



Improve Infrastructure of and for the Homelessness Response System

Basic organizational and systemic structures can be improved to increase the capacity of Illinois' homelessness response and supportive housing providers- servicing the current pandemic and the ongoing crises of homelessness and housing instability.

Build Capacity of Systems: Coordinated Entry Systems

Coordinated Entry Systems are built at the community level to help people in housing crises access services and housing to meet their needs. If appropriately resourced, this system can implement the strategies created to prevent and ultimately, end homelessness in our communities. These systems exist in every community in Illinois, led by Continuum of Care, and are pieced together by providers who are committed to serving Illinoisians experiencing homelessness. They have no dedicated funding source and are required by federal legislation.

Coordinated Entry Systems have enormous potential. They can be what fill gaps in a spectrum of housing crises and provide a comprehensive housing and service plan for Illinoisians in need. Coordinated Entry should be supported with services like housing navigation and community/mainstream service connection. These systems are platforms to create cross-system partnerships that can resolve multisector challenges.

Effective Coordinated Entry Systems ensure Illinoisians have access to comprehensive and coordinated resources, across many sectors.

Specific opportunities to build Coordinated Entry systems capacity include:

- Housing Navigation
- Supportive Services Staff (i.e. SOAR staff)
- Technical Assistance in Aligning Referral Networks
- Appropriate staff: person assignments

Strengthen Infrastructure to Leverage Funding: Lowering Barriers to Funding Reimbursement

Medicaid is a federal resource available to provide funding for some supportive services. Improving both state systems' and providers' ability to access Medicaid as a revenue source for services can leverage this resource and increase reimbursement to the state. This would increase the state revenues and allow for new funding for supportive services. Providing funding for these improvements would also incentivize cross-system programs, better positioning health and housing to achieve shared objectives.

Housing Navigation is a critical component and emerging best practice of both supportive housing and the homeless response system. This component lacks systemic capacity and resources necessary to allow for its effective and efficient implementation statewide. It is an unmet need and could possibly be scaled appropriately by modelling other statewide initiatives- such as the Community Health Worker

Data Matters- Improve Technology and Data Use

Real time data contributes to effective implementation of strategies to combat homelessness. Data driven decision making is a key component to be successful in responding to the homelessness and housing crises in Illinois.

Data Improvement Opportunity Areas:

- Align state and federal reporting requirements
- Integrate Homeless Management Information Systems data with other data sources (i.e. the State Homeless Reporting Portal)
- Improve the state victim service database infrastructure so that it is a comparable database to Homeless Management Information Systems
- Connect Referral Networks such as Local Coordinated Entry Systems and the State Referral Network & 811



Homelessness Is Systemic Issue- Its Solution Requires a Systemic Response

Federal leadership has helped Illinois providers shift toward a systemic response, adopt important best practices, focus the prioritizing of scarce dedicated funds to the most vulnerable and long-term homeless experiences, and reduce overall homelessness during the last decade. This work was done by incentivizing communitywide strategies and investing in outcome-generating progress.

The State of Illinois can build on this foundation by investing in the systems that are helping Illinoisian, expanding their reach to help a larger universe of Illinoisans in housing crisis, and building capacity so these successful systems can do more.

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.