

Western MA Task Force for Housing First Meeting Minutes - 1/16/25

In attendance: approximately 50 Network partners, including state legislators, legislative aides, municipal and town staff, and dozens of partners working to prevent and end homelessness

Individual homelessness reports; [UPDATED DIRECTORY](#) now available

Please see this [updated directory](#) that includes shelter and warming center sites across the four western counties.

Program updates:

Craig's Doors, Amherst/Hadley: Its additional 20 winter beds are now operational and full. Also overnight warming center capacity for 6 in the Econolodge lobby and 6 at the church. Still having to do 15-20 turn-aways every night. Working on getting the hotel program back in full swing (just working with Knights Inn for now). The highest # of people served in emergency winter hotel beds has been 69 people thus far, over Christmas-New Year's week.

Warming Partners, Springfield - Catholic Charities is running this new site at a local church (with City of Springfield support) to provide 25 people overflow shelter for 15 coldest weather days between now and March. Site is not quite ready yet so using hotel beds now through the weekend. A great collaboration of multiple partners.

CHD hotel funds, Hampden County - the funding is going very quickly due to intense need. Working on reducing length of stay to stretch the duration.

CSO -Friends of the Homeless: full at all 3 sites (Springfield, Northampton, Greenfield); offering daytime warming centers as well.

City of Greenfield: overnight warming center; averaging 15 people/night; working with volunteers (grateful for the incredible volunteer support!)

Franklin County/N. Quabbin: the HUB project is coordinating information and resources with 20 daytime warming centers across the sub-region and an array of other resources. [Go here](#) for a detailed listing.

ServiceNet, Pittsfield: its shelter is full with 40 beds; also operating a warming center from 10 pm - 8 am, averaging about 20 people per night.

Louison House, Adams: has freed up a little space with some successful rehousing efforts - so moving individuals from cots to regular shelter space; cots will likely fill up very quickly.

Questions about Samaratin Inn, Westfield - the understanding is that they are charging \$65/night to stay there; that they have no other funding available. Will clarify and confirm and update directory accordingly.

Family Homelessness Update

Gov. Healey proposed a radical shift in family shelter policy yesterday, including the requirement to demonstrate MA residency. [See here for her press release.](#)

Partners reported seeing an uptick of families having nowhere to go. The Days Inn in Greenfield is closing as of 2/28 (per Administration's decision to close hotels for family shelter - other hotels in the western region will be closing over the coming year). ServiceNet has rehoused 20 families thus far from the Days Inn. 15 families currently residing there and work on rehousing is ongoing. r

The Governor's recent requirement to do CORI checks on all shelter guests has imposed a significant burden on providers as they are required to obtain CORI authorizations from all guests. There is starting to be push back from shelter leaders statewide.

National changes afoot: The US Senate is holding confirmation hearings today for the President-Elect's nominee for HUD Secretary, Scott Turner. Turner does not subscribe to principles of housing first and supports criminalization of homelessness. Advocacy efforts by national homelessness organizations to oppose his nomination are underway. See this [Network blog post](#) for today's action alert.

Good news on state law requiring multi-family zoning: The MA Supreme Judicial Court upheld the MBTA Communities Act to require zoning for multi-family housing. The law impacts 177 communities in eastern MA but does not reach western MA. Gerry McCafferty reported on the significance of this decision and its potential implications for western MA, noting that western MA is the most segregated area in the state (and ranks as highest in the nation), in large part because of the concentration of rental housing in communities of color and very little in the suburban communities that are largely white. This decision is an opportunity to consider how we can utilize this "win" to push for action in the western part of the state as well. See [CHAPA's statement on the decision here](#).

Homelessness Point in Time Count on Jan. 29: Your support is needed!! [Go here](#) to get connected to Three County and Hampden County efforts.

Network Budget and Legislative Priorities Process:

Pamela reported on the process now underway across Network committees to determine its FY26 budget priorities and legislative priorities. These will be decided by the end of the month. The legislative bill filing deadline is Jan 17; Gov. Healey will release her budget on Jan 22. Be sure you [subscribe to the Network blog](#) to stay connected on these developments.

Berkshire County Housing News: Berkshire County recently celebrated the groundbreaking for 37 supportive housing units for people who have experienced homelessness. The project also includes the creation of a new comprehensive housing resource center. Hearthway is in the lead on this, with great support from many partners, including the City of Pittsfield, Zion Lutheran Church, Upside413, Mass. Housing and Shelter Alliance, ServiceNet and more. Congratulations, Berkshire County!

Secure Jobs/ESOL partnership: Jasmin Rojas of Way Finders shared an update on their innovating program that has combined ESOL services (with support from Holyoke Community College) with job placement support to create a program for non-native English speakers that has experienced a 95% retention rate and an increasing number of job placements.

[WMNEH Annual Gathering Save the Date](#): **Friday, May 30, 2025, 9:30 am - 11:30 am**, Holyoke Community College. You can reserve your spot now - [go here!](#)