

**Services Related to Homelessness: City of Bangor
Government Operations Committee
December 20, 2021**

The City is one of many agencies that provide services to those experiencing homelessness in our community. Over the next several months, we will invite various agencies to come speak at Government Operation Committee meetings about the services they provide so that we may begin to understand the depth of services, identify gaps, and seek solutions.

We will begin with the City of Bangor and will wrap up at the end of all the presentations with things that may have been missed and to answer any outstanding questions. Keep in mind this is part one of a series meant to better inform, showcase all the important work our community is doing, and to better understand how they are all related and work to help those most vulnerable.

Overarching service categories include:

- Housing (emergency, transitional, permanent)
- Case Managers & Navigators
- Food/Showers/Hygiene
- Warming shelters
- Substance use treatment/Recovery
- Mental health services
- Transportation

City of Bangor

General

The City Manager's office is regularly involved with this matter but the bulk of the work is based within the departments, primarily Public Health & Community Services. We have seen the numbers of those living outside increase from around 40 individuals historically to somewhere around 75-100 as of Dec. 16 (previously 170 earlier this year). It is important to keep in mind that the numbers fluctuate for a number of reasons.

Housing

We do not specifically track and compile the amount of affordable or low-income units we have in the City, however, Assessing was able to provide the following estimates:

- Properties believed to be low-income/affordable as of Dec 2021: 61 with 1,402 dwelling units. This would include Bangor Housing Authority, Community Housing of Maine, Inc (CHOM), Penquis, and more.
- For comparison, the City has a total of 9,154 properties with 15,345 dwelling units. That is approximately 9% of dwelling units believed to be low-income housing.

Community Funding Support

Through CDBG & CARES Act funding, the City provided financial support in 2020 through current to:

	Amount	Agreement Executed
Bangor Area Homeless Shelter - Warming Center	\$ 12,000.00	Nov-20
Brick Church - Showers	\$ 10,500.00	Dec-20
Columbia Street Church - life safety repairs for sheltering	\$ 4,500.00	Jul-20
Brick Church - Sprinklers	\$ 168,600.00	Dec-20
Shaw House- various physical plant improvements	\$ 25,000.00	(not yet executed)
Hope for Homeless -food assistance	\$ 10,000.00	Dec-20
Hope for Homeless -food assistance	\$ 10,500.00	Apr-21
Hope for Homeless -food assistance	\$ 25,000.00	Aug-21
Bangor Area Homeless Shelter - door & vent hood	\$ 12,000.00	Jun-20
Hope House - sleeping pod	\$ 90,000.00	Nov-21
Bangor Area Homeless Shelter - Warming Center	\$ 15,000.00	Oct-21
Health & Community Services	\$ 784.00	Jun-21
Bangor Area Homeless Shelter - rapid resolution program	\$ 14,000.00	Mar-21
Total	\$ 397,884.00	

Meeting Participation

- Maine Continuum of Care
- Board meeting, Data Committee, Coordinated Entry Committee, Monitoring Committee, Document Review, Scoring and Template Committees
- Region III Homeless Council
- Statewide Homeless Council
- Built for Zero & HUB 7
- Weekly case conference/by-name list
- CHLB (one area of focus is homelessness)
- GA Taskforce

Public Health & Community Services

Overview of services:

- Homeless Outreach Caseworker
- Overdose Response Team / OPTIONS (Overdose Prevention Through Intensive Outreach Naloxone & Safety)
- NARCAN
- Nurse Services (Provides vaccines – hepatitis A, COVID, & flu at shelters/warming centers)
- Prevention
- Shelter + Care Housing Vouchers
- General Assistance

Homeless Outreach Program

- The position of Homeless Outreach Caseworker was created in August 2019 and costs approximately \$70,000 annually including expenses unrelated to personnel costs.
- The caseworker spends their time working primarily with individuals and families experiencing unsheltered homelessness. They collaborate with outreach workers from CHCS and PCHC to visit encampments on a regular basis. They have also been instrumental in creating a by-name list of individuals experiencing homelessness which is key to addressing the problem.
- Until recently, the home base was the Health & Community Services Department, but now located at the Police Department. Officers were often tied up with individuals experiencing homelessness when police intervention wasn't necessarily needed. An officer who finds themselves with a homeless individual who is not engaged in criminal activity can call on this caseworker to take over so they can move to the next call.
- Program highlights:
 - 53 individuals, most of them chronically homeless, housed.
 - Bus tickets purchased for 70 homeless individuals who had a verifiable housing plan in another state. Most were returning to their place of origin or to family. Total expenditures for these bus tickets total \$11,325.

Overdose Response Team

- A four-year grant program from Maine DHHS for \$150,000 per year or \$600,000 total and started in January 2021. The grant covers Penobscot County - with a focus on Bangor (as this is the highest # of overdoses in the county).
- Penobscot County also has their own grant they work through CHCS with for this purpose called OPTIONS (state program through CARES funding) and we work closely together.
- Together they follow up with individuals who overdose (and their families) within 72 hours throughout the county and provide weekly outreach to unhoused individuals around Bangor. They build relationships, provide Narcan, make referrals to harm reduction, treatment, recovery and other services as well as do follow up/check in.
- Provides training and support to first responder & public safety departments.
- Since March 2021, the team has had 324 contacts, the majority of which have been in Bangor.
- In collaboration with CHCS OPTIONS Liaison (SUD Counselor), BARN and Together Place Peer Recovery Centers (Recovery Coaches) as well as Bangor PD - 4 officers paid for extra time, funded under our grant, to work with team. Also, collaborate with other Police, State Trooper and Sheriff Departments for referrals.

NARCAN

- Grant funded Narcan (also referred to as naloxone) distribution that covers five counties: Penobscot, Piscataquis, Washington, Aroostook, and Hancock.
- In FY 21, we spent \$383,700 on 5,116 units of Narcan.
- The grant allows us to pass out Narcan to what is called T2 organizations who can then turn around and distribute to individuals. There are 63 such organizations in total across all counties, 22 of those are in Bangor.
- For the period July 2021 – November 30, 2021:

- Total kits distributed: 3,629 with 3,000 of those in Bangor
- Total reversals reported: 428 with 398 in Bangor

General Assistance (GA)

GA is a program required by the State that every municipality provides emergency relief to folks for various needs such as housing, heating, personal items, and more depending upon a person's income/resources. This is a critical piece as it helps divert individuals away from homeless response system. The State reimburses municipalities for 70% of these direct costs. The current set up of the system adds additional burden to service centers for reasons to be discussed.

Statistics:

FY 2019

- Total number of individuals assisted: 1,569
- City share of total GA cost: \$507,354
- Shelter specific expenditure: Total - \$150,314, City Share - \$45,094
- Sober House Expenditures: \$10,341 (many sober house tenants come directly from homelessness or incarceration)

FY 2020

- Total number of individuals assisted: 1,674
- City share of total GA cost: \$447,040
- Shelter specific expenditure: Total - \$136,939 City Share - \$41,082
- Sober House Expenditures: \$41,651

FY 2021

- Total number of individuals assisted: 964
- City share of total GA cost: \$281,343
- Shelter specific expenditure: Total - \$82,332, City Share - \$24,700
- Sober House Expenditures: \$40,545

GA admin costs that ARE NOT reimbursed by the state is approximately \$315,000 for FY 2021.

It's worth noting that GA funds spent on housing decreased in FY 21 due to clients being referred to Penquis for their rent relief program, thereby dropping our rental expenditures. A significant amount of money is also spent for rent relief, separate from shelter, as a means to keep people in their homes.

Shelter Plus Care

- Shelter Plus Care is a HUD funded program that targets chronically homeless individuals and families. In order to qualify, one member of the household must have a documented mental illness, substance use disorder, or HIV/AIDS.
- The City's Shelter Plus Care Housing Specialist works closely with the homeless outreach caseworker and caseworkers from other agencies to identify chronically homeless individuals

and families. People living in homeless encampments, chronically homeless individuals and those in shelters for more than six months are prioritized.

- As of 12/15/21, 232 participants are housed through the Shelter Plus Care program. Three more are awaiting the inspection of their units before they can move in. This program does not have an end date so long as the person continues to meet the requirements.
- All Shelter Plus Care units must be inspected at move-in and annually and is generally done by Code Enforcement.
- Most are housed in Bangor, but some are in surrounding communities including Orono, Old Town, and Veazie. Housing can be anywhere within Penobscot County.
- The total HUD grant for Shelter Plus Care is currently \$1,035,914 per year.

Parks & Recreation / Public Works

These two departments frequently work together on similar items, such as:

- Field complaints related to parks, needles, trash, etc. Responds accordingly.
- Picks up trash and needles throughout City.
- Has some interaction directly with homeless individuals and alerts other staff when needed to help connect folks.
- Clean up of encampment sites costs the City approximately 10-15k per year and includes personnel, disposal, and other direct costs.

Police Dept

- As of Dec 16, 2021, Bangor PD logged nearly 34,000 calls for service since Jan 1st. About a third of annual police calls involve people experiencing homelessness and/or mental health issues including but not limited to vagrancy, want-outs, welfare checks, theft, trespass, fights, assaults, protection order issues, and warrant arrests.
- Partnership with Northern Light Acadia Hospital – two full-time mental health liaisons and new (FY22) part-time position (to be filled soon) who specialize in substance use.
 - The liaisons are used to help de-escalate agitated individuals and help divert them away from our emergency rooms whenever possible.
 - They ride with patrol officers 40 hours a week.
 - The cost is shared with Acadia. In FY 21, the City budgeted \$131,000 between the Police budget and CDBG for this purpose.
- Partners with our Homeless Outreach Coordinator to intervene and provide direct support.
- Participates with the Overdose Response Team on a weekly basis. PD interacts with many in the homeless community during outings with this team.
- Community Relations Officer spends approximately 20hrs per week working on homelessness related issues. This includes, but is not limited to, assisting Homeless Outreach Caseworker at campsite visits, working with local outreach providers, and hospitals, meeting with property owners to address vagrancy/trespass issues, and writing letters to verify homelessness for voucher programs.

- PD’s Public Information Officer spends roughly 10hrs a week working on homelessness related issues. This includes communicating with leaders at local shelters, (Brick/Mansion Church, BAHS/PCHC), and providing support for officers, and supervisors when dealing with more challenging situations.
- PD has been known to provide donated gift cards and resource information for those in need and also provide rides (when necessary) to get someone to a shelter. These are positive interactions in which case PD has built rapport with many experiencing homelessness and being on a first name basis is fairly common.
- Important to understand that part of the rapport is built because PD focuses on encouraging them to seek treatment rather than arrest/charge people for illegal drug use/possession. This increases the odds of gaining cooperation without having to use force, either in the moment, or in the future.

Built for Zero Summary

The State of Maine recently began working on a homeless services system redesign. This is being done through the COC or Continuum of Care—the States’ funnel for all HUD related housing dollars. As part of the system redesign effort, the State created Homeless Service Hubs; our hub is Penobscot/Piscataquis county, Hub 7.

The State has now engaged an organization called Community Solutions to begin a methodology called Built for Zero which seeks to collect ‘hub’ data using the data system called HMIS (homelessness management information system). The goal is to look at the data as a community, to have a by-name list of people experiencing homelessness, and to know each individuals’ strengths and barriers. Using the data, community providers will work to address barriers and secure stable housing.

The overarching goal is to achieve what Community Solutions calls “functional zero” or a state where homelessness is rare or brief. At this point, two meetings have been held and an RFP was released to each Hub to hire a Hub Coordinator. We will update as things move along.

Closing

In closing, Bangor is just one of many service providers and does a lot to help address the issue of homelessness facing our community while acknowledging there is more work to be done.

While in no way all-inclusive, the approximate amount of funding used since the start of the pandemic to help 1) those experiencing homelessness, or 2) trying to avoid homelessness, as described in this memo, is as follows:

\$2,576,062 - City funded
\$4,593,289 - Grants administered through the City by various entities
\$7,169,351 – Sub-total
\$2,883,386 – State of Maine in GA funding
\$10,052,737 in total

As we move through upcoming presentations by community agencies, we hope the information shared will help us understand the depth of services, identify gaps, and seek solutions.