

ANNUAL UPDATE TO THE FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN (2020)

EASTERN PA CONTINUUM OF CARE

INTRODUCTION

On June 19, 2017, the Eastern PA Continuum of Care (CoC) adopted its first Five-Year Strategic Plan, outlining a set of ambitious goals to drive the CoC's work toward ending homelessness. Through the Strategic Plan, the CoC also identified a series of strategies and action steps to act as a roadmap to achieve these goals. In 2019, the CoC updated its strategic plan to highlight accomplishments since 2017 and identify key opportunities and challenges ahead. The Five-Year Strategic Plan and 2019 update can be found on the CoC website: <https://pennsylvaniacoc.org/easterncoc/eastern-pa-coc-strategic-plan/>. This annual update will highlight accomplishments from the past year (2019 to 2020), and will identify goals and strategies to focus on during the year ahead.

BACKGROUND

The CoC's Five-Year Strategic Plan established several key goals that were aligned with the federal plan to end homelessness, Opening Doors:

1. Reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness in the Eastern PA CoC by 50% by 2021.
2. End chronic homelessness. Outcome: achieve functional zero. (Functional zero is the state when your homelessness system has enough capacity and resources to prevent homelessness when possible and to permanently house those experiencing homelessness now and in the future.)
3. End Veterans homelessness. Outcome: achieve functional zero.
4. Reduce homelessness among families with children. Outcomes: achieve functional zero for families with children who are unsheltered; achieve functional zero for families fleeing domestic violence; and reduce all homelessness among families with children by 50%.
5. Reduce homelessness among unaccompanied youth. Outcome: reduce the number of youth experiencing homelessness by 75%
6. Set a path to end all forms of homelessness.
7. Reduce the duration of homelessness to an average of 47 days or less.

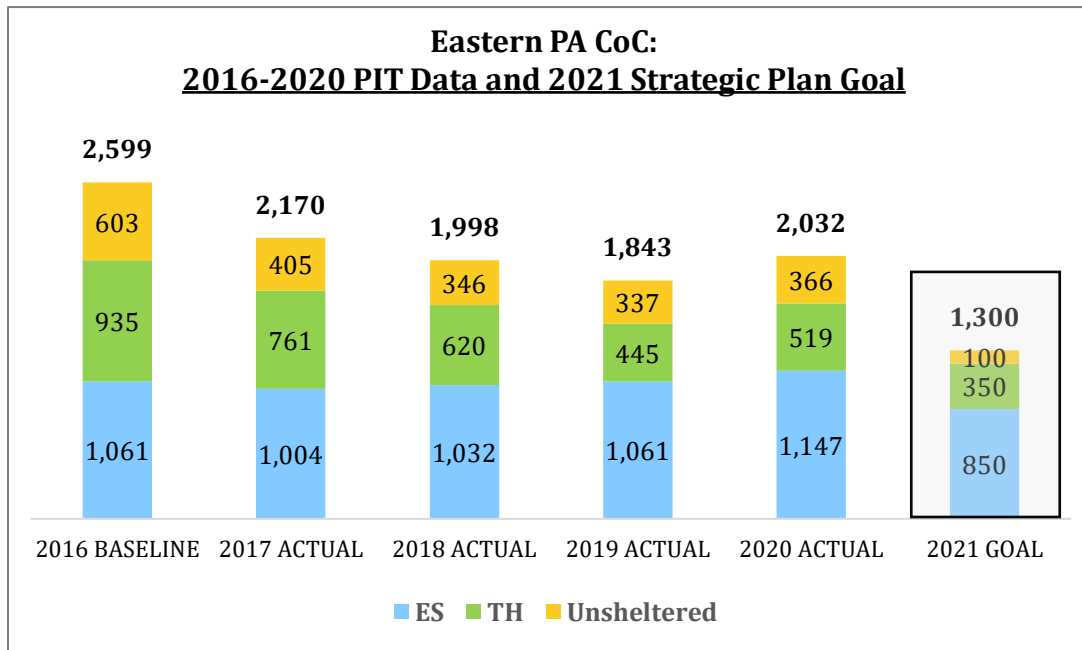
The Five-Year Strategic Plan also established eight key strategies to accomplish its goals, each with a set of more defined sub-strategies and action steps. The strategies included:

1. Prevent and divert homelessness
2. Streamline and coordinate access to housing and services
3. Expand the continuum of housing options
4. Expand and align resources
5. Increase the economic security of households
6. Increase capacity for data collection and analysis
7. Engage in advocacy to increase support and sustainability
8. Build a sustainable system/Develop CoC infrastructure

DATA UPDATES

Goal: Reduce overall homelessness by 50%.

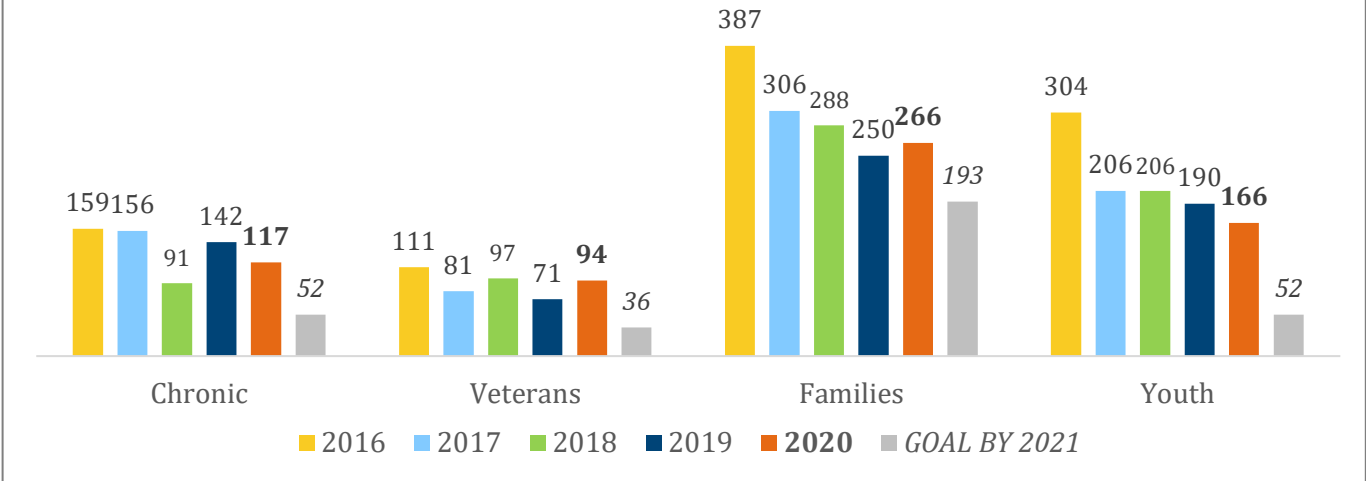
2020 Update: PIT Count data indicates a **22% decrease** in total homelessness since 2016. While the CoC has seen a sizable decrease in unsheltered homelessness and transitional housing counts since 2016, the CoC has seen an increase in the number of people in emergency shelter since 2018.



Subpopulation Goals:

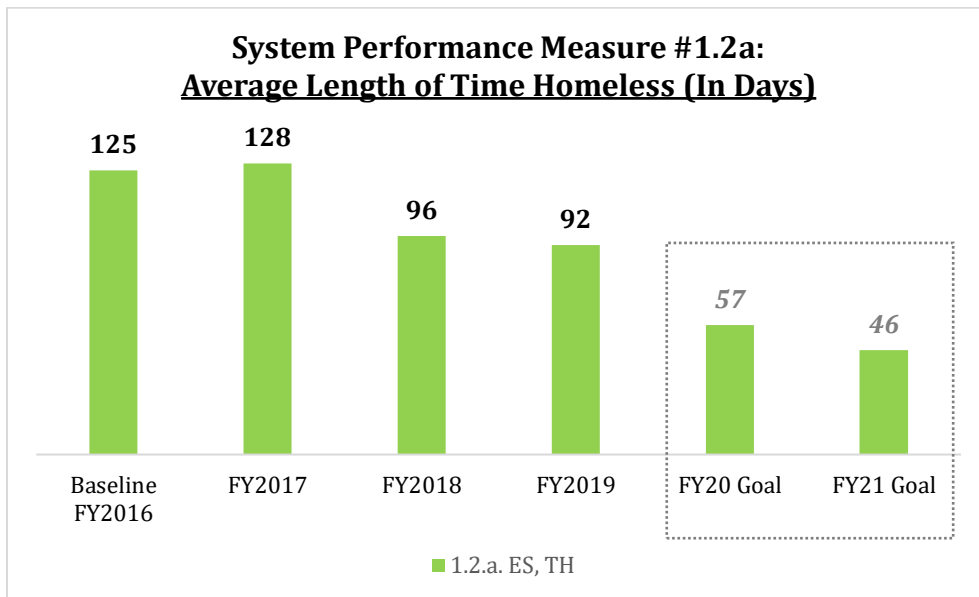
Goal	2020 Update (based on 2020 PIT Count data)
End chronic homelessness. Outcome: achieve functional zero.	The CoC has seen a 26% reduction in chronic homelessness.
End Veterans homelessness. Outcome: achieve functional zero.	The CoC has seen a 15% reduction in veteran homelessness.
Reduce homelessness among families with children. Outcomes: achieve functional zero for families with children who are unsheltered; achieve functional zero for families fleeing domestic violence; and reduce all homelessness among families with children by 50%.	The CoC has seen a 31% reduction in family homelessness.
Reduce homelessness among unaccompanied youth. Outcome: reduce the number of youth experiencing homelessness by 75%.	The CoC has seen a 45% reduction in youth homelessness.

Point-in-Time Count Data: Targeted Subpopulations



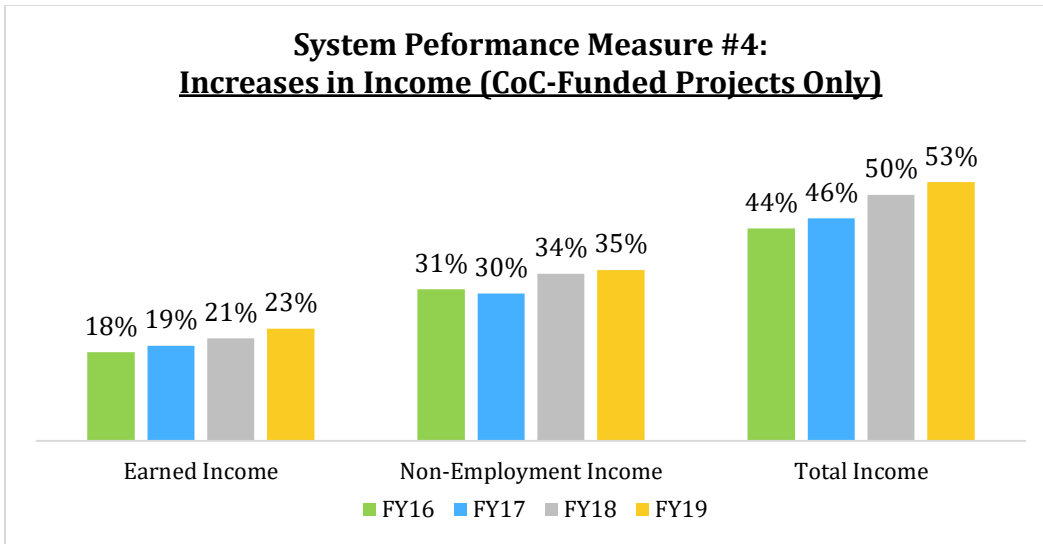
Goal: Reduce the duration of homelessness to an average of 47 days or less.

2020 Update: Based on FY19 System Performance Measures, the current average length of time homeless for Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing is 92 days. This is a **26%** reduction in length of time homeless since 2016.



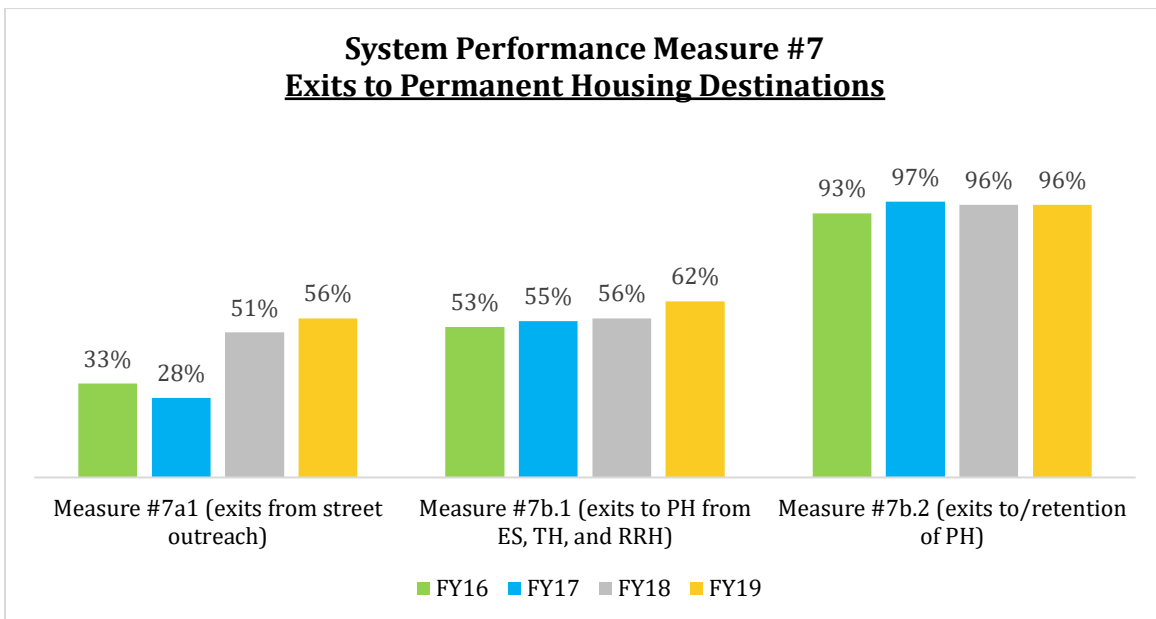
Strategy: Increase economic security of households.

2020 Update: FY19 System Performance Measure data indicates that CoC-funded projects have seen a steady increase of households increasing earned income, non-earned income, and total income. **Earned Income: 4% increase since FY16; Non-Employment income: 4% increase since FY16; Total Income: 9% increase since FY16.**



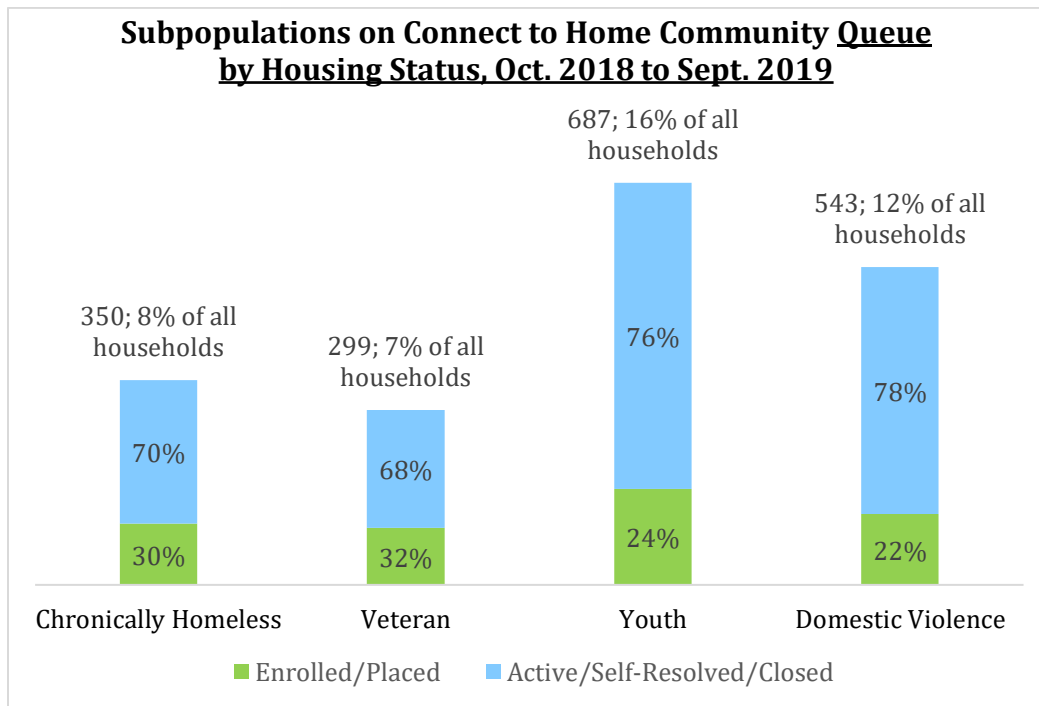
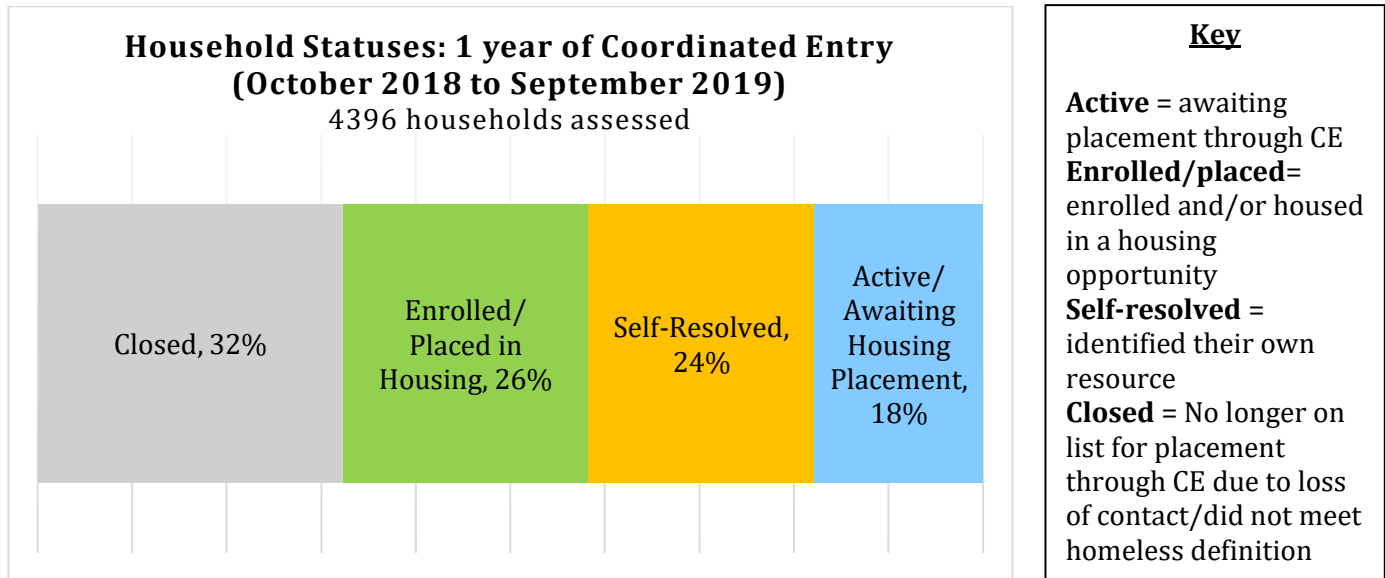
Strategies: Streamline and coordinate access to housing and services; Expand the continuum of housing options.

2020 Update: FY19 System Performance Measure data indicates that the CoC has seen an increase in households exiting to permanent housing destinations since FY16. **Exits from street outreach: 23% increase since FY16; Exits from ES, TH, and RRH: 9% increase since FY16; Exits to/retention of PH from PSH: Steady strong performance at 96% (increase from 93% in FY16).**



Strategies: Streamline and coordinate access to housing and services; Expand the continuum of housing options

2020 Update: Based on HMIS Coordinated Entry data, from the time period 10/1/18-9/31/19, 26% of households who accessed coordinated entry were enrolled/placed in housing. 24% of households self-resolved their homelessness. 32% of households were closed from the queue. Of the subpopulations, veteran households and chronically homeless households had the highest rate of being enrolled/placed through coordinated entry (32% and 30% respectively). Youth households had a 24% rate of being enrolled/placed in housing, and domestic violence survivor households had a 22% rate of being enrolled/placed in housing.



UPDATES

The follow section summarizes the strategies implemented by the Eastern PA CoC in 2019 to accomplish its strategic plan goals.

Strategy#1: Prevent and Divert Homelessness

- The Coordinated Entry (CE) Consultant developed and launched the Connect to Home Prevention and Diversion Tool in fall 2019, which is utilized with every coordinated entry contact.
- The CoC prioritized \$394,287 (80%) of its \$494,287 2019 Home4Good funding allocation for homelessness prevention and diversion activities.

Strategy #2: Streamline and Coordinate access to housing and services

- System leaders participated in a 2-day National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) Rapid Re-Housing Best Practices workshop in fall 2019 focused on more effectively and efficiently using RRH resources.
- The CoC adopted inaugural Written Standards for Providing Assistance under the CoC and ESG Programs, incorporating lessons learned from the 2-day NAEH RRH workshop.
- With 2018 CoC Bonus funding, a Domestic Violence Coordinated Entry Specialist was hired to meet the needs of domestic violence survivors within the Coordinated Entry System.
- The CoC secured \$94,737 in 2019 Home4Good funding for a pilot DV Housing First program.
- The CoC secured \$70,000 in 2019 Home4Good funding to support the ongoing operations of a youth-dedicated street outreach program in the Lehigh Valley.
- The CE Committee created a DV Subcommittee to implement changes to CES and increase the capacity of providers to serve survivors of DV.
- STAY, a collaborative in the Lehigh Valley RHAB created to drive cross-sector systems change in order to impact issues that lead to increased risk among youth, has been collaborating with community partners to create a youth resource center in Allentown, currently under construction. Services will include employment and education linkage; case management; physical and behavioral health and wellness; transportation; food; childcare linkage; mentoring; and support for youth with experiences of trafficking, domestic violence and abuse, and/or gang involvement.

Strategy #3: Expand the Continuum of housing options

- The Governing Board adopted funding policies in summer 2019, which outline the basis of funding decisions (annual unmet needs/ gaps analysis of housing units across the CoC), the funding process, and the roles of the Funding Committee and Governing Board in making funding decisions.
- The CoC secured \$14,065,098 in CoC Program funding via the 2019 NOFA Competition, an increase of \$1,580,371 from the FY2018 award amount. The funding supports 55 renewal projects, 2 new CoC Bonus projects, 1 new DV Bonus project, and the CoC's planning grant.
 - New Bonus project: 11 units of RRH for all household types in the Lehigh Valley RHAB
 - New Bonus project: 18 units of RRH for all household types in Clinton, Lycoming, and Sullivan counties in the Northern Tier RHAB
 - New DV Bonus project: 68 units of DV-dedicated RRH units for all household types targeted for the Lehigh Valley and Pocono RHABs
- The CoC increased CoC Program funding investment in RRH from \$4.2M in 2018 to \$5,780,305 in 2019.

Strategy #4: Expand and align resources

- The CoC allocated 2020 Home4Good and PHARE Home2020 funding to resource the greatest unmet needs across its 33-county region based on data (COVID-19 cases, Coordinated Entry Inflow, and Unemployment) in each county.
- The CoC sent information about the Family Unification Program (FUP) and Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Initiative funding applications to all PHAs and CoC partners, encouraging partners to invite their PHAs and child welfare agencies to participate on a webinar featuring presentations from the CoC, Juvenile Law Center, and National Center for Housing and Child Welfare about these funding opportunities.
- The CoC shared information about the PHA mainstream voucher application, as well as offered technical assistance to counties applying, specifically Union, Pike, and Wayne.
- While individual counties and providers have pooled or coordinated resources with related sectors and systems more effectively, the CoC has not yet implemented strategies system-wide.

Strategy #5: Increase the economic security of households

- While individual providers and/or counties have implemented some of the strategies identified in the CoC's plan, developing partnerships to support people obtain employment, address barriers to employment, and increase incomes and skills, the CoC has not yet implemented strategies system-wide.
 - Examples of strategies implemented include:
 - Monroe County organizations have partnered with the Visitors Bureau, Waste Authority, & United Way to offer no barrier, same day pay employment to participants experiencing homelessness
 - Lehigh and Northampton County providers worked with CareerLink to implement Allentown Youth Works, a specific youth initiative to target job training & job opportunities for youth 17-24 experiencing homelessness, operated by Valley Youth House
 - Northampton County Nursing Home offers training to people experiencing homelessness, offering them \$17.85/ hour plus Union benefits after 3 months of employment
 - Lehigh County WorkReady offers food service and customer services trainings to people experiencing homelessness.

Strategy #6: Increase capacity for data collection and analysis

- The Data Outcomes and Management Committee updated the CoC Monitoring Plan, which includes performance goals for ESG and CoC funded projects, and a process for quarterly evaluation. Due to HMIS team staffing changes at the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and change in leadership of the Committee, the Monitoring Plan has not been fully implemented.
- DCED upgraded the CoC's HMIS from ClientTrack15 to ClientTrack19 to ensure compliance with HUD HMIS data standards.
- DCED entered into a data sharing agreement with the Pennsylvania Department of Education to better understand and coordinate efforts to address family and youth homelessness.

Strategy #7: Engage in advocacy to increase support and sustainability

- Opportunities for advocacy are regularly posted on the CoC's Workplace page to inform all members about action steps they can take to advocate for resources and policies needed to advance efforts to end homelessness,
- The Lehigh Valley RHAB recently completed a strategic planning process. 1 of their 3 strategic collaboration priorities is to raise public awareness of homelessness in the Lehigh Valley and mobilize support for action.
- Individual members of the CoC advocated for / supported Senator Killion's Statewide Rental Assistance legislation, proposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- While individual providers and/or counties have engaged in advocacy efforts, the CoC has not yet implemented advocacy strategies, including expanding external communication efforts, system-wide.

Strategy #8: Build a sustainable system/ Develop CoC Infrastructure

- The governing body, DCED, and CoC consultants engaged with Strategy Solutions, Inc. to evaluate the current CoC governing structure and assess roles and responsibilities. All parties are meeting to review the evaluation and recommendations in June 2020.
- The CoC adopted a revised Governance Charter, updated with recommendations from the Governance Committee to more clearly define CoC membership and voting privileges.
- The CoC provided training on the following topics to support providers and agencies in 2019: Best Practices in Serving Survivors of Domestic Violence; the CoC's Emergency Transfer Plan; HUD's Equal Access Rule (Equal Access and Gender Identity); Accommodations in Housing: Protections, Practices, and Solutions; Racial Equity; and LGBT Equity
- PCADV partnered with the National Alliance for Safe Housing to provide training and technical assistance to DV agency sub-recipients.
- The 2019 New CoC Program Project selection process provided additional consideration to agencies that have not previously received CoC funding and technical assistance to support new applicants submit a competitive application, resulting in the 2019 CoC Application including 2 organizations who were not currently receiving CoC Program funding and 4 DV serving organizations that had not previously received CoC Program funding.
- The CoC governing body secured 2019 Home4Good funding to expand the Eastern PA CoC Staff position from part-time to full-time to support the CoC achieve its goals and implement its strategies. The CoC governing body allocated a portion of the CoC's 2020 Home4Good funding allocation to preserve the full-time status of the Eastern PA CoC Staff position.
- The Veterans Leadership Engagement Committee's (VLEC) efforts to declare functional zero were delayed in 2019 due to staffing changes at DCED, leadership changes of the VLEC, Veterans Master List issues, June 2019 changes to the USICH Criteria and Benchmarks, and the HMIS upgrade.

THE ROAD AHEAD

The following section summarizes the strategies the Eastern PA CoC will pursue in 2020 in order to achieve the goals detailed in its plan.

Strategy#1: Prevent and Divert Homelessness

- With 2020 Home4Good and PHARE Home 2020 funding allocated, the CoC will prevent and divert homelessness among those at risk of homelessness and prevent COVID-19 transmission among people experiencing homelessness.
- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and soaring unemployment rates, the CoC will engage with DCED in a thoughtful planning process to develop a strategy to maximize the extent to which the portion of DCED's \$38 Million ESG-CV allocation awarded to the Eastern PA CoC prevents and diverts homelessness and prevents COVID-19 transmission among those experiencing homelessness.
- The CoC aims to develop and implement prioritization for prevention assistance to more effectively assess households requesting assistance, channel prevention resources to be used most effectively to prevent homelessness, improve coordination of prevention assistance with Coordinated Entry, and to increase the system's performance in preventing homelessness, including among those experiencing homelessness for the first time.

Strategy #2: Streamline and Coordinate access to housing and services

- The CoC will pursue strategies to incorporate a racial equity lens to the homeless response system, including, but not limited to:
 - Conducting a CoC Racial Disparities Analysis: where the data allows, the CoC will drill down to the RHAB, county, and project/ program-levels
 - Developing a CoC-wide Non-Discrimination Policy
 - Providing sample language to homeless assistance providers to incorporate non-discrimination language into their existing operations guidelines
 - Reviewing June 2020 CoC-sponsored Racial Equity training feedback
- The CoC will continue to refine the Connect to Home Coordinated Entry System through participation in the HUD CARES Act- CE: Dynamic System Management in Response to COVID-19 Intensive Workshop, subcommittee work focused on improving how survivors of DV are served; evaluating CES system performance, adherence to policies and procedures, feedback from providers and people experiencing homelessness; and updating the CES Policies and Procedures to prioritize available resources to the most vulnerable and move people into housing more quickly.
- The CoC will formalize a quarterly reporting structure for CE Operations, including the United Way PA 2-1-1 contract.
- The CoC will review and revise its Written Standards for Providing Assistance under the CoC and ESG Programs, and develop a Written Standards implementation toolkit.
- Lehigh Valley's STAY aims to increase youth participation to account for 40% of its membership; develop a social media initiative involving enhanced outreach and multimedia awareness campaigns; identify funding streams for the youth resource center; and plan and host two community events in the City of Allentown to call attention to the issue of youth homelessness.
- The CoC is on a waiting list to have its RRH providers participate in a NAEH RRH Learning Collaborative.

Strategy #3: Expand the Continuum of housing options

- The CoC will support interested PHAs establish homeless preferences and Move-On strategies. The Schuylkill, Clinton, Lehigh, and Northampton public housing authorities have all expressed interest in developing a move-on strategy.
- The CoC will pursue and support strategies to rehabilitate properties that require reinvestment, including rehabbing properties to meet HUD's habitability and Housing Quality Standards to increase

the stock of housing throughout the CoC available for prevention and rapid re-housing rental assistance.

- The CoC will prioritize identifying housing champions in local government, faith-based community, foundations, and other community funders in areas of the CoC that are currently disengaged; and cultivate and support relationships with these champions such that they can provide the political, community, or financial support of future housing projects in their community.
- The CoC will continue to engage with PHFA regarding the development and expansion of housing resources for people experiencing homelessness.
- The VLEC will engage with and encourage PHAs and VAMCs in counties where there is need to apply for new HUD-VASH vouchers.

Strategy #4: Expand and align resources

- To achieve functional zero for veteran and chronic homelessness; and make significant reductions in family and youth homelessness, the CoC will engage in more strategic partnership with stakeholders serving these populations, including PHAs, to coordinate a community response to ending homelessness for these populations, as well as continue to strategically allocate resources, such as Home4Good and PHARE, to fill system gaps.
- The CoC will reach out to communities that do not have voucher allocations under the Family Unification Program (FUP) or Foster Youth to Independence (FYI), but have high rates of unsheltered youth and/or family homelessness, and offer letters of support and limited technical assistance in order to encourage PHAs to apply for these vouchers.
- The CoC will investigate how mainstream PHA vouchers are working in communities and work with PHAs to establish move-on strategies in communities where PSH inventory can be targeted to increase turnover.

Strategy #5: Increase the economic security of households

- The CoC will pursue opportunities to connect people experiencing homelessness to CARES Act economic development resources, such as training and job opportunities, to gain and increase their incomes.
- The CoC will explore ways to increase coordination between the homeless assistance system and workforce development system, including community colleges playing an important role in the workforce development system of a community.

Strategy #6: Increase capacity for data collection and analysis

- The Data Outcomes and Management Committee will implement the CoC's Monitoring Plan in an effort to improve system performance, implement a process and structure to support agencies improve their project-level data quality and performance on key measures tied to CoC goals and HUD's system performance measures.
- The HMIS Lead Agency will update and implement the CoC's data quality plan and provide training as needed, to address ongoing and widespread data quality issues.
- The CoC will expand the use of de-identified DV survivor data to further increase CoC-DV data-sharing efforts for more integrated planning.
- The HMIS lead will work with local Veterans Affairs Medical Centers (VAMCs) to receive client-level HUD-VASH data from HOMES, the VA's data collection and reporting system, once HUD and the VA roll out the standard process for this data transfer.

- The Coordinated Entry Consultant will provide ongoing training related to Coordinated Entry data elements, data entry, etc., as well as serve as an HMIS sub-admin to provide technical assistance to providers and support the HMIS Lead increase reporting capacity of the new system.

Strategy #7: Engage in advocacy to increase support and sustainability

- Members of the CoC will advocate for additional resources needed to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic to stabilize people in their homes and move others out of homelessness into permanent housing.
- The CoC will explore opportunities to enhance the CoC website and utilize it as a platform to share information produced by the CoC as well as consider/evaluate additional tools to enhance internal and external communications.
- The CoC will advocate for the continued allocation of Home4Good and PHARE funds to support CoC efforts to end homelessness.

Strategy #8: Build a sustainable system/ Develop CoC Infrastructure

- The CoC will consider Strategy Solutions' recommendations to strengthen the CoC's decision-making infrastructure, and identify and implement newly defined roles and responsibilities of the CoC governing body, RHABs, Committees, Collaborative Applicant, HMIS Lead Agency, Consultants, and CoC staff.
- The CoC staff will support capacity building efforts in areas of the CoC where additional knowledge and engagement is needed.
- With an HMIS upgrade in May 2020, the Veterans Leadership Engagement Committee will orient their work to achieve functional zero, submit an End to Vets homelessness claim, to USICH, and ensure there is a CoC-wide system of outreach, assessment, and referral that will sustain a functional end to veterans homelessness.
- The CoC is offering Homelessness Prevention and Diversion Training in summer 2020.
- The Funding Committee will use unmet need data from the CoC's Gaps Analysis to prioritize new project funding across the CoC and prioritize CoC Program funding for new higher performing projects over lower performing renewal projects in the 2020 CoC NOFA competition.
- Per the CoC's Monitoring Plan, the CoC will design a CE Monitoring Plan to track CoC and ESG providers' adherence to the Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures.
- Per HUD's Notice CPD-17-01 Establishing Additional Requirements for a Continuum of Care Centralized or Coordinated Assessment System, the CoC will solicit feedback at least annually from participating projects and from households that participated in coordinated entry about the quality and effectiveness of the entire coordinated entry experience (intake, assessment, and referral processes). Per HUD's Notice, the CoC will develop written policies and procedures describing the frequency and method by which the evaluation will be conducted, including how project participants will be selected to provide feedback, and will describe a process by which the evaluation is used to implement updates to existing policies and procedures.