



CHICAGO
COALITION
FOR THE
HOMELESS
2014 REPORT



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

At the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (CCH), public policy specialists, legal aid attorneys and community organizers advocate for and with people impacted by homelessness, including families, unaccompanied youth, ex-offenders and low-wage workers. Together, we work to preserve a shelter safety net, develop affordable rental housing, and protect access to schools, fair wage jobs, and basic human services.



Extensive outreach is offered to homeless youth, families, and adults. The intent is to empower people discouraged by poverty and homelessness, inform them of their options, and engage them in advocacy. Field organizers and youth attorneys offer 50 outreach sessions a month at 30 shelters, transitional housing, school and drop-in programs across Chicago, reaching 5,900 parents, youths and single adults each year. This includes bi-lingual outreach in four shelters for Spanish-speaking families, youth and adults. Another organizer offers creative writing outreach in four shelters serving families and single adults. A statewide organizer mobilizes agencies working in nine communities outside Chicago, with focus in Aurora, Rockford and Waukegan.



CCH pairs its advocacy with community organizing. We believe that effective advocacy gives voice to people directly impacted by poverty and homelessness. Community leaders who are homeless or recently homeless collaborate with the staff in developing and presenting our advocacy. Leadership committees are active, including an Education Committee of homeless students and parents. From outreach, CCH staff develops a leadership base of more than 450 homeless people a year, including mothers with children in tow. Homeless leaders are core to CCH

advocacy – they testify at legislative hearings, attend rallies, talk to the media, and meet with aldermen, legislators and government agency leaders.

With 20 advocacy trips to Springfield in 2014, CCH organizers trained and transported 515 shelter residents and staff from Aurora, Chicago, Maywood, Naperville, Rockford, Springfield and Waukegan. They advocated for funding, adequate tax revenues and substantive legislation, including a CCH-drafted bill enacted in 2014 that allows unaccompanied minors to consent to their own non-emergency health care.

HEALTHCARE FOR YOUTH

CCH authored and advocated a change in state law so that unaccompanied minors can consent to their own non-emergency healthcare. It is projected to help 7,000 Illinois youths a year, minors ages 14 to 18 who are homeless and living on their own, without a parent or guardian.

Graham Bowman, an Equal Justice Works attorney at CCH, drafted the new law, mirrored after laws in 17 states. CCH advocated for the measure after Chicago Public Schools and health clinic officials told us of being required to turn away teens for easily treatable issues – such as a needed immunization or treatment for ailments like strep throat – because the teens lacked a parent/guardian to sign a consent form. After passing the General Assembly unanimously, the law took effect Oct. 1. Since then, our youth attorneys have been training school and health care providers on the new law, and assist youth facing other obstacles to health care.

HOMELESS YOUTH



For our No Youth Alone initiative, CCH mobilizes a Youth Committee of 44 youth providers to advocate on shared issues – 25 providers from Chicago, six from the suburbs, and 13 from downstate. Meeting together monthly with our policy staff and attorneys, the committee works on shared concerns, including funding issues.

The Youth Committee researched models that create permanent supportive housing for older youth, without time limits that are typically up to two years. From this, a group led by CCH policy staff met with Gov. Quinn's

staff this fall. We secured \$2 million in capital funds for a \$17.9 million housing, health and services facility planned by La Casa Norte, a Youth Committee member. The Youth Committee is preparing a plan to advocate for more youth housing in Chicago, the suburbs, and a downstate site.

HOUSING CAMPAIGN

CCH manages Sweet Home Chicago, a coalition of 10 groups that advocates the development of affordable rental housing in Chicago. We persuaded the city to enact and fund the TIF Purchase-Rehab Program, with \$4 million in tax-increment finance funds allocated in the past two years to redevelop rental housing for low-income households.

Earlier this year, Sweet Home Chicago prodded the City Council to increase its commitment to fund the program, committing \$35 million of TIF funds in the city's new five-year housing plan – seven times what the city first proposed. In October, city officials touted the completion of the program's first apartments, a 26-unit building in North Lawndale, with a nearby nine-unit building ready in December.



Our coalition also monitors the start-up of the Cook County Land Bank, on which CCH Policy Director Julie Dworkin is a board member. The concern is ensuring that the land bank includes affordable housing and obtains community input on proposed projects, both of which Sweet Home got included last fall in the land bank's adopted priorities and procedures. We will advocate for a Sweet Home partner, Communities United (formerly, Albany Park Neighborhood Council), which plans to redevelop vacant residential properties through the land bank.

WAGE CAMPAIGNS

Jobs Project leaders are active in Raise Illinois. With CCH on its steering committee, Raise Illinois has pushed to boost the state's 2010 minimum wage, from \$8.25/hour to at least \$10/hour. Homeless minimum wage workers active at CCH testified in legislative hearings, press events and campaign videos. Our organizers working in Chicago, Champaign and East St. Louis collected 1,066 cards signed by people pledging to vote in the state referendum on the minimum wage. CCH also mobilized sheltered workers – more than 200 this year – to rally with Fight for 15, pushing for a \$15/hour wage for fast food and retail workers.

HOUSING PRESERVATION ORDINANCES

CCH partnered in Chicago For All, a coalition led by ONE Northside that proposed and negotiated for a new city ordinance to stop the rapid loss of single-room occupancy (SRO) housing. Enacted in November, the ordinance seeks to stem the loss of SRO buildings converted to high-end rental housing, mostly on Chicago's North Side. More than 2,200 SRO units were lost in three years and another 6,000 units are at-risk. Sun-Times columnist Mark Brown has reported extensively on the human impact of recent SRO closures, touting the coalition's efforts to save "a precious last chance affordable housing option for the poor."



CCH is also working to enact tougher amendments to Chicago's Affordable Requirements Ordinance (ARO). Our focus is to increase the \$100,000 fee developers must pay into an affordable housing fund if they get TIF or zoning changes yet won't set aside ten to twenty percent of the project for affordable units. Associate Policy Director Eithne McMenamin serves on the city's ARO Task Force, with allies at ONE Northside and Business and Professional People for the Public Interest. We are negotiating an ordinance that would offer incentives to developers to create more affordable units.

THE LAW PROJECT



The Law Project at CCH is the state's only legal aid project focused on the civil legal needs of homeless people. The caseload handled by our four attorneys focuses on the young: In FY14, 97% of the 298 cases that closed involved homeless children and teens with school access issues (49%), or homeless youth with civil legal needs (48%), including access to shelter and health care. Ninety-two percent of clients lived in Chicago, with others from 17 suburbs.

The demographics of our homeless clients are similar year-to-year. In FY14, 77.5% of clients were African-American, 9% Latino and 13.4% white. They were 66% female, 15% of youth clients were LGBT, and 7% had diagnosed disabilities. Last year, 67% of the 219 youth clients were unaccompanied – throwaway teens, former state wards, and very young adults who were homeless without support of family or legal guardian. Forty-eight percent of the youth were high school-age.

Two youth attorneys staff a mobile legal aid clinic called Youth Futures. They run weekly outreach at six shelter and drop-in programs; and via a rotating schedule of legal clinics at 10 Southwest Side high schools. During outreach, Youth Attorney Beth Cunningham uses a portable office inside a minivan that bears a Youth Futures sign. She runs the weekly clinics at Teen Living Programs, Center on Halsted, and CPS high schools, and helps CCH run twice-a-month meetings of the HELLO street youth group in Lakeview. Equal Justice Works fellow Graham Bowman focuses his work on helping youth access health care. He offers three weekly sessions at drop-in centers run by La Casa Norte and Teen Living Programs.

A case coordinator fluent in Spanish handles client intake, including calls from a toll-free helpline. The Law Project writes and distributes brochures on issues facing homeless students, youth and families, with 27,800 pieces distributed in 2013, including Spanish versions of each. The legal staff also offered 26 professional trainings for 1,665 attorneys, school staff and social workers. This

included including five Minimum Continuing Legal Education trainings for 80 attorneys, and in August, a dozen CPS-sponsored trainings for 1,300 homeless liaisons and school clerks on working with homeless students.

Recent clients include Tom, 17, a dropout who spent his days at the city's adult warming center at 10 South Kedzie. On his own, Tom tried to reenroll, but was turned away by several CPS high schools – they said he lacked enough credits to return to school. A city outreach worker referred Tom to CCH in April. Ms. Cunningham was able to enroll him at alternative high school in downtown Chicago.

REENTRY PROJECT HOUSING PILOT

The boards of the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) and the Housing Authority of Cook County voted this year to pilot a program to allow select ex-offenders to access public housing, instead of waiting at least five years.

Led by organizer Rachel Ramirez, the CCH Reentry Project proposed the Family Reunification Pilot. Community leaders, academics and advocates active on the Reentry Project worked two years to persuade local housing authorities to pilot it. The pilot was adopted by the CHA in November, and in August by the Cook County authority, which oversees public housing in 135 suburbs.



Up to 50 adults would be placed during three-year programs being piloted by both housing authorities. Publicly endorsed by Mayor Emanuel in March, the CHA will implement its pilot after it secures final approval from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Both pilots allow select re-entry service providers, such as St. Leonard's Ministries, to recommend clients who excelled in their post-release programs. These clients would be allowed to return to family who live in public housing, or accept their own placement if their name is drawn from a waitlist. It is hoped the pilot will show the positive impact of offering housing options to support ex-offenders who are working hard to turn their lives around.

SPEAKERS BUREAU & MEDIA



We build community support with our Speakers Bureau and media outreach. During FY14, the Speakers Bureau's 15 homeless leaders reached an audience of 4,498 people at 81 venues, usually school, university, civic and religious groups. The Bureau also organizes audiences that show interest in collaborating further: Our student teams mobilized 183 students from seven colleges/universities and seven high schools, plus two congregations, to advocate with city and state officials.

Staff and leaders are featured often in mainstream media, including the Chicago Sun-Times, Chicago Tribune, Equal Voice News, and WBEZ Public Radio. Our website averages about 12,000 visits a month, and includes a blog with 90 articles a year written by staff and volunteers. CCH has more than 3,800 Facebook followers, growing 30% this year, and doubled our Twitter following, to 2,300. Social media posts can also be accessed on the home page of our website, www.chicagohomeless.org

STATE BUDGET

CCH stopped more than \$7 million in proposed cutbacks to homeless shelter and service programs in the current state budget. This included \$4 million for homeless prevention grants, a program conceived by CCH that has helped 101,000 households with small, one-time grants since 2000. CCH also helped secure \$1 million more for homeless youth, a total of \$5.6 million for outreach, shelter and longer-term housing for unaccompanied youth. With the Responsible Budget Coalition, we also advocate extending the temporary, five percent state income tax rate so that Illinois minimizes a multi-billion dollar shortfall that would force deep cuts to vital school and human services programs.

CCH continues to advocate that Illinois restores funding for homeless school services. Proposed by CCH in the only year school services were state-funded (FY 2009), CCH wants Illinois to resume grants to school programs that ensure the enrollment, attendance and success of homeless students. CCH released a statewide survey showing more than half of public school districts said at least 52% of their homeless students were not getting needed tutoring, counseling or preschool. Homeless enrollment in Illinois still grows, with a 7% increase to 59,112 students in 2013-14. After hearing from CCH leaders and advocates, the Illinois State Board of Education and governor's office included a \$3 million allocation in their recommended budget plans, but the General Assembly did not restore funding last May.

SCHOLARSHIPS

CCH awards \$2,000 renewable college scholarships to homeless high school seniors, with five new winners each year. In 11 years, 44 Chicago students have received up to \$10,000 each in assistance to attend 23 schools, including Concordia and Lake Forest colleges, DePaul University, the University of Illinois-Chicago and Western Illinois University.



STATEWIDE NETWORK

CCH organizes service providers from nine suburbs and downstate communities to advocate on shared issues, including the minimum wage. This year organizers worked with 49 shelters, food pantries, churches and service providers in Aurora, Boone County, Champaign, East St. Louis, Joliet, Rockford, Springfield, Maywood and Waukegan/Lake County. Their outreach included registering 178 homeless people to vote, and helping more than 800 homeless people get to the polls in November.

FINANCES

CCH does not accept government funding. Instead, when we advocate for public support it is for the programs that shelter, house and assist homeless youths, families and vulnerable adults.

In FY14, 4,550 individual donors provided 41% of CCH's revenue. CCH's FY14 audit shows revenues of \$2.2 million were \$62,140 (3%) above expenses. Ranked with three to four stars by Charity Navigator since 2007, our charity relies on support from foundations, business sponsors, donors, and several special events, including a spring Hopefest concert.

UPCOMING EVENTS



HOMELESS MEMORIAL SERVICE
December 18, 2014
Old St. Patrick's Church



JUSTICE CIRCLE RECEPTION
January 28, 2015
Baker & McKenzie



CHEERS FOR CHANGE
Winter 2015



RAVENSWOOD 5K
April 26, 2015
Wilson & Hermitage Avenues



HOPEFEST
Spring 2015
Park West



SCHOLARSHIP AWARD CEREMONY
June 2015
Loyola Law School



GOLF OUTING
August 10, 2015
Wilmette Golf Club



RIOT FEST
September 11-13, 2015
Humboldt Park

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