

Develop Emergency Supportive Housing

Homelessness is an ongoing crisis in Illinois, which has been exacerbated by COVID-19. We are in a time of unique opportunity that will shape Illinois’ response to this urgent multisystem crisis and could put us on a path to end homelessness among Illinoisians.

Illinois has an overall need of 10,749 crisis beds in order to appropriately respond to the public crisis of homelessness. Emergency shelters, transitional housing, and other crisis interventions are available, but the state is vastly under resourced to provide crisis intervention Illinoisians who face homelessness. In many areas of the state, fixed-site emergency shelters are complete unavailable. Often, places of worship are used to provide emergency shelter. These shelters rotate nightly, operated entirely by volunteers, and people sleep on basement and gym floors.

There is a need to create additional fixed-site (instead of rotating), non-congregate (private rooms instead of open gyms) emergency supportive housing throughout the state. This emergency housing can be created by acquiring and renovating hotels, dorms and convents; building new facilities; or adapting and improving existing fixed-site emergency shelters to enhance safety and privacy.

The rotating church-based model has never been adequate for many reasons- such as lack of privacy, instability and stress caused by moving nightly, no safe or productive place to be during the daytime, inadequate play and study spaces for children, and dramatically higher risk for the spread of infectious disease. Now, due to the pandemic, this inadequate system has collapsed.

Illinois must invest in a stronger, more resilient crisis housing response.

Crisis Housing Response: Emergency Supportive Housing

It is important to focus on right-sizing community responses to homelessness. Non-congregate emergency supportive housing is an intervention that emphasizes housing-focused case management services, to help reduce trauma and improve exits to permanent housing.

Non-congregate emergency supportive housing models have been extremely successful serving the Hardest to House, leading to permanent housing outcomes for these vulnerable populations. All communities should provide crisis diversion and housing placement services to support the emergency supportive housing intervention.

The ultimate goal is to create efficient and rapid movement through the homeless response system with positive permanent housing outcomes- to end homelessness.

**The statewide
need is
3,329
Emergency
Supportive Housing
beds.**

Projected Program Cost and Statewide Investment Need

	One Bed	Statewide Need
Capital (Acquisition/ Renovation)	\$80,000	\$266,320,000
Operations (Annual)	\$8,000	\$26,632,000
Supportive Services (Annual)	\$7,000	\$23,303,000

****The annual cost of this program is calculated to be \$15,000/unit***

Program Recommendations

Each emergency housing project will require funding for consultants and predevelopment costs (capital for acquisition and renovation, building reserves), operating funding and supportive service funding. *The projected funds needed to support annual costs during a 5 year start up estimates operations needs to be \$133,160,000 and supportive services needs to be \$116,515,000.*

Policy Recommendations

- Center work on Racial Equity and Leadership of people with lived experience of homelessness in Illinois
- Prioritize funding to create new emergency housing in geographic areas with a high level of need that currently do not have fixed-site facilities
- Emergency Supportive Housing should be prioritized and operated by the following evidence-based practices: Housing First, Low Barrier Access, Harm Reduction, Motivational Interviewing, Person Centered, Trauma-Informed Care and other Evidence-Based Practices
- Coordinated entry systems should be utilized:
 - Placement should be limited, and all diversion or prevention interventions should be exhausted.
 - Emergency Supportive Housing should be a prioritized intervention dedicated to the most vulnerable in the community.
 - Eligibility should be determined by local need data
- Funding should be flexible with clear guidance from funder and minimal requirements to achieve regulation compliance. Community policies should be the oversight of these programs.

Procedure Recommendations

- Funding entities should find ways to align resources. Each emergency housing project will require capital for acquisition and renovation, annual operating funding, and annual supportive service funding. These sources may exist in multiple state, county and municipal agencies.
 - Example: Rolling applications that considered with other department applications. Interagency applications.
 - Barriers to applications and allocation should be reduced
- Many homeless service agencies have limited real estate development expertise. As a result, there may be a need to implement the following in order to create emergency supportive housing in some areas:
 - Provide virtual real estate development and property management workshops to educate agency staff and Board members about what to expect when pursuing a project; and
 - Create real estate acquisition and development programs within housing authorities, community development finance institutions or other real estate development entities that can acquire and develop the facilities on behalf of the homeless service agencies that will be the long-term owners and operators.
- Many homeless service agencies have limited cash reserves and may not be in a position to borrow in order to undertake projects. As a result, there is a need to prefund projects rather than using reimbursement-based contracts.
- The Illinois Interagency Task Force on Homelessness should act as an implementation group to streamline processes, align resources, set objectives, and ensure accountability

This is a time to dream big, align our diverse expertise, and ensure that Illinoisians who face a housing crisis have a system that provides them with housing and services that meet both their emergency and permanent needs.