



Office of  
**Homeless Services**  
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

# PROGRESS

**making homelessness rare, brief,  
and non-recurring in Philadelphia**

**2018 Annual Report**



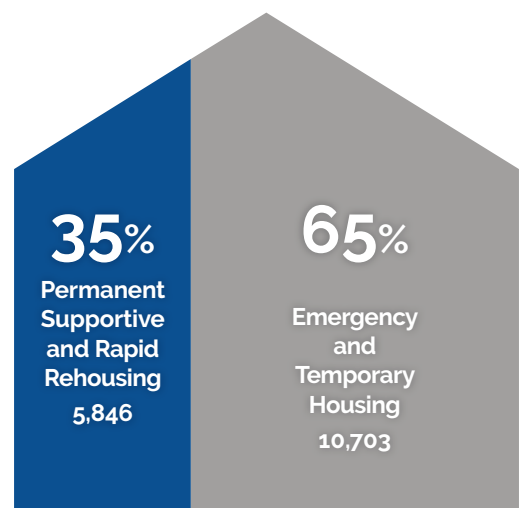
# What we do

Our mission is clear: Through a network of partners, we provide leadership, coordination, planning, and mobilization of resources to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring in Philadelphia.

Our shared work falls into three categories:

- **Prevention and diversion:** Working to prevent homelessness in the first place and diverting people away from shelters and into alternatives that are effective and safe for them.
- **Emergency and temporary housing:** Providing critically needed shelter to those who otherwise have no options and would be on the street or other places unfit for human habitation.
- **Long-term housing:** Securing stable housing for Philadelphia's most vulnerable residents. This includes programs like Rapid Rehousing.

Our strategy is "Housing First," providing housing to those experiencing homelessness without barriers to entry. Having a safe, stable place to stay is the platform upon which people can build education, employment, and recovery.



2018 People Served

Since 2016, we've added about 350 permanent supportive housing units. These programs are more than 90 percent effective at preventing a return to homelessness.





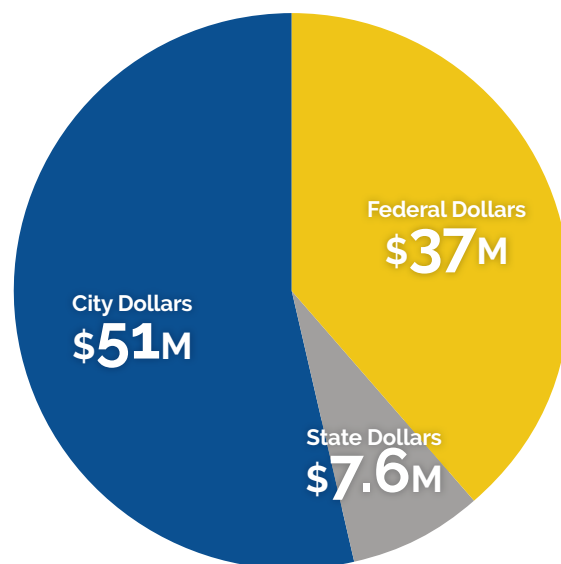
# How we do it

While Philadelphia continues to have the lowest rate of street homelessness of any major U.S. city, there is still much work to be done.

Our strategic plan, Roadmap to Homes, guides us as we continue to build on past progress to create an efficient, effective homeless services system. The newly elected Roadmap to Homes board helps guide implementation.

We listen to people with lived experience and our providers in the decision making process along with civic, philanthropic, and business leaders. And, we have a policy of equal access for all our programs.

We distribute and administer taxpayer funds to nonprofit providers who are on the front lines offering vital services to people experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness.



**2018 Homeless Assistance  
Funding Sources**

For every \$1 spent on homelessness prevention, we save \$3 in avoiding emergency shelter costs. Thanks to the local Housing Trust Fund, we've tripled our prevention budget over the past three years.



# Progress in 2018

## PROGRESS ► helping families

In 2018, we saw 20 percent fewer families in shelters than in January 2016, with no families counted on the street during the 2018 or 2019 Point in Time Count.

To sustain this progress, we're expanding what works by growing our Rapid Rehousing programs. Rapid Rehousing provides a time-limited rental subsidy that helps people quickly reconnect to housing in the community. It has an 80-85 percent success rate at preventing a return to homelessness.

This year, with the Department of Human Services, we developed a Rapid Rehousing program specifically designed to serve families for whom housing is their only barrier to reunification.

Currently, we're working with the City's PHL Participatory Design Lab to rethink and redesign our intake processes and spaces in a trauma-informed way so that all seeking help can feel safer and more welcome.

## PROGRESS ► creating innovative programs

In 2018, we piloted an innovative shallow rent program to help people with disabilities and very low incomes end their experience of homelessness. They pay a modest, fixed amount toward rent, we pay the difference in an inspected housing unit in the community. With so many people experiencing homelessness receiving SSI and SSDI, this is a cost-effective approach enabling them to be housed rather than stay in a shelter.

This program is significantly less costly than a typical rental subsidy.

After shallow rent's success in 2018 — with 39 out of 40 participants still housed at the end of the year — we decided to double the program to 80 participants.

**In 2018, 15 percent of people entering any of our programs reported they were already working for income.**





## PROGRESS ► fostering LGBTQ inclusion

We won the 2018 Pride Challenge from the True Colors Fund, training over 800 staff to provide affirming and inclusive services to LGBTQ youth, who are overrepresented among youth experiencing homelessness.

As a result of these efforts, the True Colors Fund awarded Philadelphia the 2018 True Community Award.

We're continuing to make our programs LGBTQ culturally competent and welcoming for all.

## PROGRESS ► helping immigrant and refugee communities

We've expanded outreach into immigrant communities, in particular by building the capacity of two immigrant-serving partner organizations to address the housing needs of people they serve. We also worked to help immigrant-serving organizations address critical expenses associated with providing safety for domestic abuse survivors.

In addition, we secured funding for a new English-Spanish bilingual mobile assessor to provide assessments for housing and other services anywhere in Philadelphia.

At present, we're working closely with the City's Office of Digital Design and Transformation to ensure that new marketing and informational materials aren't just translated into Spanish but designed from the start for both English- and Spanish-speaking populations.

**45 percent of all people who exited transitional, Rapid Rehousing, or permanent supportive housing programs increased their income through work or by obtaining benefits by the time they left.**



# Progress in 2018

## PROGRESS ► helping youth

In 2018, we opened youth-specific access points, ensuring that youth experiencing homelessness have their own dedicated spaces through which to seek help. We also worked at building cross-system partnerships, such as with the School District of Philadelphia and Department of Human Services to better identify and support students experiencing homelessness.

We trained partners on interacting with and helping youth, including the Free Library of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Juvenile Probation Department, and the Philadelphia Police Department.

We included members of our Young Adult Leadership Committee (YALC) on funding review panels. YALC is represented on our Roadmap to Homes board.

## PROGRESS ► transforming our system

For every \$1 we spend on homelessness prevention, we save an estimated \$3 in emergency shelter costs. So over the past three years and thanks to the local Housing Trust Fund, we've tripled our homelessness prevention budget. Last year, we diverted just under 900 people from our system, saving the City \$6.9 million in shelter costs.

We brought in national experts to train staff on mediation and other diversion techniques, finding safe, effective solutions that keep them in homes and out of shelters.

We continually listen to those with lived experience, including on our Roadmap to Homes board as well as on our participant call line, making sure we listen, address feedback, and constantly improve our system.





## PROGRESS ► increasing meal access

In 2018, we launched meal service at the Hub of Hope, providing 17,624 meals. We also brought five former outdoor meal providers inside.

Between July 2017 and July 2018, we supported eight other sites providing nearly 30,000 free meals to Philly's most vulnerable. Hosting meals at these sites fostered 7,400 connections to onsite services such as showers and laundry. We also made nearly 3,500 referrals to behavioral health resources, including substance use treatment services.

## PROGRESS ► addressing opioid-related homelessness

In 2018, the number of people experiencing homelessness dramatically rose in the Kensington area.

Working with the City's police and behavioral health departments, we piloted a groundbreaking national model through the Encampment Resolution Pilot (ERP), closing all four large encampments in Kensington compassionately and effectively. Independent researchers from the University of Pennsylvania hailed the ERP as a success, saying that providing services alongside closure was the ERP's defining feature.

After about nine months, nearly half of those formerly living in the encampments were still housed or in treatment and two thirds were engaged in services.

# Looking Ahead

Housed people aren't homeless. Our strategic plan, Roadmap to Homes, estimates that we need about 2,500 more permanent supportive housing units over the next five years to meet demand.



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