2021-2023

Welcoming Wisconsin Home

A Statewide Action Plan for Homelessness

State of Wisconsin
Interagency Council on Homelessness
Action Plan for Homelessness

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A Letter from the Governor

The ongoing coronavirus pandemic, which remains a continued concern still in its twenty-second month, has exacerbated an already challenging crisis of homelessness in Wisconsin. In addition to feeling the effects of a global economic crisis, many of our neighbors have faced housing insecurity and homelessness as a result of the ongoing pandemic. Without the efforts of our state workers, agencies, and communities working together across the state in response to these challenges, many more of our neighbors could have been exposed to the dangers of the pandemic. I am—as we all should be—very grateful for these continued efforts.

This plan was written with these challenges—those predating the pandemic as well as those exacerbated by it—to address the realities of the state of homelessness that exist. I thank the Interagency Council on Homelessness members for their efforts in forming this plan to fight and end homelessness as we know it in Wisconsin.

Having a safe and stable home is key in not only keeping our neighbors safe and healthy but is also key in ensuring our state's continued economic recovery, strengthening our communities, and ensuring kids, families, and workers can be successful. As we bounce back from the pandemic, we cannot be satisfied by merely returning the homelessness situation in our great state to one of reacting to a continued crisis—we must take meaningful steps to address housing insecurity across our state to fully recover from this pandemic and to rebound better than we were before it hit. This plan does so by connecting the dots—it includes bold proposals to address the causes of homelessness and racial disparities and housing outcomes and provides a path forward for our neighbors experiencing homelessness and housing instability.

A better future for Wisconsin and the people of our state is possible. That belief is woven into this plan to fight and end homelessness as we know it in Wisconsin, and I'm proud to recommend it.

Tony Evers

Interagency Council on Homelessness Members

- Governor Tony Evers, Chair
- Secretary Joel Brennan, Department of Administration
- Secretary-Designee Karen Timberlake, Department of Health Services
- Secretary Mary Kolar, Department of Veterans Affairs
- Secretary Emilie Amundson, Department of Children and Families
- Secretary Kevin Carr, Department of Corrections
- Deputy Secretary Pam McGillivray, Department of Workforce Development
- Kim Plache, Deputy Executive Director, Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority
- State Superintendent Dr. Jill Underly, Department of Public Instruction
- Torrie Kopp Mueller, Dane County Continuum of Care
- Rafael Acevedo, Jr., Milwaukee Continuum of Care
- Teresa Reinders, Continuum of Care for the City and County of Racine
- Carrie Poser, Balance of State Continuum of Care

Council Leadership

- Interagency Council on Homelessness Director Michael Basford

Acknowledgments

This report was undertaken in collaboration with many partners who share the Council's goal to end homelessness as we know it. We want to thank the many individuals, organizations, and partners for their support and contributions in preparing, reviewing, and providing feedback on this report, including:

Office of the Governor, Department of Administration, Department of Children and Families, Department of Corrections, Department of Health Services, Department of Public Instruction, Department of Workforce Development, Department of Veterans Affairs, Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Wisconsin State Legislature, Dane County Continuum of Care, Milwaukee County Continuum of Care, Racine Continuum of Care, Wisconsin Balance of State Continuum of Care, Institute for Community Alliances, Wisconsin Veterans Network, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, Housing and Homelessness Coalition of Marathon County, Wisconsin Partnership for Housing Development, WestCAP, Gunderson Health, Coulee Collaborative to End Homelessness, Hebron House, Wisconsin Coalition Against Homelessness, Salvation Army, Legal Action of Wisconsin, Milwaukee County Housing, Wisconsin Housing First Coalition, Waunakee School District, Madison Metropolitan School District, Sun Prairie Area School District, Verona Area School District, Eau Claire Area School District, Wisconsin Women's Council, Wisconsin Community Action Program Association, Wisconsin Collaborative for Affordable Housing, Institute for Research on Poverty, Northwest Wisconsin Community Services Agency, Community Action, Inc., Restoring Roots, Mercy Health/House of Mercy, Northern Wisconsin Initiative to Stop Homelessness (NWISH), One 5 Olive, Harbor House, Family Promise of Ozaukee County
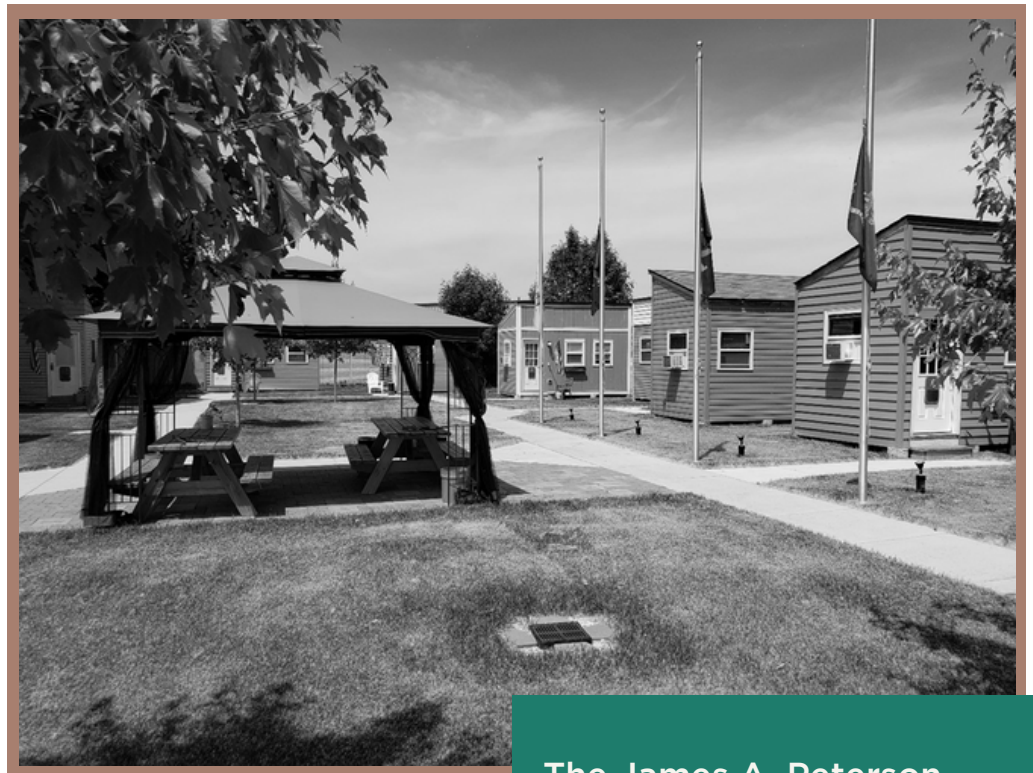
I. Introduction

The Wisconsin Interagency Council on Homelessness (Council) was created by 2017 Wisconsin Act 74, which received unanimous support in the Wisconsin State Legislature. The Council meets quarterly and is supported by Council workgroup meetings held twice each quarter, charged under existing statutory authority with the goal of preventing and ending homelessness in the State of Wisconsin.

Shortly after the Council's creation, it began work to prepare a plan and outline priorities to address homelessness and housing insecurity in Wisconsin. In late 2018, the Council released the 2019-2022 Statewide Action Plan, the State's roadmap to prevent and end homelessness, which included funding initiatives, legislation, and collaborative efforts. In 2019, the Council worked to implement and pursue recommendations included in the Statewide Action Plan. However, in 2020, the Council directed its efforts largely toward responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and addressing emerging and imminent needs relating to housing insecurity and homelessness.

In many ways, the COVID-19 pandemic brought to bear existing inadequacies in Wisconsin's housing systems and exacerbated long-standing challenges to eradicating homelessness as we know it. To that end, in 2021 and the midst of the still-ongoing pandemic, the Council reviewed the State's existing homelessness plan and prepared this Statewide Action Plan for Homelessness in 2021-2023 to not only acknowledge and reflect upon the factors underscored by the pandemic but to develop recommendations addressing homelessness and housing insecurity as part of Wisconsin's pandemic and economic recovery efforts.

The James A. Peterson Veteran Village in Racine, operated by Veterans Outreach of Wisconsin.

Guiding Principles

In preparing the Statewide Action Plan for Homelessness in 2021-2023, the Council was guided by the following principles:

1

The Wisconsin Interagency Council on Homelessness affirms the idea that **housing is a human right**. The Council affirms the idea that everybody who wants and needs a safe, stable, and affordable home should have access to one. Included in this is the need to address the criminalization of homelessness where it emerges in Wisconsin.

2

Ending homelessness as we know it in Wisconsin means creating conditions where any future instances of homelessness are **rare, brief, and non-recurring.**

3

Housing is the lodestone for better outcomes throughout society. Do you wish to see your community's economy improve? Invest in housing. Do you wish to see your schools have better test scores and outcomes? Invest in housing. Do you wish to see crime rates go down? Invest in housing. Do you wish to see families stay together and thrive? Invest in housing. Do you wish to see better physical and mental health outcomes in the community? Invest in housing. Are you a business owner who wishes to have a better pool of potential employees in your local workforce? Invest in housing. Connecting the dots between housing and these outcomes is a primary priority for the Council.

4

For people experiencing homelessness in Wisconsin, the single greatest barrier to securing stable housing is the lack of affordable housing unit availability. This is true in every area of the state, regardless of whether the area is urban, suburban, or rural. As communities throughout the state and the federal government commit to investing more to develop affordable housing for people with low incomes and extremely low incomes, Wisconsin needs to be a major partner in this investment.

5

The goal of ending homelessness as we know it in Wisconsin is inextricable from the moral imperative to address the effects of a long history of racial disparities in the homelessness system and housing markets. In a state where 83 percent of the population is white, less than 50 percent of people who are served by homelessness programs are white. This, and many other realities that outline racial disparities in housing and homelessness, is unacceptable to the Council. Wisconsin needs to identify, and fix, these disparities if we are to end homelessness as we know it.

6

The Council supports the principles of Housing First for all programs that serve people experiencing homelessness in Wisconsin. The success of Housing First requires sufficient investment in case management and wrap-around supportive services to address client needs such as mental health disorders, substance use disorders, life skills training, and job training and placement. Additionally, success also requires the embrace of known person-centered, evidence-based, trauma-informed, and culturally competent practices that promote housing stability. This principle doesn't preclude supporting the development of recovery housing programs – where such programs do not adhere to Housing First principles.

It is with these principles and a commitment to house people experiencing homelessness that the Wisconsin Interagency Council on Homelessness recommends this plan.

II. Housing and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Keeping people experiencing homelessness safe during the pandemic and beyond has required a heroic effort by communities and agencies across the state. When the coronavirus pandemic began, the homelessness situation in Wisconsin was exacerbated by the accompanying economic downturn seen across the country and the world, lack of available affordable housing, and long-standing racial disparities in homelessness systems and housing markets.

The coronavirus pandemic affected homelessness systems in many ways, including an increase in unsheltered homelessness throughout communities in Wisconsin. Key public health strategies in mitigating the spread of COVID-19 have included maintaining physical distance (six feet) from individuals outside of a person's immediate family or household, avoiding close contact with people who are sick, and avoiding gatherings or crowds of people (especially in indoor and poorly ventilated spaces), among others—necessary strategies to ensure health and safety that nevertheless uniquely present challenges for congregate settings, including emergency housing shelters. This is especially true in Wisconsin where nearly every emergency housing shelter is in a building not originally designed to be used for that purpose.   As such, for example, sleeping conditions in these shelters are typically very close in proximity to others, making it challenging or untenable to provide shelter without also potentially endangering residents' health and safety. Many emergency shelters had to dramatically reduce capacity, stop taking new clients, or closed because they were unable to accommodate safety measures. Moreover, COVID was also likely a factor in persons experiencing homelessness declining to seek emergency shelter at all out of concern for possibly being exposed to or contracting the virus. Additionally, due to COVID concerns and fear by leaseholders of losing their housing on account of having people not on the lease staying in their property, many people who were doubled-up in housing needed to leave where they were staying.

As the state entered the unknown territory of a pandemic not seen on this scale in a century, people on the ground had to put in the hard work to meet an evolving public health situation and develop systems to adapt to this unprecedented need.

State government responded and continues to respond to the needs of people who are experiencing financial and housing instability. The Council assisted communities and

agencies in the form of technical support to troubleshoot situations created by the pandemic. One such effort included help creating a partnership between Wisconsin Emergency Management, the Red Cross, federal agencies, and Continuum of Care leaders to address issues from PPE distribution to COVID-19 testing and vaccination for individuals experiencing homelessness.

In addition, there has been a whole-of-state response by the Evers Administration in responding to COVID-19 and addressing housing insecurity and homelessness caused by the pandemic. On March 26, 2020, Governor Tony Evers announced a 60-day moratorium on rental evictions and housing foreclosures, which provided temporary relief for Wisconsinites affected by the economic downturn. As that moratorium ended, the Governor announced a new program, the Wisconsin Rental Assistance Program (WRAP). It was administered by the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) in partnership with the local Community Action Program (CAP) agencies with Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding of up to $3,000 per household to help people avoid evictions. When WRAP concluded at the end of November 2020, over $28 million had been spent to assist over 14,000 households.

Additional emergency rental assistance for non-entitlement areas of the state came from the U.S. Department of Treasury, which made available more than $322 million from the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. The Wisconsin Emergency Rental Assistance (WERA) program launched at the end of February 2021 to provide up to 12 months of assistance, plus an additional three months if the state or CAP agency determines the extra months are needed to ensure housing stability and if funds are available. In addition to rental assistance and rental arrears, WERA helped pay for utility and home energy costs and arrears (including internet) and housing stability services, which could include case management and other services. As of mid-November 2021, more than $80 million had been distributed to help over 20,000 households maintain housing in the smaller communities and 68 rural counties served by the WERA program.

The Evers Administration used other federal sources to assist people in rural Wisconsin who were homeless or housing insecure. Among these efforts included $32 million from the Emergency Solutions Grant funds provided by the CARES Act and over $12 million in Community Development Block Grant funds provided by the CARES Act for funding

projects and services such as new emergency sheltering, food pantry assistance, rental assistance, hotel vouchers, and other housing/homelessness supports. DOA will also be administering over $42 million in HOME funds provided by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) this year to support development projects in non-entitlement communities, and on August 24, 2021, Gov. Evers announced a $200 million Neighborhood Investment Fund grant program, from which local governments can apply to utilize funding for affordable housing initiatives.
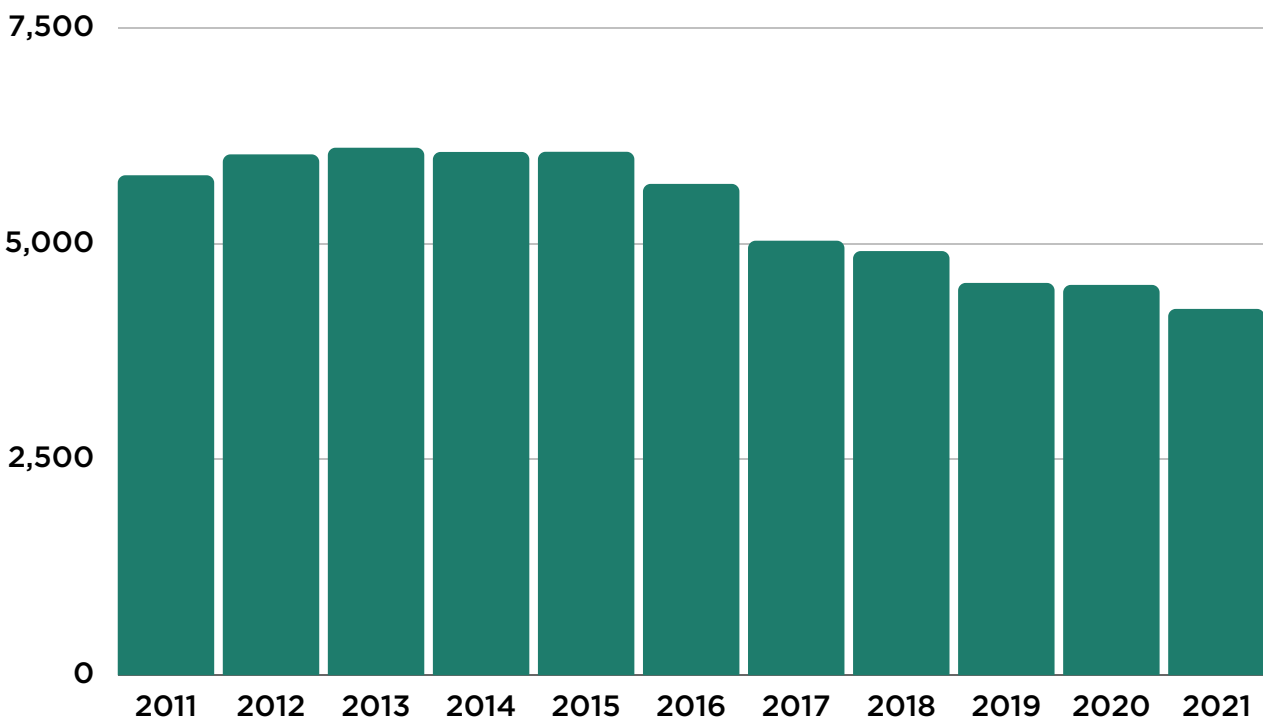
In addition to responses at the state level, local communities and agencies stood up alternate sites for congregate sheltering per CDC guidelines and non-congregate sheltering in hotels for people experiencing homelessness with health vulnerabilities, who were exposed to COVID-19, showed symptoms of COVID-19, or tested positive for COVID-19. Resources were deployed in response to the growing number of unsheltered homeless encampments throughout the state. Some of these efforts required substantial local investment. To assist these communities, Governor Evers announced on November 2021 $6 million in new targeted grants to address homelessness and ensure safe shelter for individuals experiencing short or long-term housing instability during the winter months.

It is clear that the pandemic has exposed issues in our collective response to homelessness in Wisconsin and requires bold plans and actions to not just return to a status quo of the pre-pandemic, but to a better future in pursuit of ending homelessness as we know it.

III. The State of Homelessness in Wisconsin

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, the homelessness crisis in Wisconsin was already very challenging. Between 4,500 and 5,000 people were experiencing homelessness (as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Category 1: in an emergency shelter, transitional housing, safe haven, living on the streets, or living in a location not meant for human habitation)[i] based on the January 2018-2020 Point-in-Time (PIT) counts.

Table 1. Wisconsin Point-in-Time Counts 2011-2021

Although the chart in Table 1 shows a lower number in the PIT count for 2021 than in previous years, all indications point to that number reflecting a significant undercount of Category 1 homelessness, rather than a reduction of people experiencing homelessness. Two reasons for this are that the pandemic resulted in more people being unsheltered, which is harder to count, and fewer people being able to volunteer for the count.

One indicator in the PIT count that increased in 2021 was the number of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing chronic homelessness (HUD Category 1 people experiencing homelessness for at least one year, or who have at least four experiences of Category 1 homelessness in the last three years for a total of at least one year and who have a verified disability diagnosis). Those numbers increased from 611 to 669 from 2020 to 2021 – an increase exceeding 10 percent.

Table 2. Homeless Student Enrollment 2013-2020 [ii]

The Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program administered by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction serves students who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This includes students experiencing all categories of homelessness, including those in doubled-up households.

As with the PIT count, the count of students served by the EHCY program was affected by COVID-19. School districts closing before the end of the school year and changes from in-person to remote schooling resulted in fewer students being counted and served by EHCY.

The number of unaccompanied youth receiving homeless services in Wisconsin was 398 in 2019 – a slight increase from 384 in 2018. [iii]

Another indicator of the effect of COVID-19 can be found in the number of people seeking help from domestic violence shelters. The number of individuals served by domestic violence shelter services dropped from 6,900 in the 2018-2019 service year to 5,722 in the 2019-2020 service year – again, mostly due to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic and the challenge posed for shelters by the needed public health guidelines to prevent the spread of the virus and similar factors for emergency shelters. The number of unfulfilled domestic violence shelter requests fell from 22,904 in the 2018-2019 service year to 20,682 in 2019-20202, likely due to many people requiring domestic violence services being afraid to leave their homes and go into an unknown situation – with many choosing to stay in an abusive relationship rather than risk getting ill in a communal setting, according to the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families.

In Wisconsin, while data on housing and homelessness among LGBTQ people don't exist, we know of agencies that are providing resources and assistance to this population. For example, in Madison, Outreach LGBTQ Community Center provides financial resources for LGBTQ persons experiencing homelessness through Willma's Fund.[iv] In 10 years, Willma's Fund has provided over $100,000 in resources for over 200 people. In 2020, due to the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent economic downturn, Willma's Fund awarded about $50,000 to aid 150 LGBTQ people experiencing homelessness -- a 500 percent increase over typical annual award amounts.

Nationally, homelessness is a reality for a significant portion of people who identify as transgender or gender non-conforming. In 2019, an estimated 6.9 percent of transgender people experienced homelessness – 40 times higher than the rate of all Americans experiencing homelessness according to HUD's 2019 Annual Homeless Assessment Report.[v] And according to the National Alliance to End Homelessness' analysis of HUD's 2019 PIT data, 63 percent of transgender people who are homeless and 80 percent of gender non-binary people experiencing homelessness were unsheltered homeless.[vi]

Recommendations

1. Focusing on Equity

"At no time shall the land included in Washington Highlands or any part thereof, or any building thereon be purchased, owned, leased or occupied by any person other than of white race. This prohibition is not intended to include domestic servants while employed by the owner or occupied by and [sic] land included in the tract."

Racially exclusive restriction from the covenant for the Washington Highlands subdivision in Wauwatosa, WI, 1919 [vii]

In Wisconsin, Black/African American Wisconsinites are almost 11 times as likely as white, non-Latino/a Wisconsinites to experience homelessness. Multi-racial Wisconsinites and American Indians in Wisconsin are about six times as likely to experience homelessness in Wisconsin. Latino/a Wisconsinites are 2.2 times as likely to experience homelessness.[viii] As stated earlier in this plan, while Wisconsin's population is 83 percent white, white Wisconsinites make up less than 50 percent of people who are receiving homelessness services in Wisconsin.

The situation in Wisconsin is similar to other states across the country, but in our state's history, there were many public- and private-sector actions that perpetuated structural racism in housing – from racial restrictions in development covenants to redlining neighborhoods[ix] to other actions of housing and economic discrimination against people of color.

Figure 1. Milwaukee-Area Demographic Map
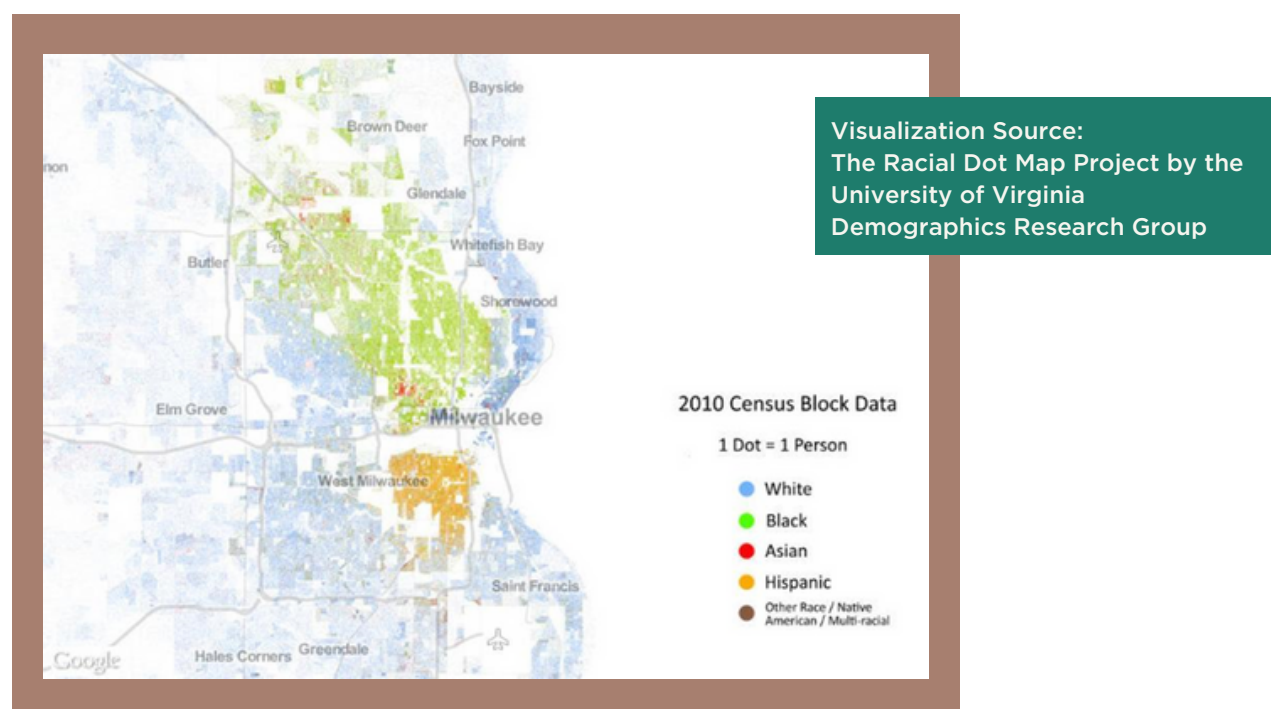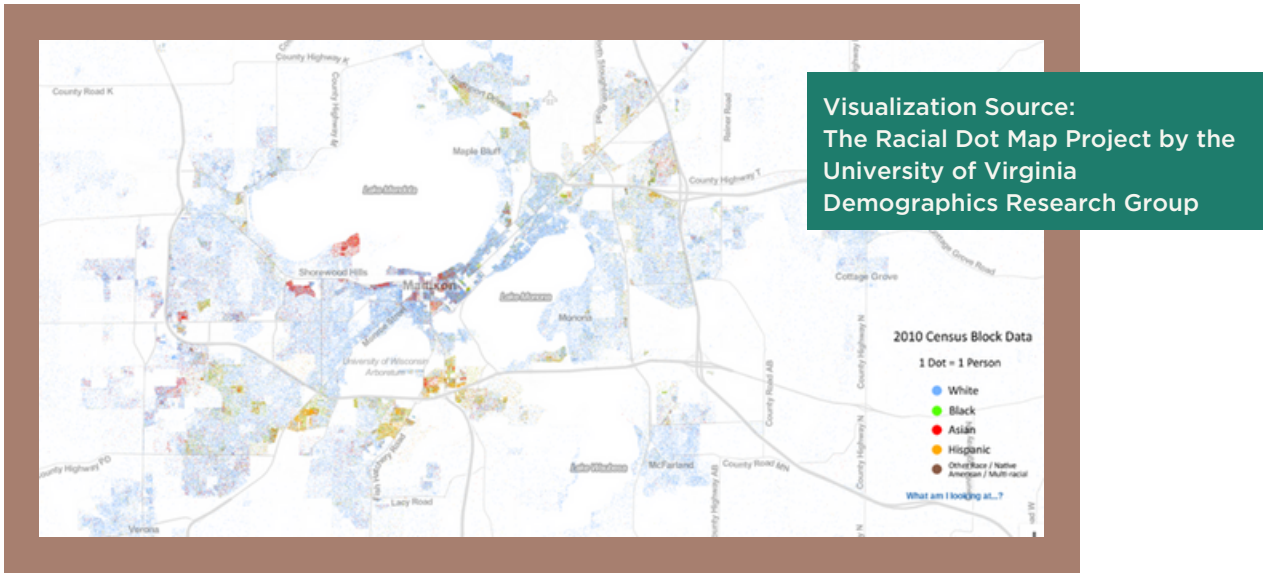

Visualization Source:
The Racial Dot Map Project by the University of Virginia Demographics Research Group

2010 Census Block Data

1 Dot = 1 Person

- White
- Black
- Asian
- Hispanic
- Other Race / Native American / Multi-racial

Figure 2. Madison-Area Demographic Map

Visualization Source:
The Racial Dot Map Project by the
University of Virginia
Demographics Research Group

2010 Census Block Data
1 Dot = 1 Person

- White
- Black
- Asian
- Hispanic
- Other Race / Native American / Multi-racial

What am I looking at...?

The result of these policies was the creation of conditions where systemic racism developed two parallel systems of housing opportunity. There can be no doubt that a historic lack of access to housing opportunities is a primary factor in creating disparities in homelessness in Wisconsin that still exist today generations after these policies were enacted. Ending racial disparities in homelessness systems and housing markets is crucial to ending homelessness as we know it in Wisconsin.

In 2020, a Racial Equity Working Group was created to study policies and make recommendations to the Council for this plan update. Wisconsin residents   who participated in the Working Group included:

- TJ Atkins, Executive Director of The Community Table, Eau Claire
- Ian Bautista, Senior Director of Civic Engagement for Greater Milwaukee Foundation and President and Chief Community Development Officer for Comunidad Milwaukee
- Stacy Broach, Education Specialist specializing in parent and family engagement with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Madison
- Dominique Christian, Housing Program Manager for The Road Home Dane County, Madison

- Gregory Davis, Co-Founder at One 5 Olive, Milwaukee
- Kathleen Fisher, Executive Director of Family Promise of Ozaukee County, Port Washington
- Loreen Gage, Director of Client Services at Housing Initiatives, Inc., Cottage Grove
- David Griggs, Co-Founder at One 5 Olive, Milwaukee
- Peng Her, Chief Executive Officer for The Hmong Institute, Madison
- Angela Jones, Community Impact Director, United Way of Dane County, Madison
- Tammie King-Johnson (Working Group Chair), manager of the House of Mercy homeless shelter, Janesville
- Dana McLester, Residential Development Director for the Oneida Nation Comprehensive Housing Division, De Pere
- Marc Perry, Executive Director for Community Action Inc., of Rock and Walworth Counties
- DeShanda Williams, MSCP, Assistant Director, Nia Imani Family, Inc., Milwaukee

While these proposed strategies and recommendations alone cannot completely dismantle structural racism in Wisconsin, rapid implementation will put into motion policies and practices to further promote equity in housing opportunities and a structure to continually review policies and results to ensure that we continue moving forward in this important work.

Strategy 1.1 - Continue Operations of the Racial Equity Working Group

For the first time in state government history, there is an active working group dedicated to exploring opportunities to promote racial equity in homelessness systems. The Racial Equity Working Group has spent over a year reviewing state policies and programs in service to this plan. To continue to promote racial equity and achieve better progress with our efforts, it will be necessary to keep the Racial Equity Working Group active to monitor that progress and make further recommendations where necessary.

Recommendation:

- The Racial Equity Working Group should continue meeting, at least quarterly, to monitor homelessness data, report regularly to the Council, and promote policies as data on disparities changes or doesn't change.

Strategy 1.2 – Initiate Racial Equity Analysis for Council Agency Homelessness Programming

Racial disparities and inequities are prevalent and relentless in the United States, and the state of Wisconsin has some of the highest rates of racial disparities in the nation. "Race In the Heartland: Wisconsin Extreme Racial Disparities", created by the Center on Wisconsin Strategies calls out the disparities that are seen in our state.[x] In 2009, the Annie E. Casey Foundation[xi](Foundation) pointed out the significance of conducting a Racial Equity Analysis to "reduce, eliminate and prevent racial discrimination and inequities." It goes on to say, "When racial equity is not consciously addressed, racial inequality is often unconsciously replicated." Furthermore, the Foundation indicated that using a Racial Equity Analysis or Assessment should be done as decisions are being made. "REIAs are best conducted during the decision-making process, prior to enacting new proposals. They are used to inform decisions, much like environmental impact statements, fiscal impact reports, and workplace risk assessments." However, other applications of similar assessment have been used to ensure racial equity in investments, evaluation of the process, and determining strategies that will reduce inequities in those most impacted by decisions.

Recommendations:

- Create a racial equity analysis framework to review and evaluate all homelessness programming across all ICH member agencies.
- Initiate racial equity analysis and evaluation of homelessness programs.
- Provide a report for the Governor's Office on results of analysis and evaluations.
- Continue with ongoing racial equity analysis and evaluations.

Strategy 1.3 – Collect Data and Review Best Practices for Program Equity

In highlighting the need to promote racial equity in our statewide homelessness solutions, a thorough examination is needed into where gaps, disparities, and inequities may exist in homelessness programs in Wisconsin. Where inequities are found to exist, changes need to be made to programming for housing and homelessness programs in order to better serve the populations they aim to support.

Where changes are needed, the changes cannot merely be cosmetic. They must be built into programs so that agencies applying for funding are measured in part by whom they serve, how they serve people, if underserved communities are represented in leadership, and how agency staff is prepared to employ culturally competent best practices in the work they do.

Informed by data collected from organizations receiving funding as well as Racial Equity Analysis' (outlined in Strategy 1.2) into current council agency homelessness programming, the Racial Equity Working Group shall work in conjunction with the larger Interagency Council on Homelessness to recommend how best to modify relevant homelessness programs to address the gaps, disparities, and inequities in service.

Recommendations:

- Require data collection from agencies and organizations receiving funding on the populations they are serving, the services they are providing, and their organization itself. Data collected may include, but is not limited, to the following:
  - Amount of funding directed towards underrepresented communities in relation to community makeup;
  - Amount of funding directed towards training in racial trauma and homelessness, racial equity, fair housing, and tenant rights, civil rights compliance, implicit/explicit bias, and microaggressions;
  - Average case management time;
  - If training provided to staff is ongoing (at least annually);
  - If training happens at all levels (including senior staff and board members);
  - Use peer support specialists;
  - Makeup of senior positions and board of directors in relation to the communities they serve.
- Require the Interagency Council on Homelessness to make recommendations, based on data collected and racial equity analysis' performed, on how to modify relevant homelessness programs to address any disparities or racial inequities found.

Strategy 1.4 – Promote Home Ownership Training

Homeownership can be a path for a household to secure sustainable affordable housing. Mike Loftin, for the Urban Institute, reports, "For households with annual incomes less than $50,000, renters spend an average of 34 percent of their income on housing while owners spend only 24 percent, controlling for income. Similarly, for households earning less than $20,000, homeowners spend 38 percent of their income and renters spend 48 percent. Even among very low-income families, homeowners spend 10 percentage points less of their income on housing than renters." [xii]

By directing formerly homeless households (particularly those in Rapid Re-Housing programs) to resources to make people homeowners, an opportunity for housing stability and wealth-building is opened up.

Recommendation:

- Include in criteria for permanent housing programs requirement to connect permanent housing clients with local homeownership training programs.

Strategy 1.5 – Promote Creation of a Wisconsin Restorative Housing Program

Homeownership is a critical tool for building savings and intergenerational wealth. Homeownership is the key to stabilizing households and communities, reducing crime, improving health outcomes, and promoting educational achievement.

According to the National Association of Realtors, Wisconsin is among the states with the highest rates of racial disparities in homeownership. [xiii] In 2019:
- 71 percent of white Wisconsinites were homeowners (compared to 70 percent nationally)
- 26 percent of Black/African American Wisconsinites were homeowners (compared to 42 percent nationally)
- 51 percent of Asian American Wisconsinites were homeowners (compared to 61percent nationally)
- 41 percent of Hispanic/Latino/a Wisconsinites were homeowners (compared to 48 percent nationally)

Solving this inequity in homeownership in Wisconsin will go a very long way towards ensuring housing stability for people of color and reductions in homelessness.

Recommendation:

- Create a "Wisconsin Restorative Housing Program" to revitalize, preserve, stabilize, and increase homeownership for Wisconsinites of color through direct grants to homeowners for down payment/closing cost assistance, mortgage assistance, and home improvement assistance.

2. Investing for Success

Studies have estimated the cost of chronic homelessness at $30,000-$50,000 per year to communities per person experiencing chronic homelessness with the cost of providing permanent supportive housing being only $20,000 per year per person experiencing chronic homelessness.[xiv]

Missing from the response to homelessness has been an adequate investment by state government. Over the past 12 years, programs administered by the state of Wisconsin have seen cuts and flat funding for vital programs that serve and house people experiencing homelessness.

In the 2021-2023 biennial budget, Governor Evers proposed investing more than $70 million for affordable housing, services, and programs for individuals who are homeless and to support Wisconsin shelters. The Joint Committee on Finance rejected nearly every proposal and pushed off needed new investments.

What is very clear is that Wisconsin taxpayers will pay for homelessness whether or not the Legislature strips funding and programs from the executive budget. Investing in solutions to prevent and end homelessness in Wisconsin is not only what is best for our residents but will ultimately be less expensive than maintaining the status quo.

Multi-Unit Apartment in Superior operated by Harbor House funded in part by $25,000 WHEDA Dividend grant awarded by the Interagency Council on Homelessness in 2019.

Strategy 2.1 – Increase State Shelter Subsidy Grant Program (SSSG) Funding

The State Shelter Subsidy Grant (SSSG) was established through 1991 Wisconsin Act 39, governed by §16.308, Wisconsin Statutes, and chapter Adm 86, Wis. administrative code. Eligible uses include renovation or expansion of existing shelter facilities, development of an existing building into a shelter, expansion of shelter services, and operating expenses.

In 2020, the Wisconsin State Legislature passed, and Governor Evers signed into law 2019 Wisconsin Act 76, which amended Wis. Stat. §16.308.[xv] This law added eligibility requirements for applicants, set budget limits for applicants, and increased the allocation of funding by $500,000 per fiscal year. While the extra funding is welcome, the SSSG program is still funded at a lower amount than 12 years ago.

Recommendation:

- Increase State Shelter Subsidy Grant Program Funding by $700,000 annually, as offered in Governor Evers' proposed 2021-23 executive budget.

Strategy 2.2 – Create "Wisconsin Housing for Heroes" Veteran Rental Assistance Program

From 2011 to 2020, the number of veterans experiencing homelessness in Wisconsin was nearly halved.[xvi] This happened, in large part, due to the investment by the federal government in housing veterans – mostly through the partnership by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide housing vouchers and supportive services to veterans experiencing homelessness (HUD-VASH).

Despite the success of HUD-VASH, many veterans who have served our country in the armed forces, including those who served in combat, are not eligible for VA health benefits and, as a result, do not qualify for the HUD-VASH program. This leaves around 300 to 350 veterans left experiencing homelessness in Wisconsin on any given night. A permanent housing rental assistance program, combined with a growing number of projects for veterans, can end veteran homelessness as we know it in Wisconsin.

Recommendation:

- Create Permanent Housing Rental Assistance Program for veterans experiencing homelessness with $1,000,000 annually, as proposed in Gov. Evers' proposed 2021-23 executive budget.

Kenosha and Racine counties' Veteran Stand Down event in November 2019.

Strategy 2.3 – Create Diversion Program

Diversion is a client-centered intensive intervention designed to meet people at the point of homelessness to provide immediate solutions to divert people away from emergency shelters or unsheltered homelessness. Through case management and resources, people can be directed to other solutions to their crises.

Successful outcomes from investments in diversion programs lead to expanded housing stability and savings for programs that need to serve people throughout homelessness systems.

Recommendation:

- Create Homelessness Diversion Program, as proposed in Gov. Evers' proposed 2021-2023 executive budget, and expand proposed funding to $1,000,000 annually.

3. Improving Housing Access

Every year, the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) produces reports on the needs and availability of affordable housing for low-income households (households at 30 percent to 50 percent of a county's median income) and extremely low-income households (households at 0 percent to 30 percent of a county's median income). NLIHC reports that Wisconsin has a shortage of units for extremely low-income households that exceeds 119,000 units.[xvii]

NLIHC's annual "Out-of-Reach" report details the gulf between housing costs and wages. For example, in Walworth County, a worker needs to earn $17.15 an hour to afford the local fair market rate for a 2-bedroom unit without spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing.[xviii]

As we acknowledge that the single greatest barrier in Wisconsin for people experiencing homelessness in their efforts to secure stable housing is the availability of affordable housing units, we must commit to finding ways to bring units online all over the state and to quickly connect people experiencing homelessness to housing opportunities.

Strategy 3.1 – Create Grant for Housing Navigation

A known best practice for homelessness systems is Housing Navigation.[xix] A housing navigator is a conduit between people experiencing homelessness and housing providers. Housing navigators also maintain relationships with the landlord community and keep lists of available units in the area they operate.

Additionally, navigators assist clients with all the aspects of the process of moving people from homelessness into housing – from filling out applications to assisting clients with setting appointments with landlords and reviewing available units to starting up utility services and assisting with moving in.

Successful Housing Navigation programs significantly reduce the number of times clients are homeless and create situations that enhance housing stability.

Recommendation:
- Create Housing Navigation Program with $600,000 annually, as proposed in Gov. Evers' proposed 2021-23 executive budget.

Strategy 3.2 – Create Grant for Housing Repairs

In order for units to be available for people experiencing homelessness who have vouchers and other government rental assistance, units have to meet Housing Quality Standards (HQS) to be eligible for renting. Additionally, landlords face certain risks when renting to people with supports through potential damage to property, which makes some landlords reluctant to participate in housing programs.

The previous Hand and a Home plan, in recommending a similar program, stated:

"The problem is especially acute in rural areas due to the age of existing dwellings coupled with a low proportion of rental units. While several funding streams exist to build and rehabilitate housing units, there is no easily available funding source to specifically address housing rehabilitation on a large scale for this purpose."

The State of Washington launched a "Landlord Damage Relief Program" in 2018 to mitigate risks that are occasionally associated with renting to people who are experiencing homelessness. To date, over $4.3 million has been distributed to assist landlords in rehabilitating over 2,300 rental units.[xx] A small grant program for landlords to bring affordable units online and up to HQS and to mitigate instances where damaged property needs to be repaired would bring the benefit of increasing the number of available units throughout the state.

Recommendations:

- Create a program to provide small grants to landlords to bring affordable housing units online with $2,000,000 annually, as proposed in Gov. Evers' proposed 2021-23 executive budget.

Strategy 3.3 – Support Initiatives to Develop Affordable Housing

Since 2018, the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) has allocated tax credits paired with federal 4 percent low-income housing tax credits. The current program limit is $42 million with the tax credits taken over a six-year period, which makes $7 million available per year. In the most recent budget proposal, Governor Evers proposed raising the limit to $100 million with the tax credits to be taken over a 10-year period, making $10 million available per year.

WHEDA projects that increasing the limit would lead to the creation of about 1,000 additional affordable housing units per year.[xxi] Additionally, barriers to low-income housing development in communities in Wisconsin should be studied.

Recommendations:

- Support increases in the state Housing Tax Credit Program limit from $42 million annually to $100 million annually to promote affordable housing development.
- Create a report on barriers to community low-income housing development.

4. Increasing Housing Stability

The coronavirus pandemic exposed the issue of housing stability among households in Wisconsin. As the accompanying economic downturn closed businesses and led to a loss of 114,000 jobs, lower-wage jobs in the leisure/hospitality sector were the hardest hit.[xxii] Overnight, a crisis for tens of thousands of rental households emerged as many Wisconsinites struggled to pay rent and utilities. Keeping the coronavirus pandemic from metastasizing from a housing crisis to an unmitigable housing disaster required substantial interventions at the state and federal levels. State and federal eviction moratoria and emergency rental assistance funding helped, and continue to help, keep households out of eviction court and the homelessness system.

But even before the pandemic, there were serious concerns for housing stability. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, 86 percent of extremely low-income households are cost-burdened (paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing) and 65 percent are severely cost-burdened (paying more than 50 percent of their income for housing). In 2019, there were 27,026 filings for evictions on Wisconsin households with 4,264 judgments for eviction.[xxiii]

Housing stability improves outcomes for physical and mental health, youth in schools, and many other community outcomes. Even when we are past the pandemic, interventions for housing stability will continue to be needed.

Strategy 4.1 – Increase Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) Funding

The State of Wisconsin, through the Division of Energy, Housing and Community Resources (DEHCR) at the Department of Administration, administers the Homeless Prevention Program (HPP). This is authorized under §16.303, Wis. Stats., and is intended to "make grants or loans … to persons or families of low or moderate-income to defray housing costs of the person or family." Priority is given to individuals and families who are homeless.

Federal investments, in the form of Emergency Rental Assistance funding, have kept and continue to keep tens of thousands of Wisconsin households out of eviction court and entry into the homelessness system. As the pandemic and the emergency federal assistance ends, situations will arise where a household loses income and will require an intervention of homelessness prevention funds to keep their housing. Funding for the Homelessness Prevention Program has been flat for over a decade. A well-funded HPP remains a necessary component in a successful system that prevents and ends homelessness.

Recommendation:

- Increase Homelessness Prevention Program funding by $1,000,000 annually, as proposed in Gov. Evers' proposed 2021-23 executive budget.

Strategy 4.2 – Increase Funding for Skills Enhancement Program

Skills Enhancement Grants are distributed to community action agencies under §49.265(3)(b)11, Wis. Stats.

By all indications, this is quite a successful program. In the 2019-2020 program year, 150 people were served and 83 percent of those who exited the program exited with a new job. Of those who exited with a new job, the average earned income increase was $20,884 and 87 percent secured a job that provided health insurance.[xxiv]

Recommendation:

- Increase Skills Enhancement Program funding by $250,000 annually, as proposed in Gov. Evers'

Strategy 4.3 - Increase Funding for Wisconsin Homeless Case Management Services Grant Program

The 2017-2019 Wisconsin State Budget (2017 Wisconsin Act 59) created the Homeless Case Management Services Grant Program. Under the program, grantees provide intensive case management services to homeless families. The services focus on providing financial management, employment, ensure school continuation for youth, and enrolling unemployed or underemployed parents in W-2 or the FoodShare employment and training program. Funding is used for social workers and associated case management services. [xxv]

Intensive case management is a necessity for the success of a Housing First approach. Many agencies do not have the capacity to have the amount of case management staff hours needed to ensure housing stability for their clients.

Recommendation:

- Double the Homelessness Case Management Services Program funding (an increase of $500,000 TANF funds annually for a total of $1 million), as proposed in Gov. Evers' proposed 2021-23 executive budget.

Strategy 4.4 - Pursue Medicaid Authorities, Initiatives, and Activities related to Housing Support Services

2019 Wisconsin Act 76[xxvi] directs the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) to submit to the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) "a request for a waiver of federal Medicaid law or a state Medical Assistance plan amendment that allows the department of health services to provide under the Medical Assistance program intensive case management services to assist Medical Assistance recipients who are homeless in obtaining permanent housing." Intensive case management services are synonymous with housing support services.

Recommendations:

- Pursuant to 2019 Wisconsin Act 76, submit Medicaid state plan amendment to allow Wisconsin Medicaid to pay for housing support services for Medicaid and BadgerCare Plus members.
- Utilize Children's Health Insurance Program to create a health services initiative to focus on housing support services for families with low incomes.

Strategy 4.5 - Explore the use of SAMHSA Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) allocates block grant programs to states for prevention, treatment, recovery support, and other services that may supplement Medicaid, Medicare, and private insurance services. Grants give states flexibility to award sub-recipients of funds to organizations that may provide substance use disorder (SUD) prevention activities and/or treatment services. States can identify or categorize substances it identifies through its needs assessments to use primary prevention dollars towards and then subsequently can identify special populations to set funding aside, including people experiencing homelessness.

Recommendations:

- Pursue opportunities to utilize Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant to fund programs and services for homeless populations.

Strategy 4.6 – Support Legislation to Balance Rights and Protections for Landlords and Tenants

Over the last decade, the Wisconsin State Legislature passed and the previous governor signed several Acts which significantly changed landlord-tenant laws in Wisconsin. The 2011 Wisconsin Act 108, 2011 Act 143, 2013 Act 76, and 2017 Act 317 limited municipal landlord-tenant ordinances and sharply changed the balance of laws away from tenant rights. The laws have limited the ability of people to secure housing.

Gov. Evers proposed changes to statutes to ensure Wisconsin residents maintained some essential protections against unfair eviction actions, but the legislature removed those from the FY21-23 biennial budget. The Legislature should review landlord-tenant laws and consider changing them to return to municipalities the ability to have their ordinances in effect and to make it easier for tenants to find housing and remain secure in housing. Additionally, the legislature should consider amending Wis. Stat. § 106.50 to include "Lawful source of housing payments (including housing vouchers)" to the list of statuses for "equal opportunity for housing".

Recommendations:

- Review landlord-tenant statutes and provide recommendations for new legislation. Consider changes to the following Wisconsin State Statutes:
  - 66.0104(2) (Restrictions on local governments);
  - 66.1010(2) (Local moratorium on evictions);
  - 799.05(3)(b) (Return date for eviction actions);
  - 799.20(4), 799.206(3), and 799.44 (Hearing date, order, and issuance of the writ in eviction actions);
  - 799.40(1m) (Acceptance of rent or other payments in an eviction action);
  - 704.085 (Credit and background checks);
  - 704.07(5) (Restriction of regulation of abatement);
  - 704.07(2) (Notification of building code violations);
  - 704.17(3m) (Terminating a tenancy on the basis of criminal activity);
  - 799.40(1s) (Estoppel as a defense to an action of eviction or claim for damages);
  - 799.40(4)(a) (Limit on length of stay for emergency assistance)
- Consider amending Wis. Stat. § 106.50 to include "Lawful source of housing payments (including housing vouchers)" to the list of statuses for "equal opportunity for housing".

Strategy 4.7 – Explore Options to Provide Civil Legal Services

It is estimated that fewer than 10 percent of tenants facing eviction in circuit court have legal representation for their cases while landlords had legal representation 90 percent of the time.[xxvii] A Civil Right to Counsel program can provide balance in these cases and help tenants better mediate disputes with landlords and keep more households out of the homelessness system.

In September 2021, Milwaukee County started a Right to Counsel pilot program to provide low-income renters with free legal representation during eviction proceedings.[xxviii] This program should be followed to determine if a similar statewide program can provide positive results.

Recommendations:

- Explore creating a statewide Civil Right to Counsel program. Create a report on costs for the program and potential outcomes.
- Develop a Wisconsin Legal Help website to help Wisconsinites independently find legal help and connect with counsel to address landlord-tenant issues.

Strategy 4.8 - Increasing Employment and Income

Meaningful and sustainable employment is critical to housing stability. Increasing income, whether through wages or disability benefits, creates self-sufficiency. There are many employment-related barriers for people experiencing homelessness. This includes: limited education, unaffordable or inflexible opportunities for child care, limited or no past work experience, mental health or substance abuse, trauma, chronic health issues, and lack of access to transportation. Lack of access to technology also serves as a disadvantage for those searching for work. For employment programs to be successful, people experiencing homelessness must be a target population with services available to address barriers to obtaining and retaining employment. Helping people overcome their barriers requires an understanding that different subpopulations face a variety of obstacles and likely need tailored interventions. For more information on best practices, interventions, and program models, see "Overcoming Employment Barriers" published by NAEH.[xxix]

Recommendations:

- Recommend that the CoCs adopt uniform requirements on questions HMIS providers must ask related to employment and education. These can include employment status, wages earned, hours worked, type of work, employment services already received, employment interests, length of employment, job satisfaction, proximity to housing, HSED/GED, level of education completed, and education interests.

- Each Workforce Development Board should require that it contain a representative from the appropriate CoC. If this requires a change in statute or administrative rule, the Council shall endorse legislation to accomplish this goal.
- Create partnerships and alignment between homeless-specific programs and mainstream education, employment support and economic assistance programs, and training services. This includes creating priorities for people experiencing homelessness, coordinating with the CoC partner agencies, tailoring interventions and models around the specific subpopulation, and requiring workforce development programs to authorize people experiencing homelessness as a target population.
- Increase the number of families experiencing homelessness who have access to affordable and flexible childcare and after-school care.
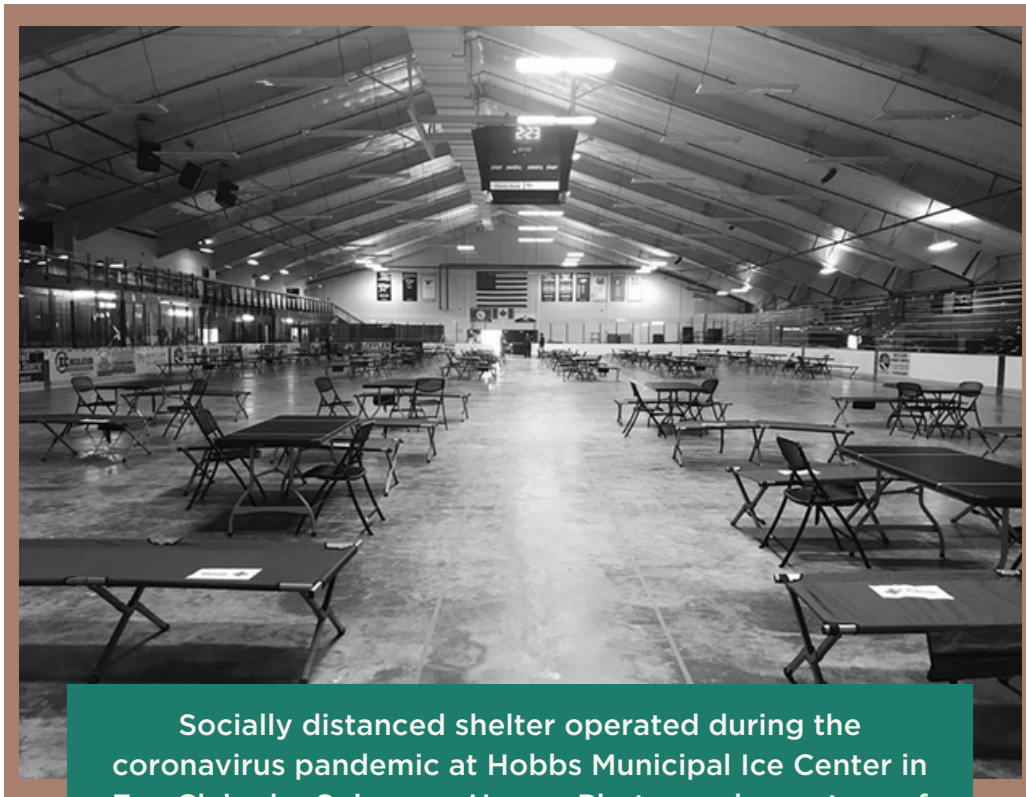
5. Using Data and Information

The previous Hand and a Home plan had the following as one of its principles:

"Progress should be measured by evidence and data. Where adequate data does not exist, Council members should prioritize data collection, sharing, and analysis." [xxx]

The Interagency Council on Homelessness continues to agree with this idea and has worked over the last two years to expand access to data to give us a better picture of the state of homelessness and housing security in Wisconsin. Two prime examples of this are the completion of the data matchup between the Institute of Community Alliances Wisconsin Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) database and the Department of Public Instruction's Educating Homeless Children and

Youth (EHCY) data [xxxi] and the creation of the Wisconsin Eviction Data Project [xxxii] - which, for the first time in the state's history, tracks in real-time monthly the number of filings for eviction and judgments for eviction in all of Wisconsin's 72 counties.

The annual Point-in-Time Count at the Salvation Army in Appleton, Wis. in January 2020.

Measuring our progress on homelessness is a nuanced task. No single data point can provide a complete picture of our progress in addressing homelessness. We need to continue to collect more data and present that information to better inform Wisconsin residents on our progress and continued needs.

Strategy 5.1 – Produce "COVID-19 Pandemic: Lessons Learned for Wisconsin's Homelessness Systems" Report

The coronavirus pandemic has been the single event with the greatest impact on Wisconsin's homelessness systems in state history. Months were spent learning best practices to keep people safe. Cooperative efforts between state agencies, homeless services agencies, and governments at all levels needed to be stood up and strengthened as the pandemic progressed.

We no longer live in a world where certain normalcy can be assumed. Events from future pandemics to disasters resulting from climate change may happen with little or no warning. A detail of lessons learned from the coronavirus pandemic can be helpful for future agency and community leaders to reduce the amount of time necessary to take action.

Recommendation:

- Draft report on the coronavirus pandemic and its effects on persons experiencing homelessness in Wisconsin and homelessness systems with a set of recommendations of action for future disasters/pandemics.

Socially distanced shelter operated during the coronavirus pandemic at Hobbs Municipal Ice Center in Eau Claire by Sojourner House. Photograph courtesy of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of La Crosse.

Strategy 5.2 – Expand Data-Sharing between State Agencies and HMIS

The previous Hand and a Home plan contained a recommendation to begin data sharing between the Department of Public Instruction and the Institute for Community Alliances (the administrator for Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) in Wisconsin) to examine how many students served by the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program were also served by other homelessness programs in the state. That recommendation was followed and a report on the findings was produced in 2020.

This strategy and recommendation seeks to expand that idea to other state agencies and includes the UW's Institute for Research on Poverty – which also collects and analyses data for programs that are serving people experiencing homelessness.

Recommendation:

- Review data-sharing between agencies, the University of Wisconsin's Institute for Research on Poverty, and the Institute for Community Alliances (ICA). Where needed, create Memoranda of Understanding between ICA and state agencies that serve people experiencing homelessness to better share data between entities.

Strategy 5.3 – Expand Requirements for Using HMIS in State Programs

HMIS continues to be the best system for tracking clients who are participating in homelessness programs. Where it is possible in State homelessness programming, HMIS should be used to track resources and efficacy of homelessness programs.

Recommendation:

- Review state programs for requirements to use HMIS and create recommendations, where possible, to expand requirements for HMIS use in programs.

Strategy 5.4 – Develop State Homelessness Dashboard

To best communicate our needs and progress in serving Wisconsinites experiencing homelessness and improve transparency, we should develop a web-based dashboard for residents to access. The data shared should include program outcomes to show whether or not homelessness events are rare, brief, and non-recurring. The State of Washington provides a model for transparency in homelessness programs and progress[xxxiii] that is worthy of emulating.

Recommendation:

- Develop a State Homelessness Dashboard to measure homelessness numbers, clients served through state programs, and progress with the Welcoming Wisconsin Home plan.

6. Leveraging our Resources

Strategy 6.1 – Increase Housing Assistance Program (HAP) Funding

The Housing Assistance Program (HAP) is authorized under §16.306, Wis. Stats., to provide grants to operate housing and associated supportive services for the homeless. These programs are meant to facilitate the movement of homeless persons to independent living.

The regulations for HAP create a level of flexibility where the program could be considered a "Swiss Army Knife", subject for use in multitudes of creative programs. Before 2021, HAP was funded at a fraction of the amount it was funded in 2007-2009. And even though an increase to $900,000 per fiscal year was achieved in the 2021-2023 budget, more substantial investment in the program is still needed to fulfill the potential for as many communities in Wisconsin as possible to create tailor-made solutions for permanent housing.

Recommendations:

- Increase Housing Assistance Program funding by $5,000,000 annually, as proposed in Gov. Evers' FY21-23 executive budget.
- Create a listing on potential programming that can be funded through HAP.

Strategy 6.2 - Encourage Homeless Preferences for Housing Choice Vouchers

The 2017 Wisconsin Act 75 granted WHEDA the ability to implement a two-year pilot program to give priority for Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) to individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness on the voucher waiting list.[xxxiv] In the 2021-2023 biennial budget proposal, Governor Evers recommended an HCV pilot program to give priority to all families and youth experiencing homelessness.[xxxv] The US Department of Housing and Urban Development, the agency that funds the HCV program, allows Public Housing Authorities (PHA) the ability to set preferences for people experiencing homelessness.[xxxvi]

Wisconsin's 85 PHAs have varying preference standards. The Interagency Council on Homelessness should survey all agencies for their preference standards and encourage those who don't have preferences for people experiencing homelessness to do so.

Recommendations:

- Survey all PHAs for policies on homeless preferences.
- Recommend WHEDA give preference to youth and their families experiencing homelessness on the authority's federal HCV Program list.

7. Expanding Community Partnerships

Ending homelessness as we know it in Wisconsin will require an "All Hands on Deck" effort across the state and region – bringing in agencies, different levels of government, the private sector, and residents to participate in creating solutions for homelessness. As the federal and local governments and private funders increase their investments in fighting homelessness, these strategies will be part of a wider effort to break down the silos to create a whole community effort.

Strategy 7.1 – Pursue Options for Social Impact Bonding Projects for Supportive Housing Development

For over 10 years, communities and states around the country (as well as other countries) have used Social Impact Bonding (also known as "Pay for Success") to create specialized supportive housing developments to serve subpopulations of the homeless community. Private investors have partnered with local governments and private agencies with evidence-based track records of success on projects to house people with specific needs.[xxxvii]

Among the most successful SIB projects was one launched in 2016 by the City and County of Denver, Colorado. The project targeted people experiencing chronic homelessness who spent the most nights in local jails. Two hundred and fifty (250) housing units with supportive services leveraged from local government and Medicaid were created and $8.6 million was raised from investors for the project. A recent report by Urban Institute found that the program was very successful, with the following results:[xxxviii]

- 86 percent of participants achieved housing stability for one year.
- 77 percent remained in housing for three years.
- The program participants had a 40 percent reduction in jail time.
- The use of detoxification services was reduced by 65 percent among participants.
- Shelter stays were reduced by 40 percent among participants.

Recommendation:

- Produce a report for the Interagency Council on potential Social Impact Bonding opportunities for communities in Wisconsin.

Strategy 7.2 – Expand Efforts to Educate Wisconsin Residents on the State of Homelessness in Wisconsin and How to Access Resources

Recommendations:

- Creation of an outreach and marketing strategy document for resident outreach.
- Create a "One-Stop-Shop" resource page to provide information to people on where to go for homelessness and housing services.

Strategy 7.3 – Involve Landlords and Landlord Associations in Efforts to Promote Renting to People Experiencing Homelessness

Providing outreach to landlords. engaging with them to learn about their experiences, and creating positive relationships with the landlord community have proven to be successful ways to increase the pool of available housing and eliminate misconceptions about housing and homelessness programs. [xxxix]

A workgroup for landlords, property managers, and apartment association representatives should be created to further this purpose.

Recommendations:

- Create a landlord and property manager workgroup to explore strategies to promote renting to persons and families experiencing homelessness.

Strategy 7.4 – Include Persons with Lived Experience in Homelessness

An emerging practice in social services is the use of people with lived experience as experts in program evaluation and policy development. These experts offer unique insights, challenge assumptions, and help pinpoint areas for change. The State of Wisconsin's Office of Children's Mental Health already has a framework for engaging with lived experience experts with their office.

A working group to provide these experts an opportunity to share their insights and experiences with state homelessness programs should be created. Those who participate should be honored for their expertise by payment of a stipend for their time.

Recommendations:

- Create a workgroup for persons with lived experience in homelessness to review programs and strategies from client perspectives.

Strategy 7.5 – Create a Regional Homelessness Consortium with Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, and Michigan

Wisconsin's homelessness issues do not begin nor end at the state line. In border areas around Wisconsin, agencies and people experiencing homelessness face unique challenges from potentially having to work with agencies and policies in other states.

Additionally, while our neighbors are creating their own strategies and programs for homelessness, an opportunity to create a regional consortium to share ideas that work should be taken.

Recommendation:

- Creation of regional homelessness consortium with neighboring states to review shared issues in border areas and to share ideas.

Endnotes

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V   "Vulnerabilities to COVID-19 Among Transgender People in the US", report published in April, 2020 by the UCLA School of Law's Williams Institute April, 2020

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xiv   https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Ending_Chronic_Homelessness_in_2017.pdf

xv   https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2019/related/acts/76

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xvii   https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state/wisconsin

xviii   https://reports.nlihc.org/oor/wisconsin

xix   "Best Practices for Solving Homelessness and Increasing Affordable Housing in California", Homeless and Housing Strategies for California, https://homelessstrategy.com/best-practices-california/

xx   https://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/homelessness/landlord-fund-programs/landlord-mitigation-program/

xxi   WHEDA Memo "LRB-0590 Overview: Increasing the state housing tax credit to an annual authorization of $100 million from $42 million with a claim period extension", February 2021

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xxv   https://doa.wi.gov/Pages/HomelessCaseManagementServicesGrants.aspx

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xxvii   "New York City's Right to Counsel law helps stem the epidemic of evictions, and provides a blueprint for Milwaukee" by James E. Causey, Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel January 22, 2021 - https://www.jsonline.com/in-depth/news/special-reports/2020/10/16/new-york-citys-right-to-counsel-provides-free-lawyers-forpoor-people-in-housing-court/3490555001/

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