



CHICAGO
COALITION
FOR THE
HOMELESS
2016 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 – 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 the homeless community. We work to empower people discouraged by poverty and homelessness, inform them of their options, and engage those who are interested in advocacy. Field organizers offer monthly outreach at 30 shelters across Chicago, reaching more than 6,000 homeless adults each year. This includes bilingual outreach in four shelters for Spanish-speaking residents, and creative writing outreach in four family shelters. Youth attorneys reach 2,000 youths at shelters, drop-in centers, street venues, and Chicago public high schools. Our State Network mobilizes 11 communities, with focus on Aurora, Rockford, Waukegan, and Will County.



CCH pairs its advocacy with community organizing. 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 500 homeless people of all ages. 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. In our effort to empower homeless people, this fall we registered 400 voters living in Chicago shelters.



HOMWORKS



Our multiyear HomeWorks campaign works with parent leaders and nine family housing providers to create affordable housing for homeless families and improve school services for homeless students.

With the promise of dedicated funding, HomeWorks advocated with aldermen to support the Airbnb ordinance enacted in June. The city's 4% surcharge will earn \$2 million yearly. The funds were dedicated to supportive services for homeless families placed in housing and for a pilot to house 75 people living under Uptown viaducts.

The CCH Law Project and our Education Committee also succeeded in persuading the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to adopt a strong homeless education policy. We spent 18 months advocating against watered-down CPS drafts, which, if adopted, would have cut services and protections for almost 19,000 homeless students. This includes pushing CPS to drop a provision that would have barred students from appealing if denied enrollment or school services, which we contend is illegal under federal McKinney-Vento law. Education Committee parents and students testified at eight CPS Board meetings.



In announcing the new CPS policy, adopted April 20, Chief Education Officer Dr. Janice Jackson issued a statement: "I want to commend the tireless work of the Chicago Coalition for the



Homeless, who worked with us to help develop a policy that is thoughtful, comprehensive and effective, because we have a responsibility to ensure all of our students receive the supports and resources they need to be successful." CCH monitors that the schools comply with the policy.

LAW PROJECT



The Law Project will mark its 20th year at a Justice Circle event on March 2, 2017. Ours is the only legal aid program in Illinois dedicated solely to the civil needs of homeless people.

Clients are low- to no-income. They include homeless people taken in by friends or a relative, often in overcrowded conditions that require moving after short stays. CCH attorneys represent clients with pressing needs: access to public schools and school services, access to housing or emergency shelter, and access to medical care, public benefits, or the birth and ID records that allow people to apply for jobs and housing. For people of meager financial means, these can be survival needs.

Five CCH attorneys closed 495 cases for 405 clients in FY16, an increase in caseload (by 21.6%) and clients served (13.1%) from the prior year. Thirty-four percent of casework stemmed from the schools: 27 children and 78 teens were represented on enrollment, residency, fee waivers and access to special education, tutoring or transportation. Another 66 teens presented other legal needs at 21 clinics held at Chicago high schools. Fifty-eight percent of casework involved youth with other civil needs, including access to Medicaid or health care (13.5%), public benefits (11.5%) or needed legal ID documents (38.5%), mostly birth certificates that youth cannot access without an attorney. CCH covered its clients' ID filing fees of \$4,362.

Ninety-six percent of cases were based in Chicago, with 19 cases in 15 suburbs.

Of our 340 youth clients, 70% were "unaccompanied" – most of them throwaway teens, former state wards, and very young adults who were homeless without support of family or legal guardian. Clients were 72% black, 16.5% Latino, 9.3% white and 2.2% other ethnicities. Sixteen percent of youth clients were LGBT.

A bilingual case coordinator fluent in Spanish handles client intake, including calls to our toll-free helpline. The Law Project distributed 21,972 informational brochures on 13 issues faced by homeless

students, youth, and families, including Spanish versions and a new palm card for youth. The legal staff trained 2,672 professionals, including 1,038 school nurses employed statewide.

Recent clients include Deandra, a senior accused of living outside her suburban high school district. The teen was raised by her grandmother, also homeless. Because the grandmother was away caring for an ailing relative, the girl would stay at different relatives' homes. The high school refused to let the teen participate in senior year activities unless the family paid more than \$9,000 in out-of-district tuition. The Law Project advocated on Deandra's behalf, preparing for a homeless dispute hearing and advocating intervention by the Illinois State Board of Education. Last spring, the school district agreed to drop tuition claims and allowed Deandra to go to prom and her graduation ceremony.



YOUTH FUTURES MOBILE LEGAL AID CLINIC

As part of the Law Project, three attorneys – one of them a formerly homeless youth – staff a mobile legal aid clinic called Youth Futures. Through outreach, youth attorneys connected with 2,003 youths and

directly consulted with 483 in FY16. Averaging 15 clinic sessions a month, the outreach sites include The Crib and Ujima overnight youth shelters, Broadway Youth Center, Center on Halsted, CPS high schools, and drop-in centers run by La Casa Norte and Teen Living Programs.

MOBILE APP FOR YOUTH

For the past year, Youth Health Attorney Graham Bowman has worked to develop a mobile phone app for use by homeless youth in Chicago. Working with technical staff from the Young Invincibles, StreetLight Chicago launched for use on November 14.



Homeless youth in Chicago have a variety of resources available to them. But too often they are required to rely on word-of-mouth or referrals and youth are left scrambling, unaware that a bed may be available at a nearby shelter. The app provides youth with timely information while offering phone numbers for key resources and referrals, including health clinics and drop-in centers. In coming months, our youth attorneys will train 150 youth and 250 service providers on how to use and maintain the app.



STATE BUDGET

CCH planned to bring 450 leaders to Springfield as usual, but due to the threat facing providers and those they serve, more people

offered to trek downstate. CCH brought 608 leaders to meet with 199 legislators on 11 trips to Springfield and six in-district meetings. We also sought public pressure through protests and regular media coverage.

Working with Housing Action Illinois, Policy Specialist Niya Kelly secured legislative sponsors for bills (HB4955/SB2603) to release \$274.7 million in already-collected funds held in eight housing accounts, including a Rental Housing Support Program and Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

To advocate for these bills, 36 statewide youth providers on our Youth Committee helped press for meetings between the governor's office and homeless youth. After several actions at the governor's office in January and February, we secured a meeting with Gov. Rauner's policy director. He said nothing could be done, so the group continued to press for a meeting with Rauner himself. The governor agreed, and a group of 20 met with the governor on February 19 – and alerted the media to the meeting. After telling the youth that he needed time to consider, Rauner directed a staffer to call four days later saying nothing would be done. Mainstream media covered this and a Feb. 29 "sleep-in"



protest at the Thompson Center.

Our staff worked with a youth leader to write a letter in Crain's Chicago Business about the failed meeting with Gov. Rauner. Caprice Williams, 22, lives with her baby at a Unity housing program that may close. Featuring a photo of Caprice standing beside the smiling governor, her March 2 letter was the top trending article in Crain's that day, according to editors. CCH also mobilized social media support: Then with a following of about 8,000, our Facebook posts that "Gov. Rauner Said No" to the youth was viewed by more than 64,000 people, and 41,845 viewed a follow-up post about Caprice's Crain's letter.



In April, we organized 121 youths to hold a high-profile sit-in at the Executive Mansion that garnered coverage in Capitol Fax. Our Action Alerts helped as well, with our biggest response ever from 554 people who sent messages telling Gov. Rauner to sign SB2038's stop-gap funding bill. Both that bill and the stop-gap that passed on June 30 included use of \$275 million in already-collected housing funds. That move was suggested in earlier bills proposed by CCH and Housing Action. CCH opposition helped win funding at 76% of FY15 levels for homeless youth programs, and 100% for homeless prevention grants and emergency and transitional housing.

REENTRY JOBS BILLS

The Reentry Project partners with Cabrini Green Legal Aid, Community Renewal Society, and Heartland Alliance. Our coalition advocated four job-access bills signed into law this summer, ending lifetime hiring bans in schools, park districts and healthcare facilities. Senior Organizer Rachel Ramirez mobilizes leaders at seven shelters and reentry programs, working with Jonathan Holmes, a policy specialist based in Springfield when the legislature is in session.





STATE NETWORK IN NAPERVILLE

CCH's State Network co-founded the DuPage Homeless Alliance, working to reduce housing discrimination in west suburban Naperville. The coalition succeeded in persuading Naperville's City Council to vote 5-4 in October to ban landlords from discriminating

against tenants who use government housing vouchers. Led by Senior Organizer Jim Picchetti, the network is active in 11 communities, including Aurora and Waukegan.

WEST SIDE HOUSING

The Reentry Project worked on the West Side Community Benefits Coalition to seek two community benefits agreements at large projects receiving public subsidies. Neither was won, but by April, we influenced a Cook County Board vote for a redevelopment plan that sets aside affordable housing in 200 (20%) of the 1,000 units to be built at the old hospital. The county board committed that 7.5% of people hired will be referred by West Side agencies, including St. Leonard's Ministries and Safer Foundation.



PEOPLE LIVING ON THE STREET

CCH co-counseled a January 2015 out-of-court agreement with the city of Chicago that provides a fair "sweeps" policy when crews remove homeless people's belongings on Lower Wacker Drive or under the Wilson Avenue viaduct. Since then, the Law Project continues

outreach to people who live on the street, offering legal assistance



and monitoring whether city crews comply. After we pressed city officials to provide housing alternatives for people living beneath Uptown viaducts, the city launched a pilot last spring to house 75 people. We continue to work with the residents as they negotiate placements and a

new round of weekly sweeps. Staff Attorney Diane O'Connell and a Loyola law intern ran 29 outreach sessions and monitoring visits in FY16, resulting in 143 connections with people and 15 individual cases.

SPEAKERS BUREAU & MEDIA

We build community support with our Speakers Bureau and media outreach. Led by Associate Organizing Director Hannah Willage, the Speakers Bureau's 15 homeless leaders reached an audience of 4,696 people at 85 venues, usually hosted by school, university, and religious groups. It also organizes audiences that show interest in collaborating further: Our student teams mobilized 289 students from 10 high schools and four local colleges and universities.



Staff and leaders are featured often in mainstream media, including the Chicago Sun-Times, Chicago Tribune, CBS Chicago, and WBEZ Public Radio. Our website averages more than 11,000 visits a month, with a staff blog. CCH has 8,800



Facebook followers and more than 4,500 on Twitter, with a new presence on Instagram. Social media posts can also be accessed on the home page of our website, www.chicagohomeless.org

SCHOLARSHIPS

CCH increased its annual college scholarship award, by \$500, to \$2,500 last school year. As of May, 13 students have graduated with bachelor's degrees, a 39% completion rate. This compares well to

a 2013 national study that showed just 9% of students from the lowest income bracket (\$34,160 or less) had earned a bachelor's by age 24 (University of Pennsylvania and the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, February 2015). Eighteen scholarship students returned to college this fall.



LEADERSHIP & FINANCES

CCH is guided by a 28-member Board of Directors. Doug Schenkelberg became executive director in January, following the retirement of Ed Shurna. Doug had experience working with CCH staff in his past positions directing advocacy at several Chicago non-profits, including Heartland Alliance, Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing, Greater Chicago Food Depository, and Forefront.



Our organization does not accept government funding. Instead, when we advocate for public support, it is for programs that shelter, house and assist homeless people. In FY16, 4,700 individual donors provided 48% of CCH's revenue. CCH's FY16 audit shows revenues of \$2.6 million at 3.6% over expenses. Ranked four stars by Charity Navigator, our charity relies on support from foundations, business sponsors, donors, and special events.

UPCOMING EVENTS

HOMELESS MEMORIAL SERVICE

December 19, 2016
Old St. Patrick's Church

JUSTICE CIRCLE 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

March 2, 2017
Chez

ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARTY

March 11, 2017
River Roast

HORIZONS POETRY SHOWCASE

Spring 2017

RAVENSWOOD 5K

April 29, 2017
Wilson & Hermitage Avenues

CHEERS FOR CHANGE

Spring 2017

BENEFIT CONCERT

Spring/Summer 2017

SCHOLARSHIP AWARD CEREMONY

June 22, 2017
Loyola Law School

GOLF OUTING

August 9, 2017
Wilmette Golf Club

RIOT FEST

September 15-17, 2017
Douglas Park

CHICAGO MARATHON

Sunday, October 8, 2017
Grant Park

