
We were thrilled to have such a great turnout for yesterday’s event on the proposed changes to HUD’s Equal Access Rule. These proposed changes would have catastrophic impacts for transgender and nonbinary individuals and we must work together to make sure that they do not go into effect. HUD’s specific proposed changes would mean that:

- Providers would be allowed to consider biological sex in placement and accommodation decisions in single-sex facilities.
- Shelters would be permitted to establish a policy that places and accommodates individuals on the basis of their biological sex, without regard to their gender identity.
- For example, under the proposed rule, if a single-sex facility permissibly provides accommodation for women, and its policy is to serve only biological women, without regard to gender identity, it may decline to accommodate a person who identifies as female but who is a biological male.

If you think these changes are wrong, please visit housingaveslives.org to submit your testimony on proposed changes. Thank you!

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### 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
- 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 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.

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### Supporting Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness During COVID-19

The National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) has put together a document to outline suggested guidance to support the academic success and safety of children and youth experiencing homelessness during the pandemic. Please click here to download the document.

As students return to school during the COVID-19 pandemic, providers and systems leaders have a responsibility to ensure that children are connected to school resources and appropriately set up to participate and succeed in academic endeavors.

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### Center for Disease Control Guidance

This is a reminder that the Center for Disease Control (CDC) is constantly updating their website with important tools and resources for homeless service providers, which you can view by clicking here.

A recent addition to their resource guide are considerations for SARS-CoV-2 Testing In Homeless Shelters and Encampments. Please click here to view that document.

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### 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.

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.

How the 2020 Census Counts People Experiencing Homelessness

The 2020 Census counts people receiving services from shelters, soup kitchens, and mobile food vans, as well as people living in certain previously identified outdoor locations. However, due to COVID-19 these efforts have been delayed. Census takers now plan to resume this activity on September 22–24, 2020.

The Census have put together a document with detail information on how these counts will be managed. Please click here to read the document.

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.

Members’ 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.

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.

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!

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!

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

Upcoming Webinars

Reading Between the Data
Thursday, September 3, 2020
11:00am-12:00pm

Components of an Effective Outreach System (Session 2)
Wednesday, September 30, 2020
11:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.

*Additional details and Registration will be available soon

Previously Recorded Webinars

- Components of an Effective Outreach System
- How Vulnerable is the Homeless Population to COVID-19? Results from a National Study
- Addressing Racialized Trauma and Actively Engaging in Anti-Racism
- Having a Harm Reduction Approach During a Pandemic (Session 2)
- Having a Harm Reduction Approach During a Pandemic (Session 1)
- Update on the Status of Evictions in CT During the COVID-19 Crisis
- Working with Landlords to Rapidly House Successfully: Recruiting, Engaging and Retaining

Please click here to access our entire webinar catalog.

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