

# Combating Homelessness In New Jersey

*Governor Christie Has A Proven Record Of Reform That Has Dramatically Reduced New Jersey's Homeless Population*

*"Reducing homelessness continues to be a critical priority for my administration, and I want to personally thank the Interagency Council for undertaking a very challenging mission that has provided me with important, thought-provoking recommendations. We recognize that homelessness has many causes and the solutions to this issue must be comprehensive. I am confident that the Working Group I am creating today will play an integral role in moving state government forward in a more coordinated and strategic manner as we work with our partners to combat homelessness"*

– Governor Chris Christie, April 24, 2015

## **The Housing First Initiative: Building On A Record Of Innovation And Leadership To Combat Homelessness In New Jersey**

Reinforcing the Governor's commitment to end homelessness and support the most vulnerable members of our society, Governor Christie today announced the availability of 500 new State Rental Assistance Program (SRAP) vouchers for chronically homeless individuals and/or families who are high utilizers of public systems through a new Statewide Housing First Program.

- Governor Christie also praised the early success of the DCA-DCF initiative "Keeping Families Together," which uses Housing Choice Vouchers to prevent the separation of children from their parents due to the parents' housing instability.

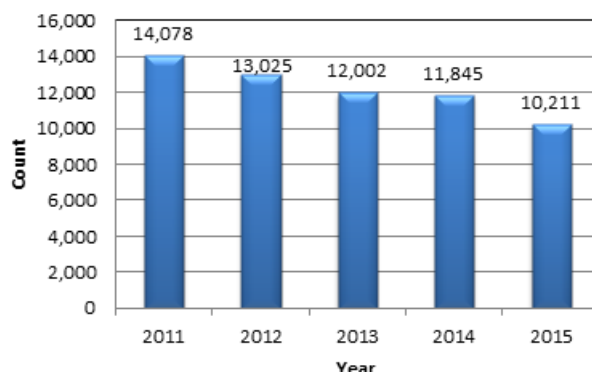
Housing First is a nationally recognized approach to ending homelessness that was endorsed by the Governor's Interagency Council on Homelessness in their December 2014 report. Shortly after, DCA began its first demonstration project by committing 50 vouchers to the Camden Housing First Initiative, proposed by the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers. Housing First programs have been successful in keeping the costliest, most vulnerable, long-term and chronically homeless patients stably housed, dramatically reducing unnecessary hospitalizations, emergency room visits and incarcerations.

## **Proven Results Of The Administration's Commitment To Combating Homelessness**

From the beginning of his Administration, Governor Chris Christie has been committed to identifying and addressing the needs of homeless New Jerseyans across the state. As part of a long-term plan to help assist those individuals affected by homelessness and to prevent homelessness from taking hold in the future, Governor Christie has continuously protected the state's most vulnerable citizens by providing funding to a variety of housing assistance programs, creating the Interagency Council on Homelessness, expanding the Veterans Haven program, and forming a Working Group to further explore ways in which to reduce and prevent homelessness in New Jersey.

Since Governor Christie took office, homelessness in New Jersey has steadily declined. The overall homeless population in New Jersey has decreased at an average rate of **7.6 percent** per year over the last 5 years. [\(2015-2019 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice, 7/16/2015\)](#)

### Homelessness in New Jersey from 2011 - 2015



The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2015 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress Showed That Nearly 1,600 Fewer People Were Homeless In New Jersey In 2015 versus 2014. "The 13.5-percent decrease underscores a dramatic continued drop in the number of people living on the streets, both in the Garden State and nationwide. The 2015 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress shows that homelessness decreased by 11 percent, or 12,000 people, in the U.S. The report estimates that 565,000 were homeless on a single night in January. In New Jersey, that figure is 10,100, which is 41.7 percent lower than in 2007." (Russ Zimmer, "Report: Homelessness down in NJ," *Asbury Park Press*, 11/19/15)

- Homelessness declined in 33 states and the District of Columbia between 2014 and 2015... Other states with large declines over the past year were ... **New Jersey (-13.5%)**.
- Homelessness declined in 32 states between 2007 and 2015... Other states with large declines were ... **New Jersey (-41.7%)**.
- New Jersey also reduced the number of homeless people in families with children by more than **25 percent** between 2014 and 2015.
- States with the greatest reductions in the number of homeless people in families with children between 2007 and 2015 were... **New Jersey (-53.1%)** (*The 2015 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress*, 11/2015)

### Providing The Necessary Housing Assistance To Those In Need

Governor Christie's fiscal year 2017 budget reaffirms his commitment to protecting the state's most vulnerable citizens by maintaining funding for a variety of housing assistance for low-income New Jerseyans.

**State Rental Assistance Program (SRAP).** Governor Christie continues funding for SRAP at **\$18.5 million** in fiscal year 2017, which helps low-income residents afford housing by providing rental assistance grants to individuals and families.

**Homelessness Prevention Program.** This program provides financial assistance to low- and moderate-income tenants and homeowners in imminent danger of eviction or foreclosure due to temporary financial problems beyond their control. Governor Christie's fiscal year 2017 budget protects funding at **\$4.4 million**.

**Shelter Assistance.** Since fiscal year 2014, the Christie Administration has provided **\$2.3 million** annually in assistance to homeless shelters in the state.

**Social Services for the Homeless (SSH).** This program provides financial assistance to homeless individuals and families and those at risk of homelessness. It is administered by the state through the counties. The fiscal year 2017

budget calls for **\$17 million** in SSH funds, which is the same as fiscal 2016 level.

**Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Emergency Assistance (EA).** The Governor's fiscal year 2017 budget calls for approximately \$21 million for Emergency Assistance which provides temporary housing and shelter-related assistance for people who are eligible for SSI. In fiscal years 2015 and 2016 over **\$43.6 million** has gone to help prevent homelessness by paying for back rent or mortgage; provide temporary support for ongoing housing costs, such as rent or emergency shelter for up to one year, with the possibility of two six-month extensions; and set up a household, by paying for moving expenses, security deposits, and furniture.

**Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH).** The Governor's fiscal year 2017 budget provides a total of **\$4.3 million** for PATH which is a statewide program administered through the counties. The program provides adult case management services to residents who are 18 years of age or older, have a serious and persistent mental illness, and are homeless or at risk of being homeless. The program funding is a combination of State and federal dollars and since fiscal year 2014 the Christie Administration has committed \$7.4 million of State resources to the program.

**Supportive Housing and Housing Subsidies for Individuals with Mental Illness at Risk of Homelessness.** Since taking office, Governor Christie has invested more than \$6.15 million state dollars for nearly 300 placements.

In addition, the Christie Administration is working to address homelessness beyond the budget process:

**Shelter Support Grants:** Since taking office, the Christie Administration has awarded 149 Shelter Support grants totaling \$18,292,567 in both state and federal funding to nonprofit and local government agencies operating emergency homeless shelters and transitional housing facilities located throughout New Jersey.

**Homelessness Prevention Grants:** Since taking office, the Christie Administration has awarded 54 Homelessness Prevention grants totaling \$13,953,093 to nonprofit agencies administering Homelessness Prevention Programs.

- The agencies use the state-funded grants to provide assistance to low and moderate-income tenants who are in imminent danger of eviction because of temporary or extraordinary financial circumstances.

### **Combating Homelessness In A More Efficient, Coordinated And Strategic Manner**

In April 2012, Governor Chris Christie signed Executive Order 92 creating the Interagency Council on Homelessness as part of the administration's commitment to protecting the most vulnerable New Jerseyans. The Governor's action brought state government leaders and community stakeholders together in a more efficient, coordinated and strategic manner around the goal of combating homelessness in the state.

The Council was tasked with better identifying the needs of homeless New Jerseyans and creating a long term plan to help assist those individuals affected by homelessness. The Council's work produced a report with a thorough evaluation of impediments to the effective delivery of services to homeless individuals and families as well as recommendations to improve programs and policies to better utilize state resources for homelessness and homelessness prevention.

Acting on recommendations from the Council, Governor Chris Christie announced in April 2015 the formation of a Working Group to further explore ways in which to reduce and prevent homelessness in New Jersey. Specifically, the Working Group will consider implementation of the proposals put forth by the Council, including housing first policies, rapid re-housing, and improved coordination among state agencies and social service providers that deliver key services to homeless individuals and families and those at risk of homelessness.

### **Expansion Of The Veterans Haven Program**

In September 2013, the Christie Administration expanded the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs successful Veterans Haven program to provide access to veterans in the northern part of the state in addition to the southern part of the state, doubling the capacity. The Veterans Transitional Housing Program – Veterans Haven – is a facility for homeless veterans. After being medically evaluated at a VA Medical Center, eligible veterans participate in a long-term program focusing on psychological, social and vocational rehabilitation.

The Veterans Haven facilities provide vocational counselors to help veterans become employment ready, social workers for those in need of individual counseling, on-staff nurses to assist veterans in need of medication and healthcare coordination.

- Since opening in 2013, Veterans Haven North, located in Hunterdon County, has successfully guided more than 75% population into more stabilized lives and permanent residency.
- The Veterans Haven facility in Camden County has helped nearly a thousand homeless veterans since opening in 1995.
  - Three of every four veterans who complete the program remain off the streets for good and return to purposeful lives.
  - The facility underwent a 20,000-square-foot expansion to serve an additional 44 homeless veterans.

### **Stand Down**

Community Hope, DMAVA, and the Department of Labor Workforce Development work throughout the year to host Stand Down events, which help our Homeless Veteran population. DMAVA's events take place twice each year, one in the Southern part of the State and one in the Northern part of the State. These events typically provide services to 800 veterans annually. These events provide veterans with access to basic physical needs such as food, clothing, shelter, and medical support as well as social services, veteran benefits, employment assistance, addiction counseling and legal services.

- Stand Down is a military term used when service members are removed from combat to rehabilitate and rest. Today, Stand Downs are grass roots, community-based intervention programs to help homeless veterans battle life on the streets.
- The Christie Administration has regularly hosted and participated in veteran-focused events including Stand Downs, dozens of veteran employment fairs and conferences designed to help employers connect with veteran services. The administration also has joined with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Legion and other sponsors to support "Hiring Our Heroes" events, as well as helping to connect military personnel with quality career and training opportunities in the building and construction trade.