



**Interagency Council on Homelessness
2020 Performance Oversight Hearing
Responses to Questions from the Committee on Human Services**

- 1. Please provide a current organizational chart for the ICH.**
 - a. Please identify the number of full time equivalents (FTEs) at each organizational level and the employee responsible for the management of each program and activity.**

There are three full-time positions that staff the District’s Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH), as shown in the table below. The Executive Director, Kristy Greenwalt, is responsible for oversight and direction of the two Policy Advisors.

Position: Executive Director (Kristy Greenwalt) FTE: 1
Position: Policy Advisor (Lindsay Curtin) FTE: 1 Focus: Single Adults/Chronically Homeless Individuals/Veterans
Position: Policy Advisor (Kimberly Waller) FTE: 1 Focus: Unaccompanied Youth and Families

- b. If applicable, please provide a narrative explanation of any organizational changes made during FY19 and FY20 to date.**

At the beginning of FY20, the District was awarded \$4.28 million for the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The grant funds are administered through The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness (TCP), which serves as DC’s Collaborative Applicant, the entity responsible for preparing the community’s application for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Continuum of Care (CoC) funding and ensuring the jurisdiction meets all CoC program requirements. Using YHDP planning funds, TCP has hired three part-time fellow positions for youth with lived experience to support the implementation of the YHDP grant. One of those fellows works part-time at the ICH. The position is funded for one year.

- 2. What are the ICH priorities for FY21? How have such priorities shifted from previous fiscal years?**

With the support of the ICH staff, the ICH Standing Committees typically review progress made on priorities at the end of each calendar year, establish any new objectives, and then update work plans for the year ahead. The work plans help ensure stakeholders have a voice in establishing ICH priorities as well as ensuring partners are aligned and clear on objectives for the year.

Over the past year, the ICH has been focused on identifying and synthesizing lessons learned from the first four years of *Homeward DC* implementation and incorporating that information into an updated strategic plan, *Homeward DC 2.0*. This plan, which includes over 100 new strategies, is anticipated to be finalized by spring of 2020. As we are working on finalizing the plan, we will concurrently work with stakeholders in January and February to identify any new priorities for the remainder of FY2020 and FY2021. We will also reevaluate our committee structure to ensure the structure is relevant to the needs of the system.

That said, it's important to note that systems change is a long-term process, and the majority of strategies we are working on are multi-year efforts. We may complete one phase of the work in a given year, but rarely is a strategy considered complete. To review last year's work plans, you can visit the ICH website at <https://ich.dc.gov/event/ich-executive-committee-12>. Once the new work plans are finalized, they will be posted on the ICH website.

3. To accomplish the vision of *Homeward DC* and *Solid Foundations DC: Comprehensive Plan to End Youth Homelessness*, a number of District agencies are involved in specific ways. Please outline each agency's role in accomplishing the goals of the plan.

The *Homeward DC* and *Solid Foundations DC* plans both include over 40 strategies across numerous key objectives. Solving homelessness in our community is not the sole responsibility of one government agency or even the government sector alone. Each strategy identified typically requires the support and collaboration of multiple partners. The challenges of making a system work effectively result from programs and services, often operated by different departments, that need to be better aligned and coordinated. For example, different programs may use different or conflicting definitions (often driven by Federal funding sources), have different or conflicting eligibility or documentation requirements, or present unintended barriers for clients, where mitigation actually involves help from another agency (e.g., completion of an application for a housing choice voucher requires identification, which many individuals experiencing homelessness do not have and therefore requires the assistance of the Department of Health and the Department of Motor Vehicles). Therefore, the work of the ICH, and the strategies in the plan, often lie at the intersection of agencies and involve multiple partners.

Both *Homeward DC* and *Solid Foundations DC* outline the key agency partners who play a crucial role in implementing the different strategies and objectives identified in the plans. The soon-to-be-released *Homeward DC 2.0* plan will as well. For a complete list of the strategies and relevant government partners, see Chapter 5 of *Homeward DC* (<https://ich.dc.gov/page/homeward-dc-ich-strategic-plan-2015-2020>) and Chapter 4 of *Solid Foundations DC* (<https://ich.dc.gov/page/solid-foundations-dc-comprehensive-plan-end-youth-homelessness>).

- 4. Please describe ICH’s progress toward the FY20 priorities outlined in last year’s oversight response, including progress made toward implementation outlined in *Homeward DC*, including *Homeward DC 2.0*.**

In September 2019, the ICH published a comprehensive progress report, *Looking Back to Move Forward: Progress and Lessons Learned During the First Four Years of Homeward DC*. The report, which details progress on priorities, system-level performance, and key lessons learned, is available on the ICH website at <https://ich.dc.gov/page/homeward-dc-ich-strategic-plan-2015-2020>.

- 5. For FY20, the Council funded the third year of *Solid Foundations DC: Comprehensive Plan to End Youth Homelessness*. Please outline the implementation benchmarks that have been achieved for the following periods:**
- a. FY19;
 - b. FY20 to date; and
 - c. Any plans outlined for the balance of FY20.

Since the launch of *Solid Foundations DC*, the landscape in the District around homeless services for unaccompanied youth looks dramatically different. Building on the work of prior years, resources allocated in the FY19 and FY 20 budgets allowed us to launch the District’s first 24-hour youth drop-in center, develop prevention programming for young people seeking support, create additional shelter beds needed to ensure a more immediate connection for youth seeking a safe place to sleep, and expand transitional housing capacity for young adults experiencing homelessness.

In addition to the programs funded with local youth homelessness dollars, the District pursued federal resources in 2019 to help supplement resources on the local level. As previously discussed in our response to Question 1, the District was selected as one of HUD’s Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) grantees, receiving an addition \$4.28M to support implementation of *Solid Foundations DC*. Planning for the use of these new funds was a key priority throughout the fall and winter of 2019.

In 2019, the ICH Youth Committee identified six priority strategies for the year. These priorities are listed below, followed by key accomplishments for each.

- 1) Develop program models and performance measures for new programs; monitor performance and make adjustments as appropriate.

Accomplishments: In 2019, the ICH Youth Committee launched a new work group – the Youth Data and Performance Measures Work Group - which meets monthly. The group has worked to identify key metrics for each youth program model. Along with those metrics, the work group provided feedback to TCP to support development of a Provider Performance Scorecard tailored for the youth programming. Lastly, the work group

developed a process for sharing and reviewing the scorecards providers on a quarterly basis to share information on what is working and ways to improve outcomes.

- 2) Develop and implement new program models to quickly stabilize youth and young adults experiencing homelessness.

Accomplishments: In 2019, the ICH Youth Committee evaluated the program models included in *Solid Foundations DC*, using data to identify the successes of each model as well as unmet needs and gaps in the system. Based on this review, the ICH Youth Committee identified the need for more permanent housing options and designed a new program model called Joint Transitional Housing-Rapid Rehousing, where youth will begin the program in a more service intense environment and then move toward Rapid Rehousing once they are stable and connected to income pathways. Using federal resources, the youth system just launched the District's first Joint Transitional Housing-Rapid Rehousing Program.

- 3) Develop training curriculum and conduct cross-training, including: (1) training for adult outreach and shelter staff on youth needs and youth system protocols, and (2) training for youth providers on adult system resources and protocols.

Accomplishments: Through the ICH Youth Street Outreach Work Group, where government agency representatives and youth street outreach providers meet to troubleshoot issues in real time, the youth system has developed processes for better connections with the adult system. Partners at DHS developed flyers and posters that are posted/distributed in adult emergency shelters to share information regarding youth-specific shelters for those individuals under age 25. The ICH Youth Street Outreach Work Group also conducted cross-training between the adult emergency shelter managers and the youth street outreach providers, youth-drop in centers, and youth emergency shelter staff to share information about the youth system and the adult system, and learn more about ways to coordinate and share resources. Finally, Youth Street Outreach Providers developed and implemented a schedule for conducting in-reach with adult emergency shelters, to ensure that young adults have access to youth resources if they choose.

- 4) Prepare grant application for U.S. Housing and Urban Development Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP), a federally funded demonstration grant designed to fund innovative and effective ways to reduce youth experiencing homelessness.

Accomplishments: The ICH Youth Committee assisted in the completion of the grant application for the YHDP, which was submitted in the Spring of 2019. As mentioned in response to question 1, the District was selected as a YHDP community and was awarded \$4.28 million to support the youth homeless services system.

- 5) Identify youth experiencing homelessness who are served by other systems in order to 1) understand the needs of multisystem-involved youth and how to better target services;

and 2) develop transfer protocols for youth receiving long-term services from, or in the custody of, the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS), or DBH.

Accomplishments: CFSA, DYRS, and DBH are members of the ICH Youth Committee and are actively engaged in *Solid Foundations DC* implementation. They continue to inform enhancements to the Homeless Youth Census survey tool to improve our ability to capture more robust data on multisystem-involved youth. The ICH has also been working with partners to establish data-sharing agreements with these agencies so we may learn more about the needs and characteristics of this population. This work will continue into FY20 and the data analysis results will be shared through the ICH Committee structure. Finally, the ICH and DHS have been guiding the continued work around improving transfer protocols that help guide other systems when they have a young person transitioning from their services who may not have access to safe and stable housing. Transfer protocols are in place and the ICH and its partners regularly meet with these agencies to monitor progress.

- 6) Identify DC-government and community-based internship/mentorship programs targeting transition age youth and determine partnership opportunities.

Accomplishments: In 2019, the ICH Youth Action Board (YAB) began work on developing recommendations regarding mentorship programming for youth experiencing homelessness. Continuing in 2020, the YAB will meet with various mentorship programs currently available in the District and will use this information to inform their recommendations. Those recommendations are anticipated to be presented to the ICH Youth Committee in spring of 2020.

6. Please state and describe all (if any) priorities of *Solid Foundations DC: Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness* that were met in 2019 and FY20 to date.

Please see response to Question #5 for information on priorities achieved in 2019 and FY20 to date.

7. In 2020, the ICH completed its 5th Homeless Youth Census. What (if any) adjustments in priority will need to be made in light of this information?

The ICH works closely with TCP and DHS on the annual Homeless Youth Census to ensure we are collecting the data needed to implement *Solid Foundations DC*. Throughout the first three years of the Census (2015-2017), the number of youth identified through the Census increased by 20% – from 545 to 656. This increase was likely the result of our increasing bed capacity as we continued to implement new programming under the Solid Foundations plan (making youth easier to identify), rather than a significant increase in the number of youth experiencing homelessness.

In 2018, a number of changes were made to the Homeless Youth Census (HYC) methodology to better understand the highly mobile nature of youth experiencing homelessness. For the first time, the count looked at the nighttime location at which a youth most often stayed during the previous 30-day window (as opposed to the previous HYC methodology, which captured sleeping location for just the night of the survey). This methodology allowed the census to identify more youth and their flow through varying homelessness categories over a one-month period. However, this makes comparing the data from the first three years of the census to 2018 and 2019 data more challenging

As the table below illustrates, the number of youth experiencing homelessness over the course of a month decreased slightly between 2018 and 2019. Given that we continued adding shelter and transitional housing beds over the last year, we believe this means we are seeing the true baseline of youth homelessness in the District.

Homeless Youth Census 2019 – 2018 Changes			
	Total 2019	Total 2018	Percent Change
All Persons			
All Persons	1306	1328	-1.7%
Household Composition			
Singles	742	782	-5.1%
<i>Transition Age Youth (18 - 24)</i>	689	712	-3.2%
<i>Unaccompanied Minors (Under 18)</i>	53	70	-24.3%
Family Heads of Household	564	546	3.3%
<i>Transition Age Youth (18 - 24)</i>	556	534	4.1%
<i>Minors (Under 18)</i>	8	12	-33.3%

Despite some fluctuations to the overall total, the trends within the data (e.g., characteristics of youth experiencing homelessness, key causes) have remained largely consistent. Accordingly, we do not anticipate major changes to priorities. We will continue efforts to scale programming, align policy across the system, ensure more effective transitions between programs (and systems), and enhance needed supports – especially around education, employment, and health.

8. Please describe how the ICH is partnering with youth-serving government agencies (DYRS, MPD, CFSA, etc.) to prevent youth homelessness. What role does the ICH view these agencies having in the formation of a system of care?

As discussed throughout *Solid Foundations DC*, youth who are involved in other systems, like the criminal legal system, the juvenile legal system, or the child welfare system, are at a greater risk of experiencing homelessness.

Accordingly, the ICH has designated nine seats for government partner participation on the ICH Youth Committee, including: DHS, DBH, CFSA, DYRS, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), the Mayor's Office of LGBTQ Affairs (MOLGBTQ), and our Federal Collaborative Applicant (TCP). These partner agencies play a critical role in expanding homelessness prevention efforts, assisting with outreach to and identification of youth experiencing homelessness, and providing resources to ensure youth have access to education, employment, and permanent connections.

9. How is the District serving LGBTQ or undocumented youth experiencing homelessness, and how is the ICH working with other jurisdictions to encourage similar programs throughout the region?

As discussed in previous responses, a core component of *Solid Foundations DC* has been the institution of an annual youth census – similar in function to our annual Point in Time (PIT) count, but administered differently to better account for the way in which youth homelessness manifests. The data gathered through the census improves our understanding of the number needs of all vulnerable youth in the District, including LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness as well as undocumented youth.

This data helps guide resource allocation and better target interventions to youth in our community. For example, the District has added dedicated programming for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness (over 100 beds as of January 2020), though our overarching objective is to ensure that all providers are culturally competent and able to serve the needs of any and all youth in need of assistance.

Additionally, there are a variety of ways the District's homeless services system ensures it is properly serving undocumented individuals. Many providers in the District's CoC have bilingual staff and all are trained on the language access line. Homeless services providers are offered access to a variety of trainings, including cultural competency, trauma-informed care, and other topics that train staff on how to ensure all individuals feel safe and welcome. Additionally, the ICH worked in coordination with the DHS in 2017 to develop and distribute guidance for providers on protocol in case Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents show up at a program site in search of undocumented individuals.

With regard to regional efforts, the ICH has been working in partnership with staff from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) to share information and identify opportunities for collaboration with our regional partners. In FY17, the District signed a Data Use Agreement (DUA) with Montgomery County and Prince Georges County. This DUA allows us to conduct system-wide data analysis to better understand movement between systems, and it enables us to do better case coordination regarding specific individuals and families that may be touching multiple systems. Additionally, we appointed members of the ICH that work in multiple communities (i.e., service provider representatives); they also help with the informal sharing of information and best practices.

10. Please share the ICH observations regarding homelessness among youth headed households and what interventions are being offered to address this need.

Pregnancy and parenthood are common occurrences among young people experiencing homelessness. Parenting youth under the age of 25 constitute approximately one-quarter of the households in the District's family system. And the 2019 Homeless Youth Census counted 564 youth heads of household experiencing homelessness in the District. It is important that the family system be designed and positioned to quickly respond to the needs of young mothers and fathers. Many young parents have little or no experience living independently, and they may also be struggling with being a first-time parent. Young parents experiencing homelessness may have also experienced family conflict related to the pregnancy, leading to a breakdown in support networks. For all these reasons, successfully stabilizing young families is not just about providing re-housing assistance, but basic life skills, parenting support, and connections to (or development of) support networks as well. Given the unique needs of youth headed households, the ICH Strategic Planning Committee recommended that *Homeward DC 2.0* include a specific set of strategies ensuring youth-headed families are connected to developmentally-appropriate resources that are tailored for their unique needs.

11. Please provide an update on how the ICH facilitates the partnership between the D.C. Housing Authority and the Department of Human Services with respect to administering housing subsidies for Permanent Supportive Housing and Targeted Affordable Housing:

DHS and the D.C. Housing Authority (DCHA) have seats on a number of committees working on implementation of different parts of the *Homeward DC* plan, including the Strategic Planning, Housing Solutions, and Executive Committees. These committees each have a multitude of responsibilities that require a close partnership between DHS and DCHA. One important example is administration of our coordinated entry systems for both singles and families. Within the Singles Coordinated Assessment and Housing Placement (CAHP) Work Group, for example, decisions are made about how to best prioritize access and lease-up available Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) resources. Given the number of different steps and different staff involved in helping a client exit homelessness to PSH, the work group regularly reviews data to examine how long it takes clients to move through the housing process and where we are experiencing bottlenecks or challenges in order to identify necessary changes to policy or business process. For example, to ensure accuracy and reduce application rejections, DHS and DHCA conduct voucher application and documentation training for providers and partners every quarter to ensure new staff are well-trained on the process. DHS also added dedicated staff to assist with review of applications prior to submission to DHCA.

a. How many pre-inspections of units were conducted in FY19 and FY20 to date?

In the past, pre-inspections were predominantly used in conjunction with "Meet and Lease" events, where the District attempted to identify (and pre-inspect) a pool of available units, and then bring landlords looking for tenants together with clients searching for units to

meet, complete an application, and execute a lease agreement on a single day. After tracking outcomes of these events, we found that they did not dramatically increase the number of lease-ups achieved over the course of a year relative to normal operating protocol, though they took a tremendous amount of time and effort to plan. Accordingly, we have not hosted Meet and Lease events in 2019 or 2020 to date.

b. What is the average approval timeline for administering subsidies for Permanent Supportive Housing and Targeted Affordable Housing?

The average timeline from voucher application submission to lease-up is 115 days. This includes the time it takes for application approval, voucher issuance, unit search, unit application/acceptance, landlord packet completion, unit inspection, and lease-up. Finding ways to continue expediting the housing search and lease-up process is a critical piece of our work ahead, and will be a focus on *Homeward DC 2.0*.

12. Please describe the work ICH is doing to improve landlord engagement. Please provide data including, but not limited to, the following:

A number of steps have been taken over the past few years to bolster landlord engagement in CoC programs. First, the Landlord Partnership Fund (LPF) was launched in early FY18 to incentivize landlords to relax their screening criteria and accept clients exiting homelessness. The LPF was developed in partnership with the Downtown DC Business Improvement District and the Coalition for Non-Profit Housing and Economic Development (CNHED) and is being administered by CNHED. In July 2019, to encourage greater landlord enrollment, changes were made to how the LPF is administered to lower administrative hurdles for landlords to “opt in” and to expand eligibility. Webinars were held to engage landlords around this expansion. Since then, the number of units enrolled by landlords have increased significantly. "Office Hours" are also being hosted to assist landlords in completing LPF applications, to discuss eligibility, and to answer any questions they may have.

In addition to the expanded eligibility of the LFP, the District took a number of steps in 2019 to stand up a coordinated, systemwide approach for landlord engagement and unit/client matching. A dedicated FTE was hired by TCP to lead The Landlord Engagement Work Group – a cross-section of government, nonprofit, and private sector partners – which meets regularly to build this infrastructure. With the help of this team, business/systems requirements were completed for a Central Unit Repository (CUR). The CUR will be a systemwide electronic clearinghouse that identifies available units from willing landlord partners. The units shown in the CUR will include details such as size (# of bedrooms), type, rental amount, and neighborhood, and will be easily searchable by both Case Managers and Housing Navigators. Based on the system requirements, Case Managers and Housing Navigators will be able to help clients apply for units and track the inspection process through the system. Finally, landlords will also be able to upload and store required

documents, complete necessary paperwork, and submit landlord packets through the system.

Finally, system partners were brought together from across the CoC to create a standard landlord package for use across the homeless services system to simplify the system for landlords. Training will be provided on this new packet, which should be rolled out across the homeless services system in early 2020.

a. Number of landlords engaged;

In FY19, clients receiving assistance through a locally-funded homeless services program leased units from 849 different landlords. In FY20 to date, DHS programs have already leased units from 182 landlords.

b. Number of units committed by landlords engaged;

When the CUR goes live, we will be able to better account for the number of units that landlords proactively advertise to individuals experiencing homelessness, though a unit is really only committed once a lease has been executed. The number of units formally committed is reflected in the response to question 'e' below.

d. Average size of engaged units;

Across the CoC, which includes both single adults and family households, the average rental unit size is a two-bedroom unit.

d. Average rental cost of units; and

Federal and local housing assistance (such as Section 8 housing choice vouchers or Local Rent Supplement Program vouchers) can only be used at units that meet federal Fair Market Rent (FMR) standards. These FMRs are the best indication of rental prices for clients exiting the homeless services system. FMRs for the District can be found at https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr/fmrs/FY2019_code/2019summary.odn.

e. Number of units for which a lease has been signed by a tenant in FY19 and FY20 to date.

- DHS FY2019 Lease ups: 1,339
- DHS FY20 (to date): 373

13. Please describe ICH's role and any progress toward reducing barriers to housing such as reliance on credit checks, criminal history checks, furnishing and rental histories.

There are a number of barriers – some administrative, some market-driven, and others related to racism and discrimination – that are experienced by individuals moving into

housing. Finding ways to reduce barriers and expedite the housing search and lease up process is a critical and ongoing piece of our work.

Building on work from previous years (including efforts to improve access to identification documents and streamline housing application paperwork requirements), several additional measures were taken in 2019. In addition to the landlord engagement measures identified in response to Question 12, the ICH partnered with the Greater Washington Community Foundation to launch the Partnership to End Homelessness (PTEH) in mid-2019 with the goal of leveraging and aligning private sector resources to support implementation of the District's Homeward DC strategy. (For more information on the PTEH, see <https://www.thecommunityfoundation.org/partnership-to-end-homelessness>). Among many other priorities, the PTEH will operate a grant fund to help fill gaps in District-funded housing programs. In the fall of 2019, the PTEH awarded its first round of "flex fund" grants to local PSH providers, the goal of which is to ensure providers have funding to cover small, one-time expenses not otherwise covered by District programs that can serve as large barriers to people searching for housing (fees related to obtaining an out-of-state birth certificate, apartment amenity fees, transportation to view a unit, etc.). We will be measuring the outcomes of this pilot and look forward to expanding it if successful.