



STATE OF WISCONSIN  
DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

Tony Evers, Governor  
Joel Brennan, Secretary

December 31, 2021

To: Governor Tony Evers  
Mike Queensland, Chief Clerk, Wisconsin State Senate  
Ted Blazel, Chief Clerk, Wisconsin State Assembly

From: Michael Basford, Director, State of Wisconsin Interagency Council on Homelessness

VIA EMAIL

Pursuant to §16.03(2)(c), Wisconsin Statutes, please find attached the annual report for the State of Wisconsin Interagency Council on Homelessness.

In addition to fulfilling my statutory obligation by delivering this report, I will also be sending copies to Council members and other interested parties via email and will presently be posting a pdf of this report on the Council's website.

Please let me know if you have any questions or require any more information.

Thank you, and Happy New Year!

Michael Basford  
Director  
State of Wisconsin Interagency Council on Homelessness

cc (VIA EMAIL):

Council Members: Secretary Joel Brennan Administration), Secretary Emilie Amundson (Children and Families), Secretary Kevin Carr (Corrections), Secretary-designee Karen Timberlake (Health Services), Secretary Mary Kolar (Veterans Affairs), Deputy Secretary Pam McGillivray (Workforce Development), Superintendent Dr. Jill Underly (Public Instruction), Deputy Executive Director Kim Plache (WI Housing and Economic Development Authority), Rafael J. Acevedo, Jr., Teresa Reinders, Torrie Kopp Mueller, Carrie Poser

# State of Wisconsin Interagency Council on Homelessness

## 2021 Annual Report to the Governor and Legislature

Prepared by Michael Basford, Director  
Submitted December 20, 2021

2021 saw continued challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic and their effects on the ability to provide housing and services for our state's most vulnerable. The scope of these challenges was not reflected in the standard counts of people experiencing homelessness. The annual point-in-time (PIT) count in January, which was affected by fewer people being able to volunteer for the count, recorded 4,237 people in emergency shelters, transitional housing, Safe Havens or unsheltered. While that reflected fewer people than were counted in the PIT count in 2020 (4,515), 669 people experiencing chronic homelessness (defined as a single individual, or head of household, with a disabling condition who has either experienced homelessness for longer than a year, during which time the individual may have lived in a shelter, Safe Haven, or a place not meant for human habitation or experienced homelessness four or more times in the last three years) were counted - a number more than 10% higher than the number counted in 2020.

The Department of Public Instruction reported 17,179 students experiencing homelessness (defined as children and youths as those who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence) served by the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program in Wisconsin schools for the 2019-2020 school year. The significant drop in students served compared to the previous year (18,349) is attributed to the number of schools that ended in-person schooling during the year.

### **Interagency Council Meetings**

The Interagency Council held four meetings in 2021. Representing agencies and member organizations for Council meetings in 2021 were:

Governor Tony Evers, Chair

Secretary Joel Brennan, Assistant Deputy Secretary Olivia Hwang (Administration)

Secretary Emilie Amundson, Senior Policy Advisor Margaret McMahon, Senior Policy Advisor Jane Penner-Hoppe (Children and Families)

Secretary Kevin Carr (Corrections)

Secretary-designee Karen Timberlake, Department of Medicaid Services Policy Advisor Leah Ramirez (Health Services)

Superintendent Dr. Jill Underly, Chief of Staff Dr. Scott Jones, State Coordinator for the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Kristine Nadolski (Public Instruction)

Executive Director Joaquín Altoro, Deputy Executive Director Kim Plache (Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority)

Deputy Secretary Robert Cherry, Jr., Legislative Liaison Jennifer Cole (Workforce Development)

Secretary Mary Kolar, Director of Bureau of Health Services Colleen Rinken (Veterans Affairs)

Carrie Poser (Wisconsin Balance of State Continuum of Care)

Torrie Kopp Mueller (Dane County Continuum of Care)

Rafael J. Acevedo, Jr. (Milwaukee County Continuum of Care)

Gai Lorenzen, Teresa Reinders (Racine County Continuum of Care)

The activities for the Council for the meetings were:

- **March 24<sup>th</sup>**: Agency and Continuum of Care check-in on COVID-19 response where programs intersected with homeless population, review of DPI and WHEDA workgroup presentations, 2021-2023 Biennium budget, update from DHS on the learning collaborative with Centers for Medicare and Medicaid services for pilot program being developed to provide supportive services for people experiencing homelessness, updates on progress with the Wisconsin Eviction Data Project and homelessness plan update.
- **June 23<sup>rd</sup>**: Agency and Continuum of Care check-in on COVID-19 response where programs intersected with homeless population, homelessness plan update, information on the January 2021 Point-in-Time count.
- **October 20<sup>th</sup>**: Agency and Continuum of Care check-in on COVID-19 response where programs intersected with homeless population, informational from Torrie Kopp Mueller and Carrie Poser on the recent Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project grants awarded by HUD, update on homelessness plan progress
- **December 8<sup>th</sup>**: Agency and Continuum of Care check-in on COVID-19 response where programs intersected with homeless population, adoption of “Welcoming Wisconsin Home” as the State plan on homelessness, approving meeting calendar for 2022

Eight workgroup sessions were held in 2021 on March 11<sup>th</sup>, March 16<sup>th</sup>, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, May 27<sup>th</sup>, July 27<sup>th</sup>, November 9<sup>th</sup>, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, and December 2<sup>nd</sup>. Sessions focused on the following:

- Completion of presentations highlighting agencies that make up the Interagency Council
- Wisconsin Eviction Data Project
- Development and review of Welcoming Wisconsin Home
- Updates on new programming (e.g. Wisconsin Emergency Rental Assistance, Safe Shelter and Homelessness Grants)

## **Response to COVID-19**

The pandemic continued to have a substantial effect on the operations of agencies serving people who experienced homelessness in 2021. Emergency shelters continued to contend with having to serve people while adhering to U.S. Centers for Disease Control Prevention guidelines for social distancing in emergency shelters.

Unsheltered homelessness due to the lack of affordable housing, lack of shelter opportunities, and a myriad of economic and social conditions continued to be a growing concern in Wisconsin in 2021. Agencies serving people experiencing homelessness continue to do heroic work to keep as many people safe as they are able and working to move more people into housing - though many barriers to sustainable housing situations still exist.

State government continues acting to help homeless people and to keep people in housing and out of the homelessness system. These efforts include:

- The Department of Administration’s Division of Energy, Housing and Community Resources (DEHCR) completed its work in allocating over \$32 million in HUD Emergency Solutions Grant funding 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.

- DEHCR launched the Wisconsin Emergency Rental Assistance (WERA) program in February - a partnership with Wisconsin Community Action Program Association agencies throughout the state to use \$322 million in funding provided by the US Department of Treasury from the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 for emergency rental assistance in "non-entitlement areas" (defined in this instance as the entire state - excepting Brown, Dane, Milwaukee and Waukesha Counties as they received their own funding). As of December 30th, over \$95 million has been distributed to assist nearly 25,000 Wisconsin households with rental assistance and assistance for other housing costs. This investment kept those households in housing and out of eviction court.
- On August 24th, Governor Evers announced a new \$200 million Neighborhood Investment Fund program funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to provide funding to local and Tribal governments for making significant investments with long-term benefits in order to help neighborhoods recover from negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Project awards are expected to be announced in early 2022.
- In response to concerns of growing unsheltered homelessness throughout the state as we entered winter, Governor Evers announced on November 16th the creation of the Safe Shelter and Homelessness Grant program with \$6 million in ARPA funds. For this winter, 42 agencies were allocated over \$3.3 million to expand services to bring more people into shelter over the winter.
- The Department of Public Instruction was awarded an additional \$10 million from ARPA funds for the Educating Homeless Children and Youth program. \$1.9 of those funds were distributed through a competitive process to 49 school districts.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs was awarded \$4.2 million from federal VA to make updates to VHRP facilities in Union Grove, Chippewa Falls, and Green Bay – which provide 78 beds for veterans experiencing homelessness. This will allow the facilities to transition from congregate situations to private rooms and private bathrooms. This will allow for safer living quarters.

Among the concerns highlighted, there will need to be continued outreach to get COVID vaccines to people experiencing homelessness - particularly as the Delta and Omicron variants continue to spread throughout Wisconsin.

### **Other Agency Highlights**

Other work agencies did that intersected with service to people experiencing homelessness included:

- On December 20th, the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) and the WHEDA Foundation announced \$1 million in awards in its annual Housing Grant program. 34 agencies were awarded Emergency/Transitional and Permanent Housing grants for projects to assist 865 beds in communities throughout the state.
- Also, in 2021 WHEDA announced the launch of the Wisconsin Supportive Housing Institute - a partnership with the Corporation for Supportive Housing to increase supportive housing development in communities across Wisconsin by training teams on ways to reduce the time it takes to obtain funding for supportive housing by improving the planning and development process.
- In November, the Department of Children and Families launched the Living Independently Through Financial Empowerment with \$14 million in ARPA funds to assist domestic violence survivors whose safety is at risk and assist them in becoming financially empowered to live independent, violence-free lives. This funding could be used to secure independent housing for applicants. The funds were obligated within weeks - with over 4,000 individuals being assisted.
- The Department of Corrections started a program to provide supportive housing beds for persons releasing from prison. \$600,000 was invested in the new model to provide 44 SH beds in Janesville and Milwaukee. In FY 22, \$800,000 will be invested to grow the program in other regions.

## Welcoming Wisconsin Home

This year, we were proud to complete "Welcoming Wisconsin Home: A Statewide Action Plan for Homelessness 2021-2023". This was the result of over two years of work reviewing the previous state plan and included several public meetings and opportunities to provide input and ideas. The Plan will be publicly released in January 2022.

We are particularly proud of achieving two goals we had through the process. One was adding a much-needed section on addressing racial disparities in the homelessness systems and housing markets in Wisconsin. The other was updating the "Performance Metrics" section to include details on responsibilities for implementing strategies, timelines, and (where possible) measurable goals. The plan includes 40 recommendations, which the Council will begin work to implement in 2022.

## Wisconsin Eviction Data Project

In May, the Council launched the Wisconsin Eviction Data Project. For the first time in state history, there is an opportunity for policymakers, advocates, and the public to have access to real-time data on the number of evictions filed and eviction judgements rendered per county, per month.

The purpose of this project was to provide an accurate picture of evictions in Wisconsin to measure the efficacy of programs and policy decisions and to spark community discussions on the number of evictions in local areas and how they affect communities. Additionally, we can use raw data to inform CAP agency partners on who is having evictions filed so they can be directed to interventions such as WERA to avoid eviction judgements. This has helped countless Wisconsin households keep their housing and stay out of the homelessness system. The site can be found at <https://doa.wi.gov/Pages/Wisconsin-Eviction-Data-Project.aspx>.

## Director's Activities

From Michael Basford, Interagency Council on Homelessness Director:

"In the 2019 Interagency Council Annual Report, I highlighted three duties for this position I developed in addition to the statutory requirements. Those duties were:

- ***Establish a relationship with communities and organizations around Wisconsin to understand how homelessness affects every area of Wisconsin, to learn the details of community responses to homelessness, and to provide whatever assistance I can to help these communities fight homelessness;***
- ***Identify areas of policy for focusing state resources; and***
- ***Serve as a conduit between levels of government.***

I continued performing these duties throughout the year, mostly virtually, in service to agencies and communities throughout the state.

In 2021, I participated in the following meetings:

- Adam Smith, Institute for Community Alliances
- August 12: I toured the Reindahl Park homeless encampment in Madison with Brenda Konkel of MACH One Health and met with Mayor Rhodes-Conway and City of Madison Community Development staff.
- Ben Lee, United Way of Marathon County
- Beth Weirick (Milwaukee Downtown BID) and Susan Schmitz (former President of Downtown Madison, Inc.)
- Black Political Social Action of Dane County

- Bridgit Van Belleghem and Kieran Furlong, UW-Madison
- Brown County Homeless and Housing Coalition
- Carrie Craig, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless
- Central Coalition
- Colleen Holmb, Lakeshore CAP
- Consulted with Quentin Hatfield of Wisconsin Veteran’s Network on WERA qualifications for a veteran who is being served by VetsNet
- Consulted with Rep. Schraa’s staff regarding an emergency shelter in the representative’s constituency
- Consulted with Sen. Bernier’s staff on shelter case management
- Coulee Coalition
- Dane County Homeless Services Consortium
- Dane County Outreach Workers Check-In
- Dane County Sheriff Dave Mahoney
- December 7: I gave a presentation for the National Low Income Housing Coalition State Leadership call on the Interagency Council on Homelessness
- Doree Stein and other Kewaunee County homelessness advocates
- Dr. Tyler Caraza-Harter and Gautam Agarwal, UW-Madison Computer Science
- Facilitated meeting with Amin Al-Qadi of FEMA and CoC leads on non-congregate sheltering
- Green Bay/Brown County Affordable Housing Development panel discussion
- Housing Action Coalition of Waukesha County
- I attended the Porchlight Open House for the Single Men’s Shelter at First Street, Madison
- I met with Rep. Hesselbein and her staff on the budget and homelessness issues
- I organized a listening session with Beverly Ebersold from the US Interagency Council on Homelessness and CoC leads
- IRP/DCF Learning Exchange presentation by Dr. Marah Curtis
- Jackie Smith, Housing Action Coalition of Waukesha County
- Joe Mauthe, Pillars Inc., Appleton
- Julie Schwab and Mary Flynn, Restoring Roots
- July 2: I toured the OM Village ‘Tinier House’ community, which was developed on Madison’s Northside at the end of last year.
- July 28-29: I travelled to help Chippewa County with their homeless Point-in-Time count (in Cadott, Boyd, and Stanley) and visit a development Salvation Army is standing up in rural Barron County, Stepping Stones in Menominee, and the West CAP Dunn County office.
- June 23-24: I visited Eau Claire and made agency visits with Chippewa Valley Street Ministry, The Community Table, Sojourner House (with Secretary Brennan joining), Beacon Shelter, and Western Dairyland Economic Opportunity Council.
- June 3rd: I travelled to Milwaukee to meet with Rafael Acevedo of City of Milwaukee, Jim Mathy from Milwaukee County, Quentin Hatfield from Wisconsin Veterans Network, and David Griggs and Greg Davis from OneFiveOlive and toured Claire Hall
- Katie Bonamasso, Corporation for Supportive Housing
- Kevin Burch, Director of Housing for Catholic Charities Diocese of La Crosse
- Lakeshore Coalition
- Madison Deputy Mayor Dr. Linda Vakunta
- May 5th: I travelled to La Crosse to give a presentation to the Badger State Sheriff’s Association on homelessness in Wisconsin and best practices for when homelessness intersects with policing.
- Meeting with Debbie Buchanan of Milwaukee Homeless Veterans Initiative.
- Meetings with a joint City of Madison/Dane County Housing Stability Workgroup

- Meetings with Ashland Mayor Deb Lewis and other Ashland County housing advocates assisting with their efforts to develop an emergency shelter plus additional supports for people experiencing homelessness in Ashland County
- Meetings with WISCAP and WERA administrators
- Met with Abigail Jackson, Senior Planner, and other staff from the State of California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). California is the 2nd state (after Wisconsin) to have an Interagency Council on Homelessness created through legislative action. We discussed unsheltered homeless encampments on DOT property, with me discussing lessons learned from the encampment under the Marquette Interchange in Milwaukee in 2019.
- Met with Bob Palmer of Housing Action Illinois on their recommendations for racial equity in homelessness policy in Illinois
- Met with Doug Kirk of MACH OneHealth
- Met with Marlo Fields of Congressman Pocan's office to discuss HUD programming and potential investments in affordable housing in President Biden's infrastructure plans
- Met with Officer Eric Lemirand of Wausau Police Department
- Met with Rep. Goyke on budget and the Joint Finance Committee process
- Met with Rep. Ohnstad on homelessness issues
- Met with Sen. Agard's staff on affordable housing
- Met with Steven Cook of UW-Madison Institute for Research of Poverty (IRP)
- Met with WHEDA staff and Carrie Poser on administration of Wisconsin's federal Emergency Housing Vouchers
- Milwaukee Downtown BID Community Intervention Team
- Noah Patton, National Low Income Housing Coalition
- November 13: I visited the City of Madison's Sheltered Encampment on Dairy Drive
- November 23: I visited the Sankofa ELU Waunakee shelter
- NWISH Coalition (Forest, Langlade, Oneida and Vilas Counties)
- October 9: I visited the Madison Veterans StandDown and assisted homeless veterans with connecting to services.
- Participated in a meeting with Saul Newton of the Wisconsin Veterans Chamber of Commerce with Dale Darrow of HUD and WHEDA and DVA staff
- Participated in several meetings with the State Medicaid Learning Collaborative
- Professor Kurt Paulsen, UW-Madison
- Racine County Continuum of Care
- Rock County Diversity Action Team
- Rural North Coalition
- Rusty Borkin, Milwaukee Community Land Trust
- September 21-23: I attended the National Alliance to End Homelessness' National Virtual Conference on Ending Homelessness. I attended sessions on City Strategies on Unsheltered Homelessness, Connecting with Voices of Lived Experience, Zoning Laws, Converting Hotels to Housing, Racial Equity, Diversion, Role of Tribes in CoCs, Rural Homelessness, and Connecting People Experiencing Homelessness with Employment.
- September 29: I attended the virtual Wisconsin Housing First Coalition town hall.
- Sharon Pomaville, The Sharing Center Trevor
- Tamarra Coleman, Shalom Center Kenosha
- West-Central Coalition
- Western Dairyland Coalition
- Wisconsin Anti-Human Trafficking Consortium
- Wisconsin Balance of State CoC Board Meetings

In June, I assisted the Department of Public Instruction's Education for Homeless Children and Youth team with their evaluations of applications for the ARP-HCY grants.

A significant amount of time was spent in 2021 working with the State Medicaid Learning Collaborative in advance of the submission of the Medicaid state plan amendment. I fully commend the leadership Leah Ramirez from DHS provided through this process and look forward to CMS approving the amendment and implementing the program in 2022.

Additionally, I would also fully commend the leadership and hard work of Alfred Johnson, John Longo and Robby Stoikes of the Emergency Support Function #6 Team. They continued to organize bi-weekly meetings with the CoC leads, federal partners, and Red Cross to strategize and share information on how homelessness services could be assisted during the pandemic. They organized DHS' monthly Homelessness Forum to provide vital information to providers of services for people experiencing homelessness (<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/preparedness/homelessness.htm>). They were instrumental in the success of our efforts to move emergency shelter workers to Tier 1 for the Covid vaccine rollout. And in the new year they are organizing meetings to continue to troubleshoot local issues with homelessness with state agency representatives.

This fall, I co-authored with Carrie Poser an article for the Housing Assistance Council's *Rural Voices* magazine. "Wisconsin Works to House Rural Residents and Eradicate Homelessness" was published in the magazine's Fall 2021 edition and can be found at <https://ruralhome.org/covid-19-leaves-its-mark-rural-america/>.

In 2022, I plan to continue to work with national agencies like the National Alliance to End Homelessness, National Low-Income Housing Coalition, Corporation for Supportive Housing, Urban Institute and others to explore options to help facilitate development for low-income affordable housing – the availability of which is our largest challenge to our efforts to move people from homelessness into housing.”

### **Looking forward**

The Interagency Council on Homelessness looks forward to the following in 2022:

- Beginning of implementation of the action steps in “Welcoming Wisconsin Home”;
- Continuing our COVID-19 responses to help our most vulnerable in Wisconsin; and
- Return to onsite visits with our partners throughout Wisconsin.