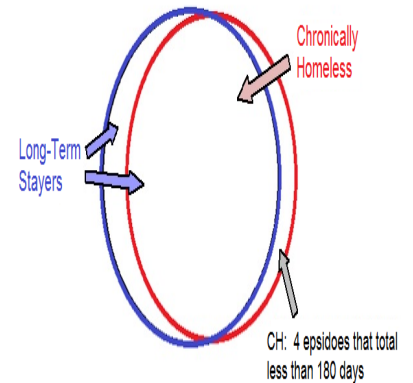
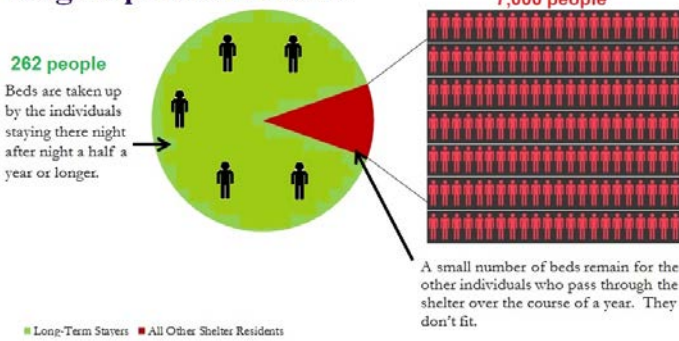


Maine's Long Term Stayers Initiative

In Maine, the HUD Definition of Chronic Homelessness seems to only apply well in Portland and Bangor. This has kept Maine from ending Chronic 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 days in shelters (or outdoors) within a 365 day period (not necessarily consecutive). This is essentially the same group as Chronically Homeless¹ but this 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 continual crises. This often leads to regular and excessive use of very expensive emergency services including police, fire, rescue, and emergency medical response personnel, as well as detoxification, hospitalizations, and emergency room visits. This group also tends to clog homeless shelters because of consumption of a large chunk of shelter beds night after night.



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, but if we look at dividing it by 4 we come up with 66 people. Housing 66 people each year for the next four years is doable. If we divide that again by 14 service center communities we start to get to 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. The 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. 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 people staying 180 days or more as determined through HMIS data. This is our Long Term Stayers population. These people will take precedence over other people. We will direct Section 8 and Shelter Plus Care as well PATH services for permanent supportive housing for this group, working our way from longest stay to shortest stay until we are done in each part of the state. We will prioritize this group, and we will end their homelessness. When done, we will work down through shorter stays from there – people staying for 170 days, then 160 days, etc. Our middle group will then receive our full attention until that job is done.

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 remain are people staying for short periods of time. We will retool our approaches as we eliminate longer stayers. This is how we will end homelessness in Maine.

Mainers are paying to sustain 262 people in long-term homelessness; we could pay less to see them stable in housing. 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.

¹ 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.