

MONROE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES



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HOUSING / HOMELESS SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2019

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TEMPORARY HOUSING ASSISTANCE/ HOMELESS SERVICES – 2019

Increased focus on emergency housing applicants, recipients, shelter providers, and local district practices on the state level continued in 2019, resulting in new policies and procedures being implemented, by both Social Service Statute and Regulations. New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) continued its expansion of local certification requirements for facilities under OTDA Certification thresholds. Use of an online Shelter Management System, submission of Operational Budgets (in addition to requests to approve Operational Plans, Safety and Security Plans) were required by OTDA's Office of Shelter Oversight and Compliance in 2017.

These continuously evolving requirements require increased coordination, cooperation and communication between Monroe County Department of Human Services (MCDHS) and community providers. We continue to work together with the homeless provider community to serve Monroe County residents in the most efficient and effective ways, while also complying with all applicable rules and regulations from NYS and OTDA.

Temporary Housing Assistance Placements

In 2019, MCDHS made 10,104¹ Temporary Housing Assistance (THA) placements for individuals and families. This represents a 9.7% decrease from the 11,186 placements made in 2018. This decrease is the result of reduced requests for placement through DHS as well as local changes to the implementation and clarification of New York State Social Services Regulation 304.18 <https://otda.ny.gov/legal/Emergency-Measures-Homeless-Inclement-Weather.pdf> (Code Blue) which requires placement in emergency shelter of otherwise ineligible individuals when the temperatures fall below 32 degrees Fahrenheit with wind-chill. In 2019, MCDHS contracted with 2 warming centers to meet the requirements of the Code Blue regulations. Individuals seeking shelter under this regulation were first referred to a warming center to address their emergency. Only if the warming centers were full or the individual was not allowed in, were they placed in a traditional THA placement.

Year	Families	Individuals	Total	Change from Previous Year	% Change	Total Cost	Average Cost per placement
2015	2,318	5,137	7,455	-1030	-12%	\$4,631,902	\$621
2016	2,424	5,391	7,815	+360	4%	\$4,743,783	\$607
2017	2,984	6,440	9,424	+1,609	21%	\$4,635,699	\$492
2018	3,293	7,893	11,186	+1,762	19%	\$5,293,887	\$473
2019	2,238	7,866	10,104	-1,082	-9.7%	\$5,733,845	\$567

¹ The number of temporary housing placements made is not unduplicated, and does not include canceled placements or certain no show placements.

The 2019 THA placement numbers do not include Monroe County residents that were placed in domestic violence shelters outside of Monroe County. In **2019, an additional \$450,869.23** was issued for out-of-county placements.

Temporary Housing Assistance – Unduplicated Placement Information

Unduplicated placement information tells a story that needs further consideration. While placements decreased in 2019 by 1,000, the actual individuals (or head of households) entering shelters only decreased by 445. In 2018, 3,227 unduplicated singles and 1,292 unduplicated families comprised the 9,424 placements made. In 2019, 3,033 unduplicated singles and 1,041 unduplicated families comprised the 10,104 placements made.

Of note, 437 individuals and/or families accounted for the 1,165 THA placements made under the 304.18 Regulations (Code Blue) and 379 individuals and/or families in receipt of Social Security income accounted for 873 of the total placements.

Placements into THA (especially into hotels which lack case management support) with unresolved outcomes, cause individuals to return to the shelter system for multiple placements within the year.

Year	Total Family Placements	Unduplicated Families	Total Individual Placements	Unduplicated Individuals
2015	2,318	1,366	5,137	2,973
2016	2,424	1,269	5,391	2,963
2017	2,984	1,299	6,440	2,988
2018	3,293	1,292	7,893	3,227
2019	2,238	1,041	7,866	3,033

Leading Causes for Temporary Housing Assistance Placements in 2019

The primary cause of homelessness in 2019 continued to be eviction by the primary tenant. Individuals and families residing in the homes of relatives or friends are often asked to leave due to overcrowded conditions, substance use, domestic disputes, family breakups and strained relationships. This placement reason represented 50% of the total THA placements made in 2019.

The second leading cause of homelessness in 2019 was a result of being released from an institution without a plan for permanent housing. Institutions include hospitals, substance use treatment programs, Monroe County Jail, and other correctional facilities. This placement reason represented 16% of THA placements made in 2019.

Temporary Housing Assistance Placement Reasons 2018-2019

<u>Cause of Homelessness</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>
Eviction by Primary Tenant	65%	69%	60%	57%	50%
Release from Institution	12%	11%	11%	12%	16%
Eviction by Landlord	7%	7%	8%	8%	6%
Arrived from out of county	6%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Domestic Violence	7%	6%	5%	5%	5%
Street Homeless*			3%	3%	4%
SS Law 304.1* (Code Blue)			3%	9%	12%
Fire	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
All other causes	2%	1%	4%	n/a	1%

*added as new reasons in 2017

Temporary Housing Assistance Placements – Youth

In 2019, 333 youths (ages 16-21, unduplicated) were placed in temporary housing. As some youths experienced multiple bouts of homelessness, the total number of youth placements into temporary housing for 2019 was 702. Of the total youth placements made in 2019, 53% were placed in the adult shelter system, 45% were placed in the youth shelter system and 2% were placed in hotels.²

Temporary Housing Assistance Placements – Youth (ages 16-21) 2015-2019

Year	Youths Placed	Change from Previous Year	% Change	Total Placements	Change from Previous Year	% Change
2015	465	-58	-11%	858	-76	-8%
2016	479	+14	+3%	845	-13	-2%
2017	450	-29	-6%	966	121	14%
2018	443	-7	-1.5%	1,047	81	8%
2019	333	-110	-24%	702	-345	-34.6%

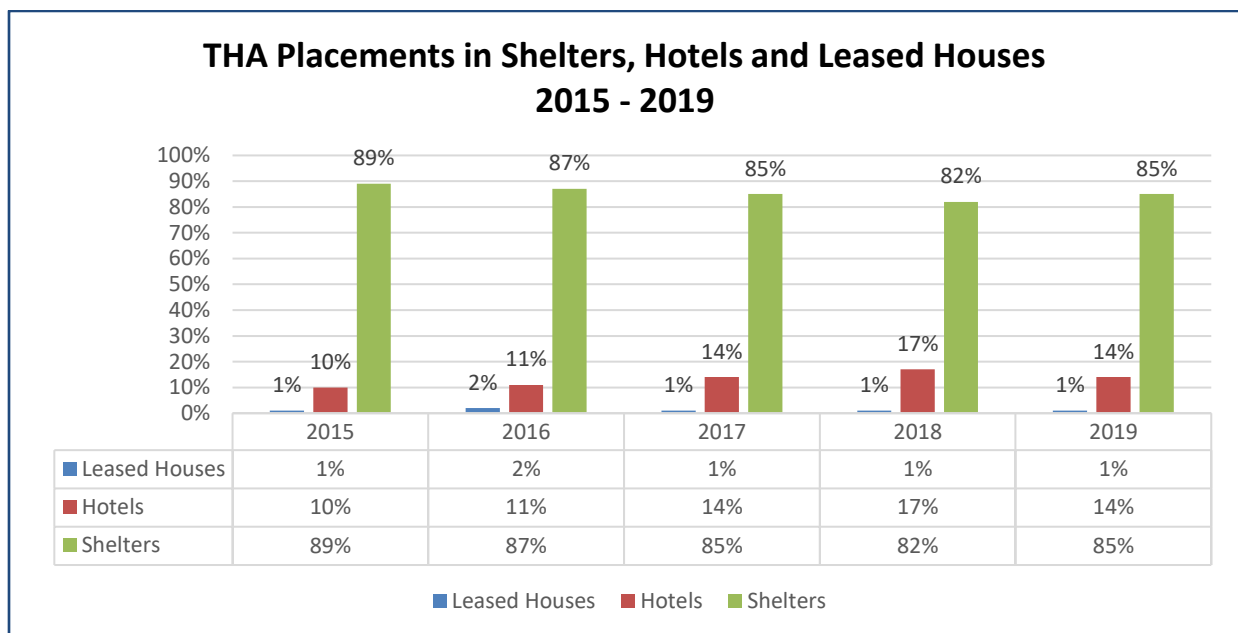
Temporary Housing Assistance Placements – Shelters, Hotels and Leased Houses

Shelters and leased houses provide case management services that are not provided at a hotel. When making a placement, shelters are always utilized first, and a hotel placement is only made when a shelter bed or leased house is unavailable. In some situations, hotel placements are utilized when a shelter option is not appropriate based on the household circumstances. In 2018,

² These percentages are based on the unduplicated numbers.

MCDHS entered into a contract with MC Collaborative to provide case management services to households placed in a hotel setting due to lack of space or household circumstances. A case manager will complete the Vulnerability Index-Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) and place individuals on the Prioritization List while the household waits for a placement in a shelter or leased house, avoiding a delay in needed services and minimizing the time spent in temporary housing. Case management services will be provided for the duration of the hotel placement.

In 2019, 85% of the THA placements were made at homeless shelters, while hotel placements accounted for 14% of the total temporary housing assistance placement and leased houses 1%. MCDHS has actively worked with THA providers to reduce the number of placements made in hotels. It is important to note that 34% of placements made in 2006 were in hotels. In 2019, MCDHS continued to hold hotel placements to some of the lowest levels seen since that time.



Average Length of Stay

The goal of MCDHS is to assist homeless residents in securing appropriate permanent housing as quickly as possible. In 2019 MCDHS continued the practice of having MCDHS staff liaisons assigned to each temporary housing facility. This allows MCDHS staff and temporary housing/shelter staff to collectively assess and address the needs of each household, determine barriers to accessing stable, permanent housing and developing independent living plans tailored to each household’s circumstance. MCDHS THA reimbursed lengths of stay across facility types increased in 2019.

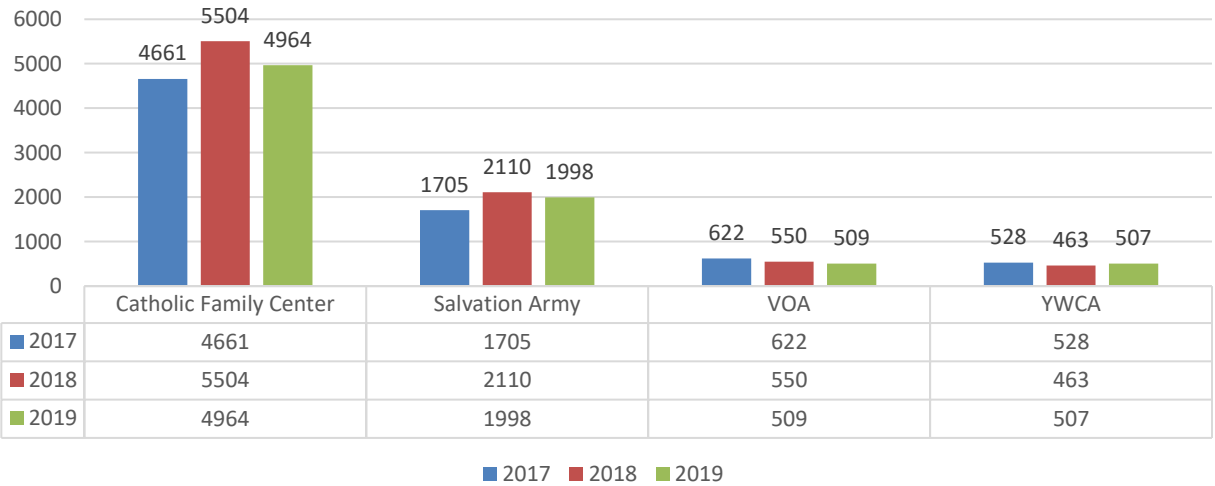
	Families			Individuals		
	2018	2019	Change	2018	2019	Change
Hotels	2	4	+2	3	6.5	+3.5
Shelters	15	17	+2	11	12	+1
Leased Houses	22	32	+10	-	-	N/A

Contracted Temporary Housing Assistance Beds and Placements

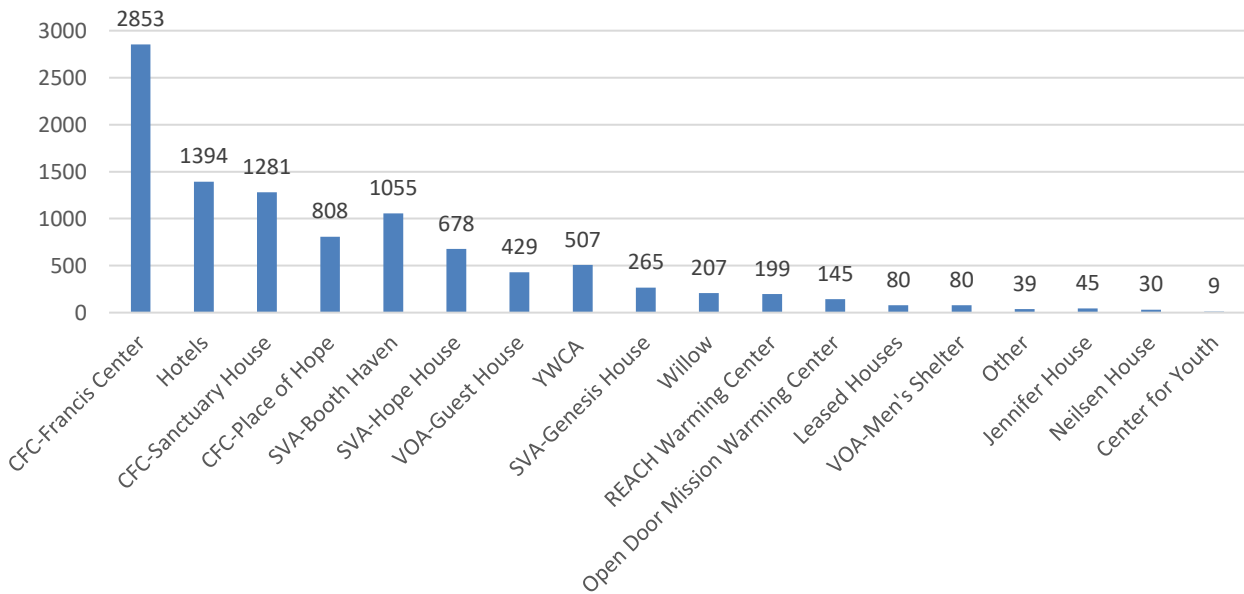
During 2019, MCDHS contracted with various community agencies for approximately 388 THA beds for homeless individuals and families. These are approximate numbers as rooms can be reconfigured based on need and some of the shelter beds are “moved” between various programs when necessary. When the shelters are unable to accommodate a placement, MCDHS utilizes various hotels and motels across Monroe County.

Agency	Beds	Program
Willow Domestic Violence Center	37	Individuals with children
Catholic Family Center- Francis Center	38	Single men
Catholic Family Center- Sanctuary House	46	Women – single and with children (17 rooms)
Catholic Family Center- Place of Hope	43	Families, couples and singles (18 rooms)
Center for Youth	13	Youth (16-20) male or female
Salvation Army Men’s Shelter- Booth Haven	29	Single men
Salvation Army Youth Shelter- Genesis House	14	Youth (16-21) male or female
Salvation Army Women’s Shelter- Hope House	19	Single women
Tempo Development (Temple B’rith Kodesh)	58	Families (11 units)
VOC Richards House	6	Single men (Veterans)
Volunteers of America- Guest House	42	Families, couples and singles (12 rooms)
Volunteers of America- Men’s Shelter	3	Single men
YWCA	40	Families, single men or women w/ children (20 rooms)

Top Four Temporary Housing Assistance Placement Sites 2017-2019



2019 THA Placements by Site



Temporary Housing Assistance Placement No-Shows

When a family or individual is placed by the Housing Unit they are instructed to report to the shelter by 5:30 PM. If they have not arrived by 6:00 PM, their placement is cancelled, and their bed(s) are once again made available for other homeless individuals and families. When the placement is made during non-business hours (through the After-Hours process), the placement is paid for by MCDHS even if the client fails to show for the placement. In 2019, a total of 635 no show placements were paid by MCDHS.

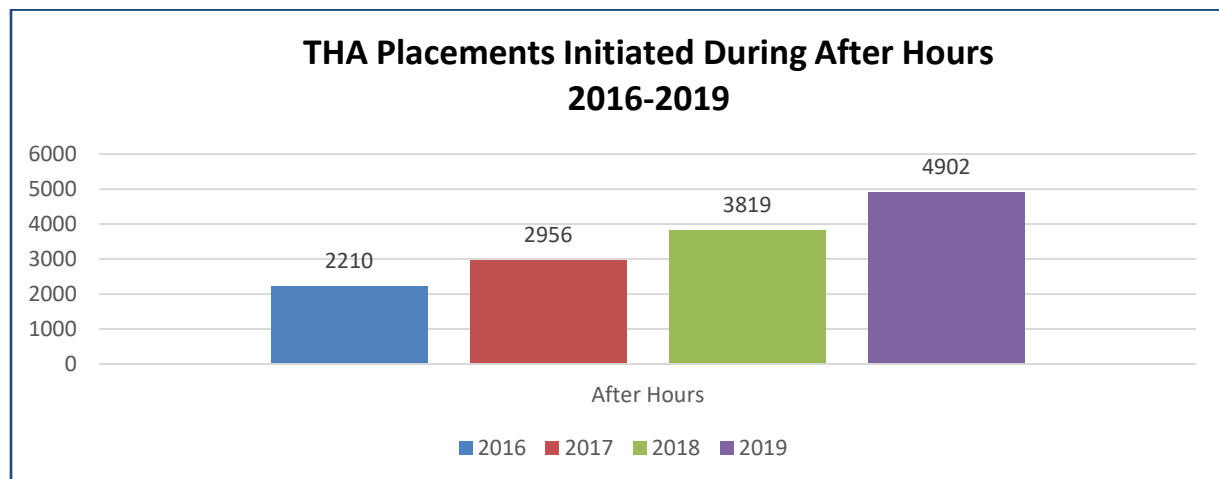
During 2019, an additional 382 (91 Family and 291 Individual placements) no show placements were released and MCDHS did not pay for those placements.

After-Hours Placements

In 2018, 3,819 placements were made during non-business hours through the After-Hours process, which was a 29% increase from 2017. **In 2019, 4,902 After-Hours placements were made**, another 28% increase. MCDHS continues to explore solutions for individuals facing an emergency resulting in the need for THA placement during non-business hours.

Of note, 50.1% of individuals placed through After-Hours fail to appear the next business day for continued placement.

Historical evidence suggests that experienced callers sometimes seek placement through After-Hours when they are aware they would not otherwise be eligible for THA, by providing inaccurate information to seek placement at hotels, particularly on holidays and weekends. Since 2015, improvements to the After-Hours process has helped to better discern Temporary Housing eligibility. In 2018, 207 of these placements (5%) were made for callers in which erroneous identity information was provided. In 2019, the number of placements with erroneous information was 179 or 3.6%.



Tenant Accountability Training

In September 2009, MCDHS, the City of Rochester and the Housing Council collaborated to offer Tenant Accountability Training (TAT). The goal of the program is to assist recipients of Temporary Assistance (TA) in achieving their highest level of self-sufficiency. The training focuses on the value of being a good tenant and neighbor, along with the costs to the individual, their children and the community of a transient lifestyle. The client's attendance is considered a continuing eligibility requirement for TA, and failure to attend would be cause to discontinue the client's TA grant. Circumstances that warrant a referral to TAT include; two moves within the last 12 months, a former landlord has filed a claim on a Landlord Tenant Security Agreement for \$500 or greater, two emergency housing placements within a 12-month period, the head of household is under the age of 21, administrative discretion, a TA household that contains a child under the age of 6 and is residing in the areas that have been identified by the City of Rochester as posing the highest risk of exposure to lead poisoning, or a request from a city, town or Housing Council inspector, the Health Department, a MCDHS case worker or investigator.

In December 2010, the curriculum for half of the training sessions was revised to include a segment on Healthy Homes, specifically geared toward to lead poisoning. The goal of this portion of the training is to increase the tenant's knowledge and awareness of potential lead hazards. The participants are also given instructions, resource materials, and contact information to use in the event they identify a potential lead hazard in their home. In August of 2011, this was expanded and now all TAT trainings include a segment on Healthy Homes and specifically lead poisoning. In July of 2013, educational information was added to the training regarding the identification, prevention and treatment of bedbugs.

Surveys of participants consistently find that over 96% of those who respond felt that as a result of the presentation they were better able to identify lead hazards in their home. During 2019, 472 TA recipients attended TAT. Since its resurrection in September 2009 through December 31, 2019 there have been a total of 10,473 participants.

Monroe County Department of Human Services Housing Unit

The MCDHS Housing Unit was established to serve the emergency needs of the homeless and the housing needs of the low-income residents in our community. The following services are provided by the Housing Unit and other units within MCDHS:

- Housing Unit staff work with shelter providers to assist residents in securing financial assistance, locating housing and providing relocation services such as moving, utility turn-on and acquiring essential furniture and appliances.
- The Housing Unit provides the homeless with housing assistance and linkages to other County staff, including: Adult Protective, Child Protective, Financial Assistance, Mental Health, Youth Bureau, Probation, as well as community service providers.
- The Housing Unit has a Senior Examiner designated as a single point of entry for any youth between the ages of 16 to 18 that are homeless and/or applying for cash assistance as the head of household. MCDHS staff conducts investigations to locate responsible adults, or, in the event no adult is available, work with community providers to locate appropriate permanent housing and link the youths to needed services.

- MCDHS operates an after-hours placement line (585-442-1742). After-hours telephone coverage is available during non-business hours to provide emergency assistance to individuals facing emergencies during non-business hours.
- The Housing Unit is the central point of entry for MCDHS placement into temporary housing. Staff coordinate the placement of the homeless into available beds. A daily census is taken at the shelters and hotels to maximize use of available beds and identify and address any client-specific barriers to relocation into permanent housing.
- Screening of all homeless individuals and families who are not receiving TA to determine eligibility for temporary housing assistance. When appropriate, expedited Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, personal needs allowances and assistance with first month's rent are issued.
- The Housing Unit operates a Landlord "Hotline" (585-753-6034). Questions and concerns are resolved quickly, and in many instances, have prevented evictions. Staff work directly with landlords to resolve agency/landlord disputes. In 2019, a total of 2,907 calls from landlords and property managers were received.
- The Housing Unit conducts yearly inspections of the shelters and semi-annual hotel inspections to ensure that safe and sanitary housing is being provided to homeless residents.
- The Housing Unit operates the Rent Withholding Program which works to ensure that buildings with open health and safety violations occupied by TA recipients are brought up to code compliance. When necessary, rental payments are withheld until major violations are corrected.
- MCDHS issues a Landlord Tenant Security Agreement (LTSA) in lieu of a cash security deposit. The LTSA secures the landlord against tenant-caused damages and unpaid rent up to a maximum amount equal to two months of the household's TA shelter allowance. The Emergency Housing Unit is responsible for processing claims made on LTSA's. In 2019, there were 59 claims filed on the agreements. There has been a steady decline in the number of LTSA claims that are being filed annually. MCDHS does not maintain statistics on the number of LTSA's issued each year, but there has been a decline in the number of inspections that are being done related to the process. While there may be several factors that are causing this, it is felt that more landlords are requiring cash security deposits. The Community Homeless Coordinator regularly meets with landlords and property managers to review the LTSA process and encourage more landlords to accept the LTSA to increase the number of property options available to DHS clients.
- Provide emergency payments to financially eligible home-owners which include payments to prevent tax or mortgage foreclosures or help with necessary repairs to maintain current occupied housing.

Monroe County Department of Human Services staff are also active participants in the following organizations:

- **Homeless Services Network:** This organization facilitates networking, coordinating, training, consulting and fundraising among individuals who work for, or with agencies who provide high-quality, accessible and effective health, social, housing and other services to

individuals who are homeless. Members represent approximately 60 community agencies, including County and City departments. In 2015, the Homeless Services Network became the official stakeholder body of the Rochester and Monroe County Homeless Continuum of Care.

- **Homeless Continuum of Care Team:** This team, comprised of staff from Monroe County, the City of Rochester, and the Homeless Service Providers' Network, facilitates and evaluates the implementation of the local Homeless Continuum of Care Plan. Each year, this group is responsible to coordinate the community's submission for the HUD Super Notification of Funding Availability (NOFA). This includes collecting community data, facilitating a community priority exercise, ranking proposals to meet community needs and writing the Rochester/Monroe County application for HUD funds.

- **"Rapid Re-Housing Services" Program:** This team functions as a collaboration of community partners. Some of the key elements of this collaboration include:
 - A staff person that will work in conjunction with MCDHS staff in developing a pool of potential landlords that will have housing readily available for our homeless clients. As part of this process, they will identify and address any issues that landlords may have to renting to our clients. (i.e. Landlords who are reluctant to accept a Landlord Tenant Security Agreement.)

 - A staff person who will work with MCDHS and shelter staff in locating appropriate housing for families that have completed the VI-SPDAT, score in the Rapid Re-Housing intervention spectrum and have been prioritized through the Coordinated Entry Community Prioritization List.

- **Coordinated Entry:** The vision for Coordinated Entry is to:
 - Ensure that everyone who needs emergency shelter is able to access and receive services.
 - Reduce episodes of homelessness and the number of bed placements through coordinated diversion strategies and tactics.
 - Utilize MCDHS as the primary entry point into the homeless services system. Eliminating "side doors" ensures equitable access to necessary services.
 - Emergency shelters and outreach programs will use the VI-SPDAT, which is supported in our community.
 - Decrease the length of homeless episodes by moving households to permanent housing as quickly as possible.
 - Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Re-Housing programs are expected to fill beds/vacancies from a single prioritization list that is accessible in the Homeless Management Information System.

- **Chronically Homeless Workgroup:** The MCDHS Community Homeless Coordinator co-chairs this group and it became a committee of the Continuum of Care (CoC) with the charge of addressing the needs of all the chronically homeless in Monroe County.

Along with members of the CoC, MCDHS, Person Centered Housing Options, Rapid Rehousing, the Veterans Administration, Rochester Regional Health System, faith based providers, community volunteers, and community shelter and homeless services providers, this group continues to work with other community partners to identify this group of individuals, their specific needs and remove any barriers they face. The group regularly goes out where the chronically homeless members of our community are to offer available options, case management, apartment searching, and other services.

2019 Highlights

PIT Training and Implementation – January of 2019 – Conducted 78 surveys, 35 surveys yielded results

Increased capacity and consistency of service delivery to unsheltered community - providing assistance to REACH, and other service providers

Began to engage Neighborhood Associations and Neighborhood Service Centers as an avenue to increase our reach to individuals experiencing homelessness

Unity Health Reach, PCHO Inc., City of Rochester, House of Mercy, Peace Village, Homes for the Homeless joined to help with piloting 3 Small Temporary Domiciles

Worked closely with City of Rochester Housing Development and Zoning to identify homeless individuals in abandoned places or on the streets

Identified problem housing stock that we can work to renovate and provide better affordable housing

Department of Transportation has partnered with CHWG to provide more humane and supportive efforts when homeless are found on their property

September – Community Clean Up of Peace Village

Met with City Police and City Security to address growing concerns with homeless in the garages downtown