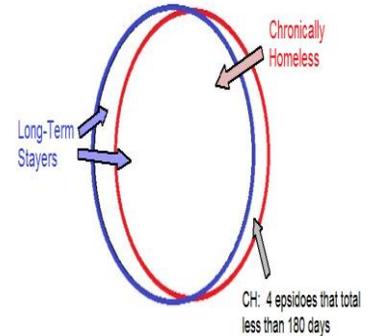
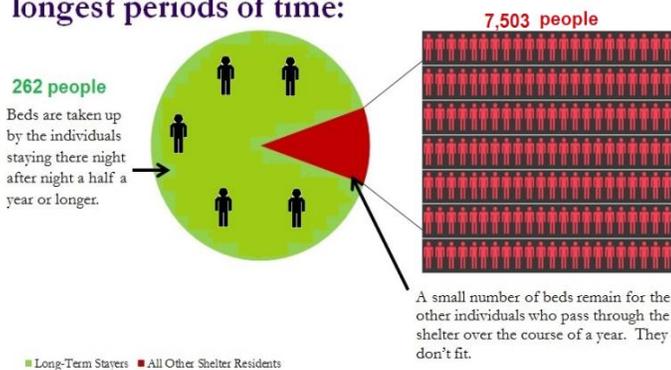


# Maine's Long Term Stayers Initiative – Adopted by the Statewide Homeless Council, the Regions I, II, and III Homeless Councils, the Maine Continuum of Care, and the Portland Continuum of Care

In Maine, the HUD Definition of Chronic Homelessness seems to only apply well in Portland and Bangor. This has kept Maine from ending Chronic and Long Term Homelessness. To solve the issue, the Statewide Homeless Council has developed a different classification to highlight the same people. “Long Term Stayers” are defined as people staying over 180 cumulative days in shelters (or outdoors) within a 365 day period (not necessarily consecutive). This is essentially the same group as Chronically Homeless<sup>1</sup> but the new definition works all over the state. Long Term Stayers represent a relatively small portion of the homeless population – about 5%. This group has been disproportionately expensive to serve because of frequent use of very expensive emergency services including police, fire, rescue, emergency medical response personnel, detoxification, hospitalizations, and emergency room visits. This group tends to clog homeless shelters because of consumption of a large chunk of shelter beds night after night (bed nights).



## Targeting people who are homeless for the longest periods of time:



The Statewide Homeless Council has developed a plan to target the Long Term Stayers. From 7/1/12 to 6/30/13 there were 262 Long Term Stayers across the state, based on data from the Maine Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS). This number will fluctuate a bit as we better count unsheltered individuals, but if we divide 262 by 4 we have 66 people. Housing 66 people each year for the next four years is achievable. Divided again by 14 service center communities we reach single digits in nearly all communities – easier still. The plan is to break it down to very feasible individual community efforts over the next 4 years, and get it done. Key to accomplishing this is focusing resources on the right people:

- Most people in shelters stay less than two weeks – up to 55% of adult singles, and many families pass through shelters quickly. Even though they are the easiest to engage and house, we won't focus on them. They tend to solve their temporary homelessness with little to no help.
- People who stay over two weeks but less than 6 months will get some of our focus now, and our full attention later. We will provide properly titrated rapid re-housing support to them over the next year in the community.
- But first, our primary focus will be on Long Term Stayers – people staying 180 cumulative days or more as determined through HMIS and other data sources. These people will take precedence over other people. We will focus Section 8 and Shelter Plus Care, as well as PATH services for permanent supportive housing for this group, working our way from longest stay to shortest stay *until we have ended long term homelessness in each part of the state.*
- When done with people staying over 180 days, our middle group will receive our full attention. We will work down through shorter stays from there – people staying for 170 days, then 160 days, etc.

When we prioritize housing the long term stayers we can make room in our shelters for the other individuals and families that couldn't be accommodated well previously. We will work our way down from those staying the longest in shelters until all that remains are people staying for short periods of time, at which point we will retool our approach, increasing our attention on homeless prevention. This is how we will end homelessness in Maine.

Mainers are paying to sustain 262 people in long-term homelessness; we will pay less to have them stable in housing with support. We have the ability to actively engage, rapidly house, and provide stabilizing services to this particular group of people, moving them from long-term homelessness to stability in housing in the community. We will end chronic homelessness in Maine, and then we will work to end other types of homelessness from there.

<sup>1</sup> At least initially, the vast majority of Long Term Stayers will meet the definition of Chronic Homelessness; most people over 180 days in a one year period have also been homeless for 365 days in a two year period. A small group will have been homeless for more than 180 days, but less than 365 consecutive days and will meet the Long Term Stayers definition but not the Chronic Homelessness definition. Another small group of people may meet the Chronic Homelessness definition through 4 episodes that total less than 180 days.