December 29, 2023

To: Governor Tony Evers
   Richard Champagne, Acting 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-Designee Kathy Blumenfeld (Administration), Secretary Emilie Amundson (Children and Families), Secretary Kevin Carr (Corrections), Secretary-Designee Karen Timberlake (Health Services), Secretary-Designee James Bond (Veterans Affairs), Deputy Secretary Pam McGillivray (Workforce Development), Superintendent Dr. Jill Underly (Public Instruction), Executive Director Elmer Moore (WI Housing and Economic Development Authority), Rafael J. Acevedo, Jr., Teresa Reinders, Torrie Kopp Mueller, Carrie Poser
Wisconsin’s homelessness crisis continued in 2023 with concerning growth in areas throughout the state. The annual point-in-time (PIT) in January 2023 recorded 4,861 people in emergency shelters, transitional housing, Safe Havens, or unsheltered – the highest number recorded since 2018. Of those persons, 476 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. 458 people were counted as experiencing unsheltered homelessness – the highest number recorded since 2012.

The Department of Public Instruction reported 16,454 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 2021-2022 school year. This is a significant increase from the previous school year (whose numbers were affected by the pandemic with changes in the number of students in school and not learning virtually).

Responding to our challenges has been the main work of the Interagency Council on Homelessness. And we’re continuing this response at a time when we are not receiving extra funding for our efforts to end homelessness as we know it in Wisconsin.

**Interagency Council Meetings**

The Interagency Council held four meetings in 2023. Representing agencies and member organizations for Council meetings in 2023 were:

- Lieutenant Governor Sara Rodriguez, Chair
- Secretary-Designee Kathy Blumenfeld (Administration)
- Senior Policy Advisor Jane Penner-Hoppe (Children and Families)
- Secretary Kevin Carr (Corrections)
- Assistant Deputy Secretary Sarah Valencia, Homelessness Services Manager Amy Pulda (Health Services)
- State Coordinator for the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Kristine Nadolski (Public Instruction)
- Executive Director Elmer Moore, Deputy Executive Director Kim Plache (Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority)
- Deputy Secretary Pam McGillivray, Deputy Legislative Liaison Katie Jaeger (Workforce Development)
- Deputy Secretary Christopher McElgunn, Assistant Deputy Secretary Joseph Hoey (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)
- Teresa Reinders (Racine County Continuum of Care)
The activities for the Council for the meetings were:

- April 19th: Department Check-In on programs serving people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity, a presentation from Jana Steinmetz on the Neighborhood Investment Fund, and a presentation from Director Basford on homelessness and housing items in the proposed 2023-25 budget.
- June 28th: Department Check-In on programs serving people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity, a presentation needs of LGBTQ+ community members experiencing homelessness with Brad Schlaikowski of Courage MKE, AJ Hardie of Outreach Madison, and Megin McDonell of Fair Wisconsin with a decision to refer information to Workgroup to study for the statewide plan update next year.
- September 27th: Presentation on the data from the January Point-in-Time count, Follow-up information on efforts to track criminalization of homelessness, Update on statewide plan progress and decision to update plan metrics dates.
- December 13th: Presentation on housing development administered through the Division of Energy, Housing and Community Resources, Decision on accepting the annual report, Approval of meeting calendar for 2024, Information on the calendar for the 2024 statewide plan update, Information on the January 2024 Point-in-Time Count.

Eight workgroup sessions were held in 2022 on January 31st, February 28th, April 25th, May 30th, July 18th, August 29th, October 31st, and November 28th. Sessions focused on the following:

- Informational presentations on providing civil legal services by Colleen Foley of Legal Aid of Wisconsin and Sophie Crispin and Grace Kube of UW-Madison Law School's Eviction Prevention Clinic, a presentation on 2022 Eviction Data, and an update on Welcoming Wisconsin Home progress.
- Discussion on efforts to provide services for LGBTQ+ community members experiencing homelessness with Brad Schlaikowski of Courage MKE in Milwaukee and Steve Starkey and AJ Hardie of Outreach Madison.
- A presentation from Joli Guenther from the Wisconsin Association for Homeless and Runaway Services on their work and potential legislation, and a further discussion on a new workgroup meeting process.
- A review of the potential legislation from the April meeting’s presentation regarding homeless and runaway youth.
- A presentation on the January Point-in-Time numbers, a presentation by the Division of Energy, Housing, and Community Resources (DEHCR) staff on the State Shelter Subsidy Grant program (stating that over 7,500 people have been served as of July 1), and information on the state plan progress.
- A discussion on Strategy 4.8 from the plan (Increasing Income), with information on efforts to connect CoCs with Workforce Development Boards, progress on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) State Plan update, and efforts to educate the public with what is at stake if the Child Care Counts program is not continued funding. Additionally, the Workgroup followed-up on the presentations to the Workgroup and Council earlier this year on specific needs of LGBTQIA+ community members experiencing homelessness (with bringing Fair Wisconsin’s recommendations to a sub-workgroup for considering additions to the state plan update next year), a follow-up on the January PIT count presentation (Dane County has received and is contracting services for funding from HUD for unsheltered homelessness and we will learn of the results of this additional investment), and a follow-up on the recommendations based on the April presentation from the Wisconsin Association of Runaway Services with a recommendation to further study the issues facing runaway and homeless youth and report back to the council by the end of the year on their findings.
- A discussion on Homeless Awareness Month and hospital discharge policies.
- A presentation on Green Bay’s Blueprint to Prevent and End Homelessness with Lydia Van Thiel, Blueprint Implementation Project Director, and information on recent Director visits and progress on the statewide plan.
The State’s Response to Homelessness

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 2023. 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. Point-in-time counts done during 2023 showed an increase in the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness rising.

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

**Administration**
- Shelter beds have increased because of the Neighborhood Investment Fund program awards announced last year. This year we have seen the opening of new shelter facilities in Oshkosh and Menomonie and an expanded shelter in Eau Claire. Neighborhood Investment Funds are also going to the construction of new affordable housing units – which we should see come online during the next two years.
- The Veterans Rental Assistance Program, started at the end of 2022, has spent $2,074 Million and has provided 566 households with veterans emergency rental assistance to stay in housing and avoid eviction court.
- As the Wisconsin Emergency Rental Assistance (WERA) comes to an end, DEHCR reports that over $267 Million was distributed providing over 66,000 households with emergency rental assistance to stay in housing and avoid eviction court since the beginning of the program in 2021.
- The Safe Shelter and Homelessness Grant program assisted over 20,000 people in the 2022-2023 winter period.
- The Recovery Voucher Grant program started in 2023. Through six agencies, 152 people experiencing homelessness with substance abuse disorder diagnoses were provided housing in recovery residences as of November.

**Children and Families**
- The Permanent Connections, Academics, Training and Employment, Housing Social and Emotional Well-being (PATHS) program provided 112 youth housing in 2022.
- The Family Keys program, a pilot program in La Crosse, Marathon, and Wood Counties through a partnership with Casey Family Programs and the Corporation for Supportive Housing to keep families together through housing stability supports, has been reporting initial success working toward intended outcomes:
  - More families able to remain together.
  - Faster reunifications for families who were separated due to housing barriers.
  - Stakeholder partnerships have more than doubled, and landlord relationships have increased 3x, in some counties.
  - The innovative partnerships are leading to cost savings, as communities are finding other, less expensive ways to meet family needs.
  - Over 90% of individuals served reported they felt they had a choice in their housing solutions.
  - Most of the families served by this program are exiting to positive outcomes (housing stability, families reunified, families no longer needing supports)
  - More specific data on this effort will be available in 2024.
- The Domestic Violence Housing First program, a program centered on housing DV survivors, continues to operate in nine locations throughout the state.

**Corrections**
- In FY23, Department of Corrections spent $7.6 Million for housing services. Among this was $4.8 Million was spent on transitional housing, $1.4 Million was spent For Supportive Housing, $800,000 was spent for short-term housing and $477,000 was spent Emergency Housing.
- 63,000 are on community supervision.
Thanks to increases in the budget, the Opening Avenues to Reentry Success (OARS), a program to provide supports for prisoners with severe mental illness diagnoses reintegrating back to communities, will operate statewide.

**Health Services**
- Work continued on the Medicaid 1915(i) exemption to provide people experiencing homelessness housing supports through Medicaid. The exemption should be approved by the end of 2023 to start providing services in 2024.
- A partnership with Lead Safe Homes began on May 1st to provide lead abatement services for affordable homes.
- DHS continues to hold monthly Homelessness Forum webinars. Forum topics in 2023 included Resources to Support Wisconsin’s Medicaid Programs Return to Routine Operations, Street Outreach, Housing Services through the Department of Corrections, De-escalating Challenging Behavior, Recovery Voucher Grant program, and Peer Services.
- The CHIP HSI program started on May 1st. This program provides housing supports through the CHIP program for families with children and people who are pregnant.

**Public Instruction**
- The Educating Homeless Children and Youth program awarded $1.27 Million in Innovation and Compliance grants to 40 school districts throughout the state.

**Veterans Affairs**
- The Veterans Housing and Recovery Program received approval in October for a $1.8 Million project to perform maintenance and repairs for the Veterans Home at Union Grove in Racine County. In FY2023, 201 veterans were provided transitional housing through VHRP – with 75 veterans exiting to permanent housing.
- The Veterans Outreach and Recovery Program, with additional ARPA funding, was expanded from 11 to 16 regions to provide services for veterans experiencing homelessness. In FY2023, 313 veterans were provided services through VORP – with 118 veterans receiving housing referral services. The Governor’s proposed budget included GPR funding to continue the expanded VORP positions when ARPA funding ends on December 31st, 2024. The Republican Legislature did not include that funding in their final budget.

**Workforce Development**
- The Workforce Solutions Initiative, a $158 Million investment into solutions to address the state's workforce needs and support innovative pandemic recovery efforts, assisted many people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity:
  - The Workforce Innovation Grant Program, designed to help the regions of Wisconsin solve their most pressing workforce challenges by financially supporting collaborative, sustainable and innovative pandemic-recovery plans developed by regional organizations, served over 11,000 people in 2023. Projects funded through this program include: Lac Courte Oreilles received funding for developing water infrastructure for tribal workforce housing units. United Way of Door County is using funds to purchase 10 vacant lots in Sister Bay to develop affordable housing. Northwood Technical College is using funds to develop workforce housing in rural areas that will also include co-located classrooms to provide educational services for residents.
  - The Worker Advancement Initiative, designed to serve people whose jobs have not come back since the pandemic, as well as those who were not attached to or were not successful in the labor market prior to the pandemic, by offering subsidized employment and skills training opportunities with local employers, provided 17,000 services for 3,500 people.
  - The Worker Connection program, designed to provide free navigation services to expand career opportunities in Milwaukee and Green Bay areas, have served 75 clients experiencing homelessness since June.
  - The Veteran Employment Services program, assisted 25 veterans experiencing homelessness since July.
The WHEDA Foundation announced that in 2023 there will be $2 Million awarded for the second year in a row for the Housing Grant Program. This will provide resources for construction/maintenance/repair programs for Emergency/Transitional housing and Permanent Housing programs.

Through Housing Trust Fund and Capital Magnet Fund programs, 27 projects were awarded funding to help create 1,413 low-income units.

Through bipartisan legislation, four programs were created to provide workforce housing. These programs will create housing starting in 2024:

- **Restore Main Street Loan program** – a competitive loan program allows an owner of rental housing to apply for a loan to cover the costs to improve housing located on the second or third floors of an existing building with commercial space on the ground level.
- **Vacancy-to-Vitality Loan program** – a competitive loan program allows a developer to apply for a loan to help cover the cost of converting a vacant commercial building to workforce housing or senior housing.
- **Infrastructure Access Loan program** – a competitive loan program allows a residential housing developer to apply for a loan to cover the costs of installing, replacing, upgrading, or improving public infrastructure related to workforce housing or senior housing.
- **Home Repair and Rehab Loan program** – a modifications to the Workforce Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program administered by WHEDA. This program will provide repair and rehab loans to qualified homeowners.

"Welcoming Wisconsin Home: A Statewide Action Plan for Homelessness 2021-2023" was officially launched in February 2022. In 2024 we look forward to completing a number of unfinished action steps and update the plan for 2025-2027.

**Evictions in Wisconsin**

The Wisconsin Eviction Data Project, launched in May 2021, continues to be a valuable resource for understanding the trends in eviction filings and judgements in every county of the state. We also continue to supply our CAP agency partners with weekly information on who has been filed on for eviction so that they can reach out and help with housing stability services – helping Wisconsin households keep their housing, stay out of eviction courts, and keep out of entering the homelessness system.

2023 saw the end of the Wisconsin Emergency Rental Assistance program. Since its beginning in 2021, over $267 Million in ARPA funds were spent to assist over 66,000 households in Wisconsin. As a result of the program coming to an end, we have seen increases in the numbers of eviction filings and judgments. For January through November, there have been 26,110 eviction filings – putting us on pace for the highest number of filings since we started tracking data in 2019. There have also been 1,848 judgments – the highest number of judgments since 2020.
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 December 2022 and in 2023, I participated in the following meetings and events:

December 19th – I met with Colleen Foley of Legal Aid of Wisconsin and Samantha DiDomenico of Stout to review data for report on Eviction Free MKE civil counsel program.

December 20th – I travelled to Bad River Tribe in Odanah to participate in the DOA/DOC tribal consult to discuss housing and homelessness with representatives from Wisconsin’s tribal nations.

January 10th – I participated in USICH’s webinar on the “All In” federal plan on homelessness.

January 13th – I met with community members from Dodge County to discuss homelessness issues in Dodge County and potential solutions for the communities there.

January 19th – I travelled to Milwaukee to participate in the monthly Milwaukee Downtown BID Crisis Intervention Team, toured Soldiers Home, and visited Courage MKE to tour their facilities.

January 25th – I travelled to Green Bay to participate in the Point-in-Time count.

January 31st – I met with Harvard Kennedy School’s Government Performance Lab staff with Carrie Poser and Torrie Kopp Mueller to discuss partnership on potential homelessness policy project.

February 3rd – I met with Stephanie Kaple, Director for the Interagency Council on Homelessness for Savannah, GA to discuss common issues and goals for preventing and ending homelessness.

February 10th – I presented to the Balance of State Continuum of Care’s quarterly board meeting on ICH’s progress in the last quarter.

February 13th – I met with Joselyn Lopez of Department of Corrections and Ryan Graham of Balance of State CoC to discuss further collaboration between CoCs and DOC.

February 17th – I briefed incoming Secretary-designee James Bond at Department of Veteran Affairs on the ICH.

February 27th – I met with Marcee Doherty-Est, a doctoral student at Cardinal Stritch University, on her research project on the needs of people experiencing homelessness with pets.
March 17th – I met with Erin Gaede, a doctoral student at UW-Madison, on her research project on homelessness in Wisconsin.

March 21st – I traveled to Port Washington to meet with the Ozaukee County Homelessness Coalition and tour the new Family Promise shelter, which was opened thanks to CDBG-CV funding. I also went to Milwaukee for the monthly Milwaukee Downtown BID Crisis Intervention Team.

March 27th – I participated in a call with statewide tribal housing leaders hosted by Department of Administration.

April 3rd – I met with Sharon Pomaville of The Sharing Center (Trevor) to discuss potential affordable housing development in rural Kenosha County.

April 4th – I travelled to Rice Lake to visit a transitional housing facility being developed by the Salvation Army with Governor Evers and Secretary Blumenfeld.

April 18th – I gave a presentation on the housing and homelessness items in the Governor’s budget for the Wisconsin Housing First Coalition’s Advocacy Day in Madison.

April 20th – I visited St. Katherine Drexel's Shelter in Fond du Lac.

April 25th – I gave a presentation on the Interagency Council for a group of housing advocates in Clark County.

April 27th – I visited the Day-by-Day shelter and Tiny House Village in Oshkosh with Secretary Blumenfeld.

May 2nd – I visited The Road Home in Madison and met with agency staff.

May 9th – I gave a presentation on the Interagency Council for Housing Advocacy Team of Stoughton.

May 10th – I gave a presentation on the Interagency Council for the Dane County Homeless Services Consortium’s Education and Advocacy committee.

May 11th – I attended the Grand Opening of the Day-by-Day shelter in Oshkosh.

May 17th – I participated in the US Interagency Council on Homelessness’ State ICH Quarterly meeting.

May 22nd – I met with Ann Cartlett of Solace – a hospice care home for people experiencing homelessness being started in Madison.

May 23rd – I attended the Wisconsin Non-Driver Advisory Committee’s biannual meeting. I have been asked by DOT Secretary Craig Thompson to participate in this committee.

May 24th – I assisted DPI with their Educating Homeless Children and Youth grant application scoring.

May 25th – I met with Tamarra Coleman of Shalom Center in Kenosha.

May 26th – I met with the Veterans Community Project from Kansas City. They will be taking over development of the veterans tiny home community at North 60th in Milwaukee.

June 7th – I met with Jesse Dirkman of Institute for Community Alliances regarding a couple projects that could require HMIS data.
June 13th – I met with Lu Scheer – Housing Grant Specialist for Winnebago County.

June 22nd – I attended the Milwaukee CoC in-person meeting.

June 29th – Eau Claire: I attended the Sojourner House expansion opening with Governor Evers. Sojourner House’s expansion was funded in part by a Neighborhood Investment Fund program. I also visited The Community Table and met with Executive Director TJ Atkins and I also visited Western Dairyland Economic Opportunity Council and met with Jeanne Semb, Housing Services Program Manager.

June 30th – I visited the new Community Partners Campus in Wausau, toured the new Catholic Charities Warming Center and met with Diane Sennholz, Executive Director of North Central Community Action Program. I also visited the Eagle’s Nest shelter run by the Menominee Nation in Neopit and met with Joel Whitehouse of the Menominee Tribal Housing Department. I also visited Shawano Area Matthew 25 shelter in Shawano and met with Christine Ciucci, Resource Manager, and Muffy Culhaine, Board President.

July 19th, 20th – Oshkosh: I attended A Home For Everyone and presented on the state plan with Jeff Olivet, Executive Director for the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness.

July 26th – Eau Claire: I assisted in the summer Point-in-Time count.

August 1st – Met with U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan and staff to discuss federal housing funding and needs for Wisconsin.

August 2nd – Met with Cathy ten Broeke, Executive Director for the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness to discuss creating an Upper Midwest homelessness consortium.

August 10th – Milwaukee: I met with staff from the Veterans Community Project – the organization that is developing a tiny home community for veterans experiencing homelessness in Milwaukee.

August 11th – I gave a presentation for the Wisconsin Balance of State Continuum of Care quarterly board meeting.

August 18th – I met with Ben Hutterer and Justin Williams of Senator Tammy Baldwin’s office with Cheryl Detrick of Newcap and Meredith McCoy of the Balance of State CoC on issues with the effects of Fair Market Rent rates with leasing programs.

September 6th – I participated in the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness’ quarterly State Leadership meeting.

September 25th – I visited Milwaukee with a landlord engagement group organized through United Way of Dane County and attended meetings at United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha Counties and at Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee.

September 27th and 28th – I participated in the Poverty Matters conference in La Crosse and met with Brian Sampson – the Homelessness Coordinator for the City of La Crosse.

October 11th – I appeared on Wisconsin Public Radio to talk about “Welcoming Wisconsin Home” and the state of homelessness in Wisconsin.

October 19th – I visited Milwaukee for their annual Project Homeless Connect service day at Marquette University campus and Green Bay to participate in a roundtable discussion on homelessness with La
November 3rd – Met with Shunti Taylor, Deputy Director of the State of Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts to talk about homelessness in Wisconsin and our state’s response to the crisis.

November 6th – Participated in a meeting with the Corporation for Supportive Housing on Family Homelessness in Wisconsin

November 13th – I visited House of Mercy in Loyal and met with Judy Morrow. I then gave a speech on Homelessness in Wisconsin with the Neillsville Kiwanis Club.

November 14th – I visited Hope Village in Chippewa Falls, Northwoods Homeless Shelters in Amery, and attended the opening of the new shelter at Stepping Stones in Menomonee.

November 15th – I visited Northwest Community Services Agency in Superior and met with Mille Rounsville and visited a new shelter in progress to be operated by Harbor House. I also visited the Red Cliff Tribe and met with Ray DePerry, Executive Director of Red Cliff Chippewa Housing Authority, and with Nicole Gurnoe, Director of the Behavioral Health Department at Red Cliff Community Health Center.

November 16th – I visited the Bad River Tribe of Odanah and met with Chairman Robert Blanchard.

November 17th – I visited the Wausau Police Department and met with Tracy Rieger, Community Outreach Specialist, Lieutenant Nathan Cihlar and Wausau PD staff to discuss the department’s response to homelessness in Marathon County.

November 29th – I travelled to the Ho-Chunk Nation in Black River Falls to participate in the DOA/DOC tribal consult to discuss housing and homelessness with representatives from Wisconsin’s tribal nations.

November 30th - I attended the Wisconsin Non-Driver Advisory Committee’s biannual meeting.

December 6th – I attended the Bad River Planning Team’s meeting to learn about the tribe’s housing development plans.

We continue working with the Emergency Support Function #6 Team for the monthly Homelessness Forum presentations that provide vital information to providers of services for people experiencing homelessness. These regular meetings bring in dozens of people from around the state.

In 2024, 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 efforts to move people from homelessness into housing.”

Looking forward

The Interagency Council on Homelessness looks forward to the following in 2024:

- Continuing to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable in Wisconsin through the legislative agenda;
- Continuing our progress on action items in Welcoming Wisconsin Home while working on the plan update; and
- Continuing onsite visits with our partners throughout Wisconsin.