
Maine Homeless Policy Committee – 2019 Legislative Agenda

Maine is making progress towards ending homelessness. In order to maintain this progress and achieve this goals, access to and funding for affordable housing, rental subsidies, and services for people experiencing homelessness is essential.

LD 1201, An Act To Create a Low-barrier, Permanent Housing Rental Subsidy for Individuals in the State Experiencing Long-term Homelessness – Rep. Dick Farnsworth - This bill establishes a rental subsidy program within the Maine State Housing Authority for persons experiencing long-term homelessness. The rental subsidy program provides a rental subsidy and housing retention services to a person eligible for the program.

LD 48, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue To Invest in Housing for Persons Who Are Homeless – Rep. Michael Brennan - *\$15 million bond referendum.* This bill would authorize a \$15 million bond, to go to referendum, to invest in the creation of housing for people experiencing homelessness, to be administered by MaineHousing.

LD, 775, An Act To Expand Community Support Services for Certain Adult Members of the MaineCare Program – Rep. Gramlich. This bill directs the Department of Health and Human Services to amend its rules in Chapter 101: MaineCare Benefits Manual, Chapter II, Section 17, Community Support Services to include access to services to persons who have a diagnosis of bipolar disorder, major depressive disorder, panic disorder or post-traumatic stress disorder. In practice, this would revert back to the previous Section 17 (pre-March 2016) eligibility criteria, removing barriers for people experiencing homelessness to access Section 17 services, and as a result the Bridging Rental Assistance Program (BRAP).

LD 1404, Resolve, To Require the Department of Health and Human Services To Request a Medicaid Waiver Relating to Support Services and Provide Funds to Prevent Homelessness – Rep. Michael Brennan. This resolve requires DHHS to apply to CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) for a waiver from the requirements of federal law and regulations to allow Maine to provide Medicaid-funded direct support services to individuals experiencing homelessness. In addition, the bill provides ongoing funds (\$500,000 annually) to the Housing First Assistance Program established within the Maine State Housing Authority to be distributed to community action agencies to assist individuals on the verge of becoming homeless.

LD 195, An Act To Continue MaineCare Coverage for Parents During the Rehabilitation and Reunification Process – Rep. Patty Hymanson. This bill would require DHHS to continue to provide MaineCare coverage to parents who are MaineCare members while they are participating in reunification efforts with child welfare. Currently if a qualifying child is removed, the parent is no longer eligible for MaineCare and DHHS must then approve and pay for any services based on the reunification plan. This often leads to parents experiencing gaps in services during the transition as well as loss of other critical supports. This results in parent treatment services being paid entirely through state general funds. When parent services are paid using MaineCare, the state only pays a third of the costs due to federal match.

LR 1030, An Act To Ensure the Quality of and Increase Access to Recovery Residences – Sen. Shenna Bellows. This bill would establish standards for recovery residences based on those established by the National Alliance for Recovery Residences, and create a pilot rental subsidy program for people experiencing homelessness with a substance use disorder (SUD).

LD 1337, An Act To Save Lives by Establishing a Homeless Opioid Users Service Engagement Project within the Department of Health and Human Services (HOUSE) – Rep. Gattine. This bill will establish and fund a program to support recovery and create stability for people using opioids who are among the most vulnerable in Maine. This program will address the intersection of the opioid and homelessness crises by providing rapid access to low barrier treatment for substance use disorders, intensive case management, and a housing assistance fund to support stable housing.

Maine Homeless Policy Committee – Factsheet on Homelessness in Maine

State Fiscal Year 2018 - 7/1/2017 – 6/30/18

In Maine, approximately 98% of people who experience homelessness show up in emergency shelters. Two percent or less stay outside or in places unfit for human habitation. Both are counted by HMIS Emergency Shelter Data.

Highlights:

- **6,454 people were homeless in 2017** vs. 6,373 in 2017, a slight increase of 1%, but 8% less than 2016.
- There was a **slight increase in the average length of stay** in 2018, but a 17% decrease since 2016.
- There was a **5% decrease in Veterans experiencing homelessness** in 2018 vs 2017.
- There has been a **76% decrease in single adult Long Term Stayers since 2013: 63 people** in 2018 vs 262 in 2013.

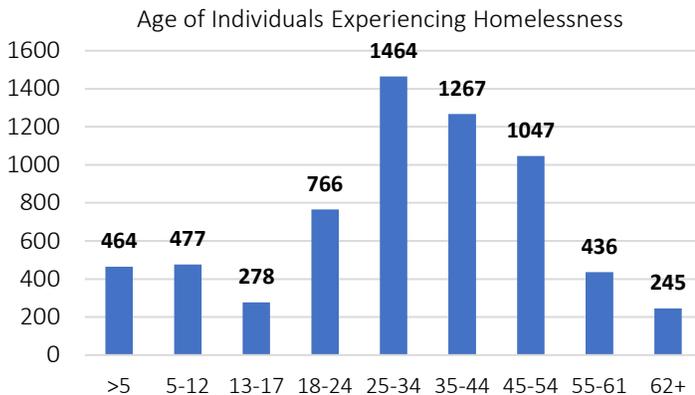
FY 2018 statewide totals: In FY 18 there were: **6,454 unique individuals who experienced homelessness** at some point during the year (vs. 6,373 in FY 17, and 7,020 in FY 16). The composition of households experiencing homelessness in FY 18:

- **88% of households did not have children**
- **10% of households had at least one child**
- **2% of households were children only (unaccompanied youth)**

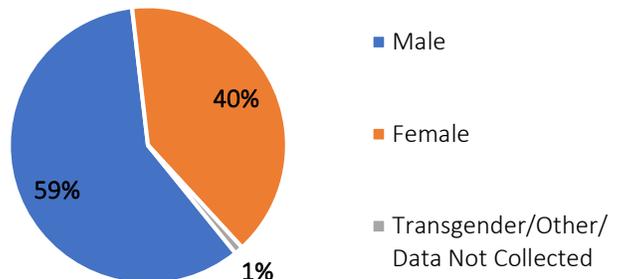
Changes over time: In FY 18 there was:

- A slight (1%) increase in people experiencing homelessness (81 people) compared to FY 17. FY 18 is 8% below FY 16 (566 less people).
- A 3-day increase in the average length of time people remain in homelessness compared to FY 17, likely related to a very tight housing market. This represents a 17% decrease vs. FY 16 (a 13-day reduction over two years).
- A 5% reduction in Veterans experiencing homelessness on Maine’s By-Name List. As of 7/30/18, only 73 people remained on the By-Name List, 18 of whom (25%) were chronically homeless.

Demographic Information for the 6,373 people who experienced homelessness in FY 2018:



Gender of Individuals Experiencing Homelessness



Maine’s Long Term Stayers: Long Term Stayers (LTS) were originally defined as people staying more than 180 cumulative days in shelters or outdoors within a 365-day period. Because of the success in housing this population, the definition was amended in March 2016 to the longest stayer in homelessness in shelters or outside as determined by local shelters and homeless outreach providers for all parts of Maine except Portland. Portland has retained the original definition.

Overall, LTS represent 1.3% of the overall population, down from 5% of the population in 2013.

- 63 LTS were single individuals, down from 70 in July of 2017, a 10% decrease.
- 21 LTS were people within homeless families, down from 29 in July 2017, a 28% decrease.

Urban LTS Statistics: In 2018 there were 74 LTS (including people in families) in urban locations (88% of the total LTS). 85 percent of these were in Portland and Bangor (76% Portland, 9% Bangor). By city:

Augusta – 3 (down from 5 in 2017)

Bangor – 7 (down from 9 in 2017)

Brunswick – 6 (down from 18 in 2017)

Lewiston – 2 (up from 0 in 2017)

Portland – 56 (up from 50 in 2017)

Waterville – 0 (down from 2 in 2017)

Rural LTS Statistics: As of June 30th, 10 LTS (including people in families) were in rural locations (12% of the total LTS). Rural shelters are defined as any program based in a community which is not listed as urban (Augusta, Bangor, Brunswick, Lewiston, Portland, and Waterville). Unlike urban shelters, all rural shelters serve families, and none serve single adults exclusively.