

# Homeless Response Hub NEWSLETTER

May-July 2024



## Hub Coordinator Summer Strategy Retreat

On July 31 and August 1, the full team of 9 hub coordinators met in Belfast for a 2-day strategy retreat. The focus of this retreat was to celebrate the accomplishments and progress of all 9 hubs, and to make goals to achieve data quality in each of the hubs within the next year. At least 2 of the hubs are on track to reach the Built for Zero quality data threshold by November of this year.

## Statewide Goals For Ending Homelessness

- 1 June, 2024**  
Reach Data Quality statewide.
- 2 June, 2025**  
Reach Functional Zero statewide for veterans.
- 3 June, 2026**  
Reach Functional Zero statewide for chronic homelessness

“

Each redemptive or loving act, as small as you'd like...

It says the world and its inhabitants have value and are worth defending.

It says the world is worth believing in.

In time, we come to find that this is so.”

-Nick Cave

## Barriers To Reducing Homelessness in Maine

As multiple hubs approach the Built for Zero Quality Data benchmarks, the other hubs continue to run up against systemic barriers that are preventing them from reaching quality data, and subsequently reducing homelessness. The quality data benchmarks include community participation and coverage, ensuring that each hub is able to identify and track each person experiencing homelessness in the community; policies and procedures, ensuring that each hub has policies to maintain timely and accurate data collection; and data infrastructure to track data points related to system-wide inflow and outflow and population-based statuses.

One of the main barriers preventing hubs from being able to track each individual experiencing homelessness in the hubs, and therefore getting to quality data, is **outreach** capacity. In some areas there are no outreach staff at all, which means we can't understand the scope of the unsheltered populations in the hubs without the outreach staff to identify those individuals.

Another gap in Maine's homeless response system is **diversion and eviction prevention** with supportive services. New programs regarding these topics have come online within the last couple of years and have seen great success in preventing households from entering into homelessness. However, the rising number of new households entering into homelessness from permanent housing demonstrates the need for more of these programs in the state.

It probably comes as no surprise that a large barrier to reducing homelessness in Maine is **housing**. But not just affordable housing, *appropriate* housing. There are many populations experiencing homelessness in Maine, and the hubs have identified, through Coordinated Entry and their Built for Zero Reports, the apparent need for all types of housing, including transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, sober living centers, senior living facilities, and voucher options. Once there are choices of appropriate housing for people experiencing homelessness, then we will have established an equitable system for reducing and ending homelessness in Maine.

## Homeless Response Hubs Mission Statement

The Homeless Response Hubs are collaborative multi-agency teams devoted to continuous improvement of the Homeless Response System, driven by quality data. Hub teams identify gaps and inconsistencies by working with a cross-sector team of service providers, municipalities, housing providers, people with lived experience, and others who interact with people experiencing homelessness. The Hubs operate within their geographic areas, in conjunction with Statewide efforts, through dedicated communication and collaboration. The Hub agencies facilitate a more direct and coordinated path to housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Using creative solutions, Hubs strive to solve homelessness by reaching and sustaining functional zero, ensuring that homelessness is short and infrequent.

## Using Person-First Language

Many advocates across sectors, and especially within homeless services, urge the use of person-first language. To begin with, person-first language centers the person and allows them to have a choice, which is an important characteristic of humanization and providing dignity to an individual's current situation. Someone experiencing any of issue such as mental illness, substance use disorder, or homelessness, is just that—someone. They are human beings first, and it's important to emphasize that in the language we use. When you use person-first language, you help dismantle stigmas and create a more compassionate community.


Here is a quick reference guide from Community Housing Network: [Person-First Language Guide](#)

## Contact Info

 [aholland@mainehousing.org](mailto:aholland@mainehousing.org)

 [mainehousing.org](http://mainehousing.org)

 26 Edison Drive, Augusta ME, 04330

 (207) 626-4600

## HUB 1 – York County

### County Funding for the Hub

The York County Commissioner’s Office recently gave \$125,000 to Hub 1 to use towards solving homelessness in that area. Abigail Woods met with the hub’s homeless service providers and they collectively decided to use the funding for move-in expenses and homelessness diversion, both of which have been identified as significant needs in York County. The funding is split between placement and diversion, tracked and assessed, and will be adjusted based on feedback and experience. The funding is being put through the Coordinated Entry System, and HMIS is being utilized to track how the funding is being used. The cap per household is \$2,000 and it is estimated that at least 50 households can be served with this funding.

## HUB 2 – Cumberland County

### Coordinated Entry Successes

Housing providers in Hub 2 have shown enormous support for the Coordinated Entry System, with some non-CoC-funded entities offering up resources to the system, resulting in many successful housing placements and connections with services. Resources that are currently incorporated in Hub 2 Coordinated Entry are 5 Rapid ReHousing programs (3 of which are specific to Domestic Violence and Anti-Trafficking programs), 2 Housing First programs, The Hope Project, and the Home ARP program. The Portland Public Health Team, Street outreach collaborative, and City of Portland Outreach Team all assist in trying to locate Coordinated Entry participants that have lost contact. As of August 30, 1,304 participants had been assessed in Hub 2 since the implementation of Coordinated Entry in 2023. By using the case conferencing model and the Tie Breaker Policy to match to RRH openings, they have been able to connect with several clients who’ve been missing for months and offer navigational services, in addition to those Coordinated Entry housing resources.

## HUB 5 – Western Region

### Opioid Grant Funding

Emily Richards worked with others at Western Maine Community Action to apply for an opioid settlement grant, and were awarded about \$10,000 of flexible funds for Hub 5. These are now being used to assist individuals experiencing homelessness with things like tents and transportation needs.

## HUB 6 – Central Region

### Hub Workshop

In July, the Hub 6 Coordinator, Nicole Frydrych, convened a half-day workshop at the Waterville Police Department. Over 45 people from 23 organizations attended the workshop. The group collaborated to map out the homeless response system in Hub 6, and problem-solve around barriers that are holding up the system. The group also created goals for the hub and left with action items to start working on those goals.

## HUB 3 – Midcoast Region

### Cross-Sector Collaboration

The Built for Zero model is to create cross-sector partnerships and a team to guide the system improvement work, and examples of this collaboration are demonstrated in Hub 3, where the hub coordinator, Jeff Cosgrove-Cook, recently attended the first meeting of the Brunswick Task Force (which included Brunswick police, Fire Department, Parks & Rec, General Assistance). Topics included brainstorming ideas surrounding cooling and warming centers, thinking outside the box and looking at other community responses with lived experience to solve homelessness in the community, and an overview of the Coordinated Entry System. And Tedford Housing has spent the last few months coordinating meetings to brainstorm around warming center plans for this coming winter for the communities of Brunswick, Harpswell, Bath, West Bath, and Topsham.

## HUB 4 – Androscoggin County

### New Resource Center

Julia Kimball has been working with an ad hoc committee for the City of Auburn to stress the need for a community resource center. Due to collaborative efforts, a proposal passed with the city council and work will start soon to have a space that individuals can access services and providers 5 days a week, when previously individuals had to go to Lewiston to access a drop-in center that was open 1 day a week.

## HUB 7 – Penobscot & Piscataquis

### Addressing a Public Health Crisis

HUD Technical Assistance is aiding Hub 7 to address a public health crisis in a Bangor encampment. DHHS Permanent Supportive Housing vouchers were provided to individuals in the encampment, of which the Hub 7 Coordinator facilitated through Coordinated Entry. Several workgroups have been meeting to continue addressing the needs of individuals in the Bangor encampments and work to house people swiftly.

## HUB 8 – Downeast Region

### ESHAP Navigation Feedback

While doing monitoring for the ESHAP program, MaineHousing staff received feedback that housing navigators across the state have never felt as supported as they do with the hub coordinators, but this was especially voiced from navigators in Hub 8. They spoke about feeling more empowered in their work, and supported on the individual and state levels. They reported feeling that their voices are heard and that the barriers and concerns they expressing will be addressed. The navigators reported feeling like they are better connected with the community, as well as with outreach providers. They attributed this to the hub model and Coordinated Entry System. Housing navigators at HOME, Inc. have consistently had high engagement with Hub 8 case conferencing and provider meetings. They have seen success in housing people each month, with 5 households placed in permanent housing in July.

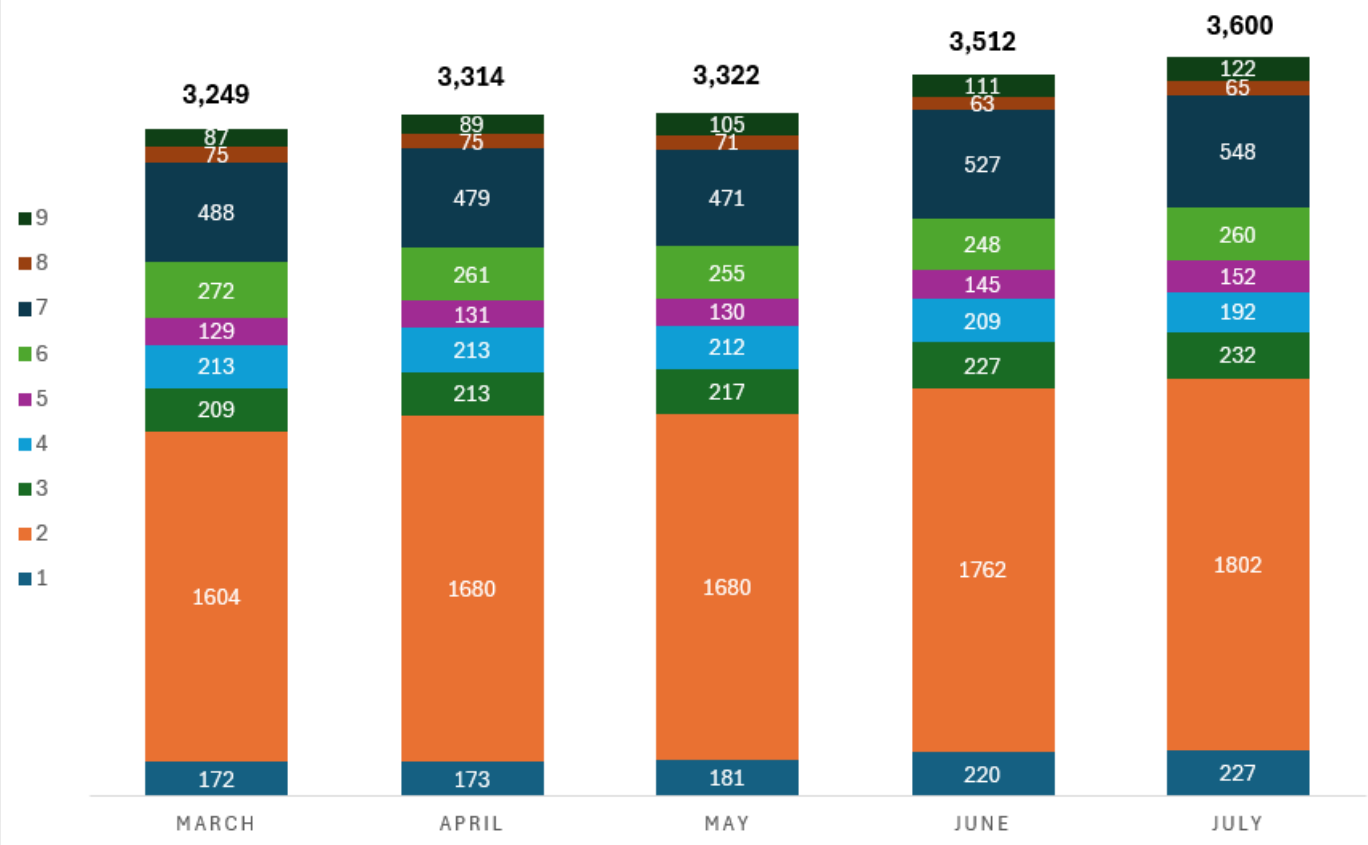
## HUB 9 – Aroostook County

### RRH Pathways

The Hub 9 Coordinator, Shelby Wilson, has started using the Coordinated Entry System to connect clients staying at Homeless Services of Aroostook to Aroostook Community Action Program’s Rapid ReHousing Program, which has resulted in several successful matches.

# Data Deep-Dive

## ACTIVELY HOMELESS

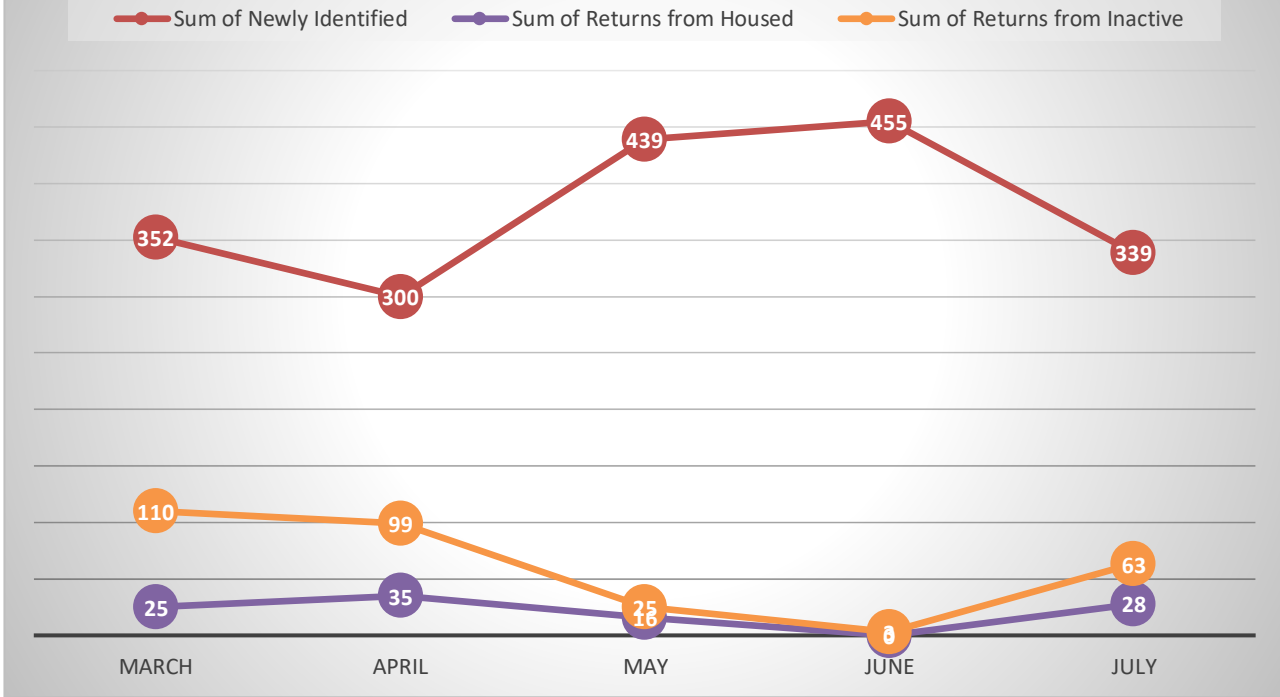


The Actively Homeless number refers to the total number of individuals or families actively homeless at the end of the reporting month. Persons experiencing homelessness meet HUD's [Literally Homeless definition](#).

This count only includes programs that are entering data into HMIS. Any persons being served by programs that do not enter data into HMIS are not included here, as well as statewide veterans programs and victim service providers.

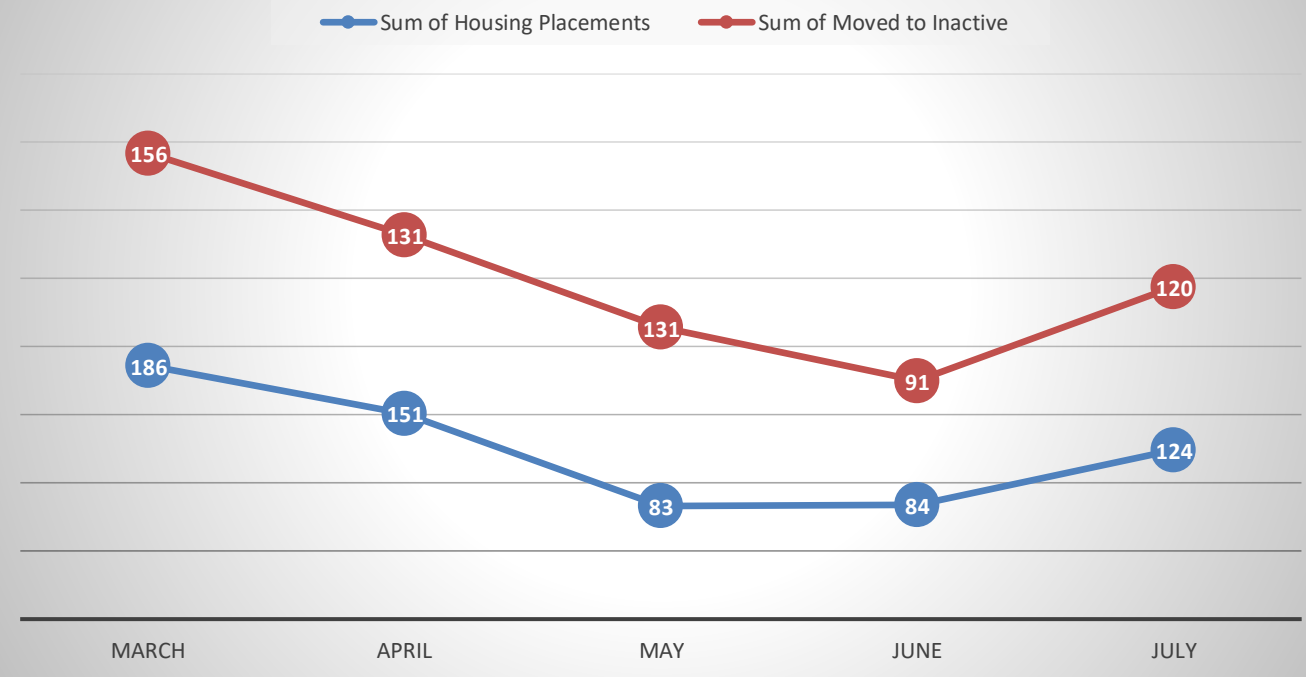
The legend to the left of the bar graph refers to Hubs, with Hub 1 at the bottom of the bar graph and Hub 9 at the top. The total number of actively homeless is at the top of each month's bar.

## Inflow



This inflow graph shows the number of individuals experiencing homelessness who have entered into the system over each month. **Newly Identified** indicates the total number of individuals who are identified as experiencing homelessness for the first time during the reporting month. **Returns from Housed** encompasses individuals who were previously housed through an HMIS-entering program, but have since returned to homelessness during the reporting month. **Returns from Inactive** includes individuals who were previously disengaged or went to an unknown/temporary destination from an HMIS-entering program but have since reappeared or have returned to homelessness during the reporting month.

## Outflow



This outflow graph refers to the number of individuals who exit the homeless response system during each month. **Housing placements** represents the total number of individuals experiencing homelessness who moved into permanent housing during the reporting month. **Moved to Inactive** refers to the total number of individuals who disengaged from services/shelter for more than 90 days.