

## Homelessness in Massachusetts

On a single night in 2016, **19,608 people were experiencing homelessness in Massachusetts** - meaning they were sleeping outside or in an emergency shelter or temporary housing program for people experiencing homelessness.

- Overall, Massachusetts reported a decrease of 7.2 percent in homelessness from 2015 to 2016 and an increase of 17.8 percent since 2010.
- 760 of those who experienced homelessness in 2016, or 3.9 percent, were unsheltered or living in places not meant for human habitation.

A comprehensive solution to homelessness requires a systemic response. Below is a breakdown of the unique populations that experienced homelessness in Massachusetts in 2016, and the important components of the appropriate solutions:

### Veteran Homelessness in Massachusetts

#### *The Need*

Nationwide, the number of homeless veterans has declined by 35 percent since 2011. And, three states and 45 communities have effectively ended veteran homelessness. **Tremendous progress has been made but in 2016, 949 veterans experienced homelessness on any given night in Massachusetts.** Work remains to ensure that communities are implementing a systematic and collaborative approach to ending veteran homelessness.

#### *The Solution*

We know what works. **Congress should continue to invest in proven solutions and communities should bring a comprehensive approach** of outreach, emergency shelter, housing, including rapid re-housing (RRH) and HUD-VASH, and services to meet the needs of homeless veterans in a systematic and targeted way.

### Chronic Homelessness in Massachusetts

#### *The Need*

**Chronic homelessness** refers to people who have been homeless for long periods of time or repeatedly AND who have chronic and complex health conditions including mental illness, substance use disorders, and medical conditions. **1,272 individuals were experiencing chronic homelessness on a single night in 2016 in Massachusetts.**

#### *The Solution*

**Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) is a proven solution to chronic homelessness.** PSH pairs affordable housing with case management and supportive services and has been shown to not only help people experiencing chronic homelessness to achieve long-term housing stability, but also improve their health and well-being. Investments in PSH have decreased chronic homelessness by 30 percent in the U.S. since 2007. PSH reduces costs for hospitals, law enforcement, shelters, and other systems.

### Homelessness among Single Adults in Massachusetts

#### *The Need*

**The largest number of people who experience homelessness is single adults.** Their homelessness is typically the result of a crisis, such as a loss of a job, breakup of a marriage, death of a spouse, or health emergency resulting in the loss of housing; and their experience with homelessness is most often brief and non-recurring. Despite common stereotypes, most of this population does not suffer from chronic

mental illness or other disabling conditions. **6,434 single individuals experience homelessness on any given night in Massachusetts.**

### *The Solution*

We need to implement a comprehensive approach for ending homelessness among single adults in local communities. We know that **emergency shelter and crisis response services are necessary components of a response for this group.** We need to encourage a broader approach that incorporates **opportunities for employment and income, access to health care, re-entry support, and permanent housing opportunities, including rapid re-housing.** Rapid re-housing provides help with housing search, financial assistance, and case management services to help individuals quickly transition back into housing of their own, with connection to any services they may need.

### Family Homelessness in Massachusetts

#### *The Need*

In 2016, as many as **13,174 families with children** were residing in emergency shelters, transitional housing, or in places not intended for human habitation in Massachusetts. Half of the children who rely on homeless assistance programs each year are age 5 or under. A significant number of families are headed by a young parent under the age of 25.

#### *The Solution*

Housing is the solution to homelessness for low-income families. Most families would benefit from assistance to help them rapidly reconnect to permanent housing. **Rapid re-housing** provides help with housing search, financial assistance, and RRH case management services to help families quickly transition out of shelter and back into housing of their own. A small subset of families may require more intensive or long-term support, through the provision of **transitional housing, permanent rental assistance, or permanent supportive housing** to escape homelessness. Families also benefit from connection to other supports designed to strengthen and improve their lives, such as child care, employment assistance, early childhood services, income support, or mental health counseling.

### Youth Homelessness in Massachusetts

#### *The Need*

**Youth homelessness** refers to young people under the age of 25 who are experiencing homelessness on their own, not in the care of a parent or guardian. On a single night in 2016, **374 unaccompanied, single youth and young adults up to age 24 experienced a homelessness episode of longer than one week in Massachusetts.**

#### *The Solution*

Communities will need to respond in a systemic, coordinated way to end youth homelessness. This response should include: **family intervention** work; enhanced support for youth exiting the **child welfare and juvenile justice systems**; and facilitated connections to **mainstream resources** to increase education and employment, mental and behavioral health outcomes, and connections to caring, supportive adults. It should also include an adequately resourced continuum of **low-barrier housing options including RRH** for youth who cannot return home.