



# REPORT



*Photo: Shawn Poynter. There is More Work to Be Done*

## Preventing and Eliminating Homelessness in Rural Illinois

# The Housing Assistance Council

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This report was prepared by the Housing Assistance Council (HAC). Manda LaPorte, Cheneè Young, Jonathan Harwitz, and Lance George are the principal authors of this report. Leslie Strauss, also from HAC, reviewed and contributed to drafts of this report. The work that provided the basis for this document was delivered through a Statement of Work with the Supportive Housing Providers Association (SHPA). HAC is solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and interpretations contained in this document, and such interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the Supportive Housing Providers Association.

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The Housing Assistance Council (HAC) is a national nonprofit corporation that helps build homes and communities across rural America. For over 50 years, HAC has supported local efforts to improve rural housing conditions.

HAC is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Homelessness and housing related issues manifest differently in rural environments. Highly effective urban solutions aimed at homelessness too often falter in rural America, where service provision is different and those who are homeless are often less conspicuous, but no less in need of assistance.

Recognizing the importance and unique nature of rural homelessness, the State of Illinois is committing resources to help end homelessness in rural Illinois. As part of that effort, the Housing Assistance Council (HAC) partnered with the Supportive Housing Providers Association (SHPA) and the Illinois Department of Human Services to undertake a data and information collection effort that will help inform strategies, solutions, and policies with the goal of preventing and eliminating homelessness in rural Illinois. Below are selected highlights from a comprehensive assessment and recommendations on preventing and eliminating homelessness in rural Illinois. Detailed information can be found in the full report.

**Homelessness Just Looks Different in Rural Communities.** Homelessness is often viewed as an urban problem, but rural individuals and families also experience both literal homelessness and extremely precarious housing situations. Rural homelessness may be simply less visible, as rural homeless people do not usually sleep in visible spaces, and emergency shelters may not exist in rural places. It is also common for rural people experiencing homelessness to live in their cars or campers.

**There Are 5 “Largely Rural Continuums of Care (Coc) in Illinois.** Similar to general geographic and residential characteristics, Illinois’ Largely Rural CoCs have modest populations, but cover the vast majority of the state’s landmass. Illinois’s Largely Rural CoCs include: Bloomington/Central Illinois CoC, Southern Illinois Rock Island CoC, Moline/Northwestern Illinois CoC, South Central Illinois CoC, and West Central Illinois CoC.

**According to HUD Estimates Approximately 1,023 Individuals Experienced Homelessness in Rural Illinois’s Largely Rural CoCs in 2022.** Homelessness in Illinois’s Largely Rural CoCs comprised approximately 11 percent of the state’s total estimated homeless population. Homeless estimates varied somewhat among Largely Rural CoCs with a median homeless estimate of 204 homeless persons for

these CoCs. Approximately 83 percent of the homeless population in Largely Rural CoCs are estimated to be sheltered, which is slightly higher than the overall homeless population (79 percent sheltered) in Illinois.

**Illinois Has a Robust, Active, and Innovative Ecosystem of Rural Homeless Providers Across the State.** CoC providers stated that their organizations excelled at knowing the communities they served. With the majority of providers being from these areas, rural CoCs are staffed with individuals that have invested interest. Additionally, many of these programs have a surprisingly low turnover rate, compared to other CoCs nationwide, due to their personal investment. Much of the connection and expertise within rural CoC care providers emanates from being local advocates.

**Rapid Rehousing Was Viewed as A Valuable Resource in Rural Illinois.** Many CoC representatives agreed that providing supportive services after being housed is what proved most successful for people experiencing homelessness. Their rapid rehousing programs allow local CoC agencies to quickly help individuals or families experiencing homelessness to return to permanent housing.

**Collaboration With Services is Integral to A Holistic Approach That Helps Stabilize People Experiencing Homelessness.** Rural CoC representatives stated the importance of collaborating with each other in order to find creative solutions. Participation in the Community Advisory Council on Homelessness has helped give rural communities a place at the table. Although rural CoCs may experience distinct challenges, suburban, and urban CoC share some rural characteristics and have been able to learn from rural CoCs' innovative approach to common issues within the field.

**Rural CoCs Cover Large Geographies With Relatively Few Staff.** Many rural CoCs and service providers travel great distances to assist their clients, creating time constraints on services they provide. Due to funding constraints, rural CoC organizations are operating with fewer staff members, further limiting their outreach capacity. Overall, these limitations restrict access to vital services needed to assist those experiencing homelessness or seeking supportive services.

**Rural CoCs Need More Mental Health Resources.** Rural homeless advocates in Illinois repeatedly expressed the importance and need for more mental health services for individuals experiencing homelessness. Rural CoCs are relying on rural health providers that are already at capacity in order to provide vital mental health services to their clients. Rural CoCs need more funding to address the mental health needs of their clients and connect them to local health care providers. Many rural CoCs must reach out to other counties to help clients seeking health services.

**The lack of market and subsidized housing stock is the number one concern among CoCs.** Rural housing markets do not always mirror national trends. But the increasingly limited housing supply – especially for affordably priced housing has become a crisis in rural communities too. Lack of housing options was repeatedly

noted and referenced by homeless and housing providers in Illinois as a major and growing obstacle to help address homelessness in rural areas of the state. The shortage of affordable housing extends across the housing spectrum, but the lack of affordable housing options is most acute among households renting and seeking rental housing in rural Illinois.

**Strategies and Recommendations to Prevent and End Homelessness in Rural Illinois.** The multifaceted research, assessment, and synthesis of housing and homeless dynamics in rural Illinois culminated in 10 recommendations to inform strategies and solutions to rural homelessness in the state. Below is a summary of the recommendations and strategies which can be accessed in their entirety from the full report.

1. Illinois Should Increase Rural CoC Capacity and Coordination Through Dedicated Staff
2. Illinois Should Consider Modifying Funding Structures to Include CoCs as Eligible Grantees
3. Illinois Should Support Expansion of Successful Rural Housing Navigation, Landlord Outreach, and Risk Mitigation Strategies
4. Illinois Should Consider Expanding the Range of Eligible Populations and Activities in Rural Areas for Some of its Targeted Homelessness Funding
5. Illinois Should Expand Its “211” Coverage to the Entire State
6. Illinois Should Provide Resources to Rural CoCs to Support Their Ability to:
  - 6a) Access Accurate, Real-time Homelessness Data More Frequently Than the Annual PIT; and
  - 6b) Identify the “Hidden Homeless”/At-Risk
7. Illinois Should Provide Funding for Transportation in Rural CoCs to Connect Clients Experiencing Homelessness to Needed Supportive Services
8. Illinois Should Target Supportive Services Funding to Close the Housing Stability-Focused Case Management “Gap” in Rural Communities
9. Illinois Should Invest Increased and Targeted Housing Resources into Rural Communities
10. Illinois Should Consider Expanding Additional Housing Resources to Farmworkers

# INTRODUCTION

All communities and residents, regardless of location, should have access to a range of housing options including resources to prevent and eliminate homelessness.

Homelessness and housing related issues manifest differently in rural environments. Highly effective urban solutions aimed at homelessness too often falter in rural America, where service provision is different and those who are homeless are often less conspicuous, but no less in need of assistance.

The State of Illinois has recognized the importance and unique nature of addressing homelessness in its rural communities and is committing resources and efforts to help end homelessness in rural Illinois.

The Housing Assistance Council (HAC) partnered with the Supportive Housing Providers Association (SHPA) and the Illinois Department of Human Services to undertake a data and information collection effort that will help inform strategies, solutions, and policies with the goal of preventing and eliminating homelessness in rural Illinois.



*Photo: Jennifer Emerling There is More Work to Be Done*

# BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW



## Preventing and Eliminating Homelessness in Rural Illinois

*Photo: Jennifer Emerling There is More Work to Be Done*

# BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

## Homelessness Just Looks Different in Rural Communities

Homelessness is often viewed as an urban problem, but rural individuals and families also experience both literal homelessness and extremely precarious housing situations. Rural homelessness may be simply less visible, as rural homeless people do not usually sleep in visible spaces, and emergency shelters may not exist in rural places. It is also common for rural people experiencing homelessness to live in their cars or campers.

Literal homelessness, the condition of living on the street or in a shelter, is often episodic and may be less common in some rural areas than in cities due to kinship networks and a lack of service providers and resources. It is generally more common for rural homeless people to double or triple up with friends or relatives or live in structures not built for habitation, like garages and barns, as rural areas often lack shelters and other homeless assistance programs. People experiencing homelessness in rural areas often experience precarious housing conditions, moving from one extremely substandard, overcrowded, or cost-burdened housing situation to another.

## The Complicated (and Largely Unknown) Picture of Rural Homelessness

The difficulty of enumerating and identifying rural homeless populations leads to challenges in quantifying need, ultimately hindering policy creation, funding, and attention for this problem. Support services for people experiencing homelessness are often unavailable in rural areas due to isolation, lack of awareness, and lack of resources.

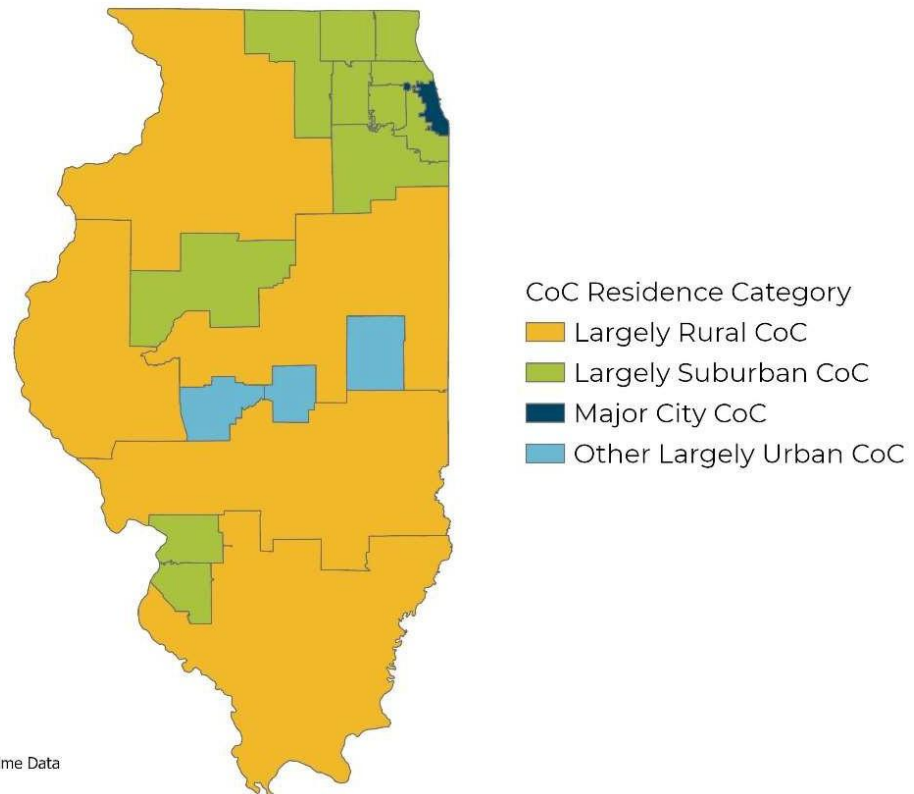
There have been modest advancements in federal and official efforts to estimate the size and prevalence of the homeless population, and some of those improvements are directly related to better understanding homelessness in rural communities. Prior to 2020, homeless figures derived from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) Point-in-Time estimates generally relied on "Balance of State CoC" estimates as a proxy for rural homelessness. Wide variations in state CoC structures largely undermined any meaningful utility of this methodology to estimate rural homelessness. In the past few years, HUD modified the presentation of its Point-in-Time data to include a classification on the prevalence or predominance of residence in each CoC including:

- Major City CoC
- Other Largely Urban CoC
- Suburban CoC
- Largely Rural CoC

Under this typology, five of Illinois's Continuums of Care are classified as Largely Rural CoCs:

- 1) Bloomington/Central Illinois
- 2) Southern Illinois
- 3) Rock Island, Moline/Northwestern Illinois
- 4) South Central Illinois
- 5) West Central Illinois

## Continuum of Care Residential Classifications, 2022



While the new residential classifications are an improvement to the official homeless estimates, they still lack enough precision and granularity to establish a total rural homeless estimate, as many rural persons and communities are located in Suburban

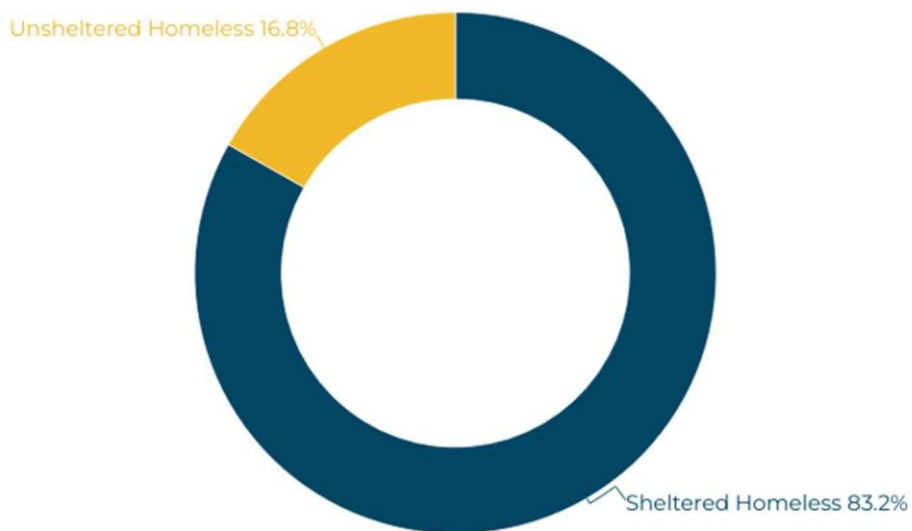
and Other Largely Urban CoCs. Likewise, there are some small urban clusters within Largely Rural CoCs, which may erroneously attribute homeless populations as rural.

Despite the shortcomings and limitations to both the residence classifications and the potential for undercount, this report presents figures from Largely Rural CoCs as a basic proxy to better understand the scope of rural homelessness in the State of Illinois. But this report acknowledges the limitations of these data and classifications and considers them an undercount of the actual rural homeless population in the state on any given day.

### **According to HUD Estimates, Approximately 1,023 Individuals Experienced Homelessness in Illinois’s Largely Rural CoCs in 2022**

The estimated 1,023 unhoused individuals residing in Largely Rural CoCs comprise approximately 11 percent of the state’s total estimated homeless population. The 2022 estimate for Largely Rural CoCs increased by more than 20 percent from the 2021 Point In time estimate (791). Homeless estimates varied somewhat among

#### **Rural Illinois Homeless Estimates by Shelter Status, 2022**



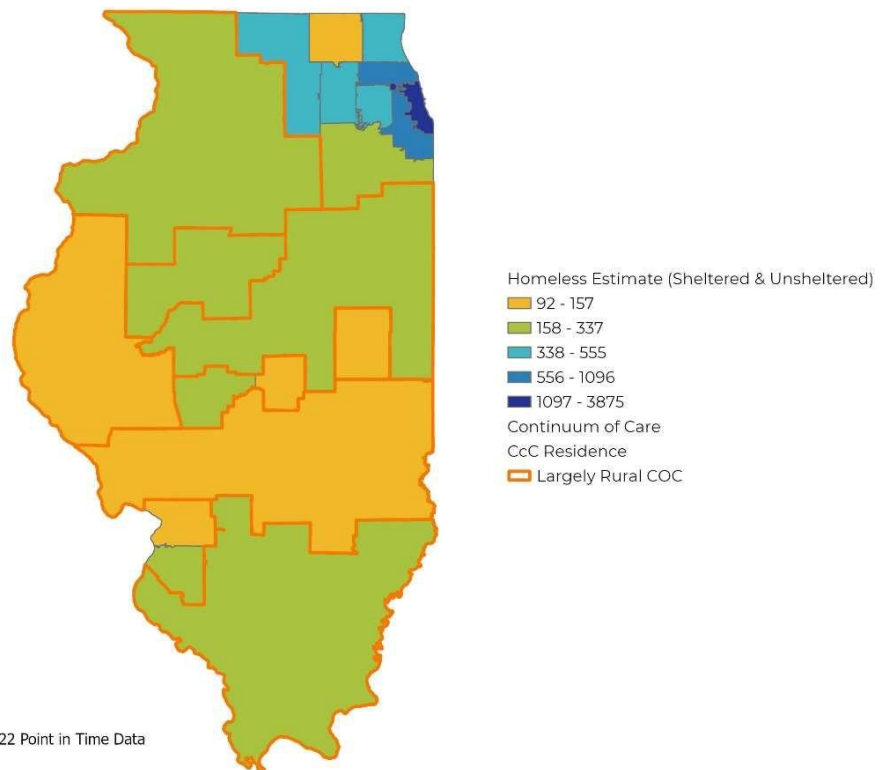
Source: Housing Assistance Council Tabulations of HUD 2022 Point In Time (PIT) data

Largely Rural CoCs with a median homeless estimate of 204 homeless persons for these CoCs.

Approximately 83 percent of the homeless population in Largely Rural CoCs are estimated to be sheltered, which is slightly higher than the overall homeless population (79 percent sheltered) in Illinois.

The HUD data estimates 35 homeless veterans in Largely Rural CoCs, accounting for 1 percent of Illinois's estimated homeless veteran population.

## Homeless Estimates by Continuum of Care, 2022



## Severely Substandard and Overcrowded Housing are Common Indicators of Homelessness in Rural Communities

While certain housing problems are on the rise in our nation, it is often presumed that the most basic of housing inadequacies such as substandard and dilapidated homes have been largely vanished from the American landscape. Indeed, efforts to improve housing conditions have resulted in dramatic gains where most Americans currently live in high quality, safe, and decent housing. Among the most basic housing quality indicators is access to running water and working plumbing facilities. In 2021, the Census Bureau's American Community Survey estimated that approximately 5,300 occupied housing units in rural Illinois lacked adequate

plumbing. This is a higher rate than in the state as a whole, and approximately one-fifth of homes lacking adequate plumbing in Illinois are located in rural areas of the state.

Similarly, the effects of crowded housing can exacerbate substandard living conditions and lead to social as well as health concerns.<sup>1</sup> Household crowding in rural areas is often an invisible form of homelessness as some rural households “double up” with friends or relatives in reaction to adverse economic or social situations, or to escape substandard housing conditions. Crowded homes, defined as homes with more than one occupant per room, are slightly less common in rural areas than in the nation overall. Yet there are an estimated 20,000 crowded homes in rural areas of Illinois and over 5,000 of those homes are severely crowded with 1.5 or more persons per room.

## **Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers are Among the Hidden Homeless in Rural Illinois**

Agriculture is a major industry in Illinois and is integral to the health and well-being of all communities in the United States. The affordability of fresh and unblemished fruits and vegetables comes, in part, through cheap labor undertaken by farmworkers.

Among the poorest groups in the nation, farmworkers earn low wages and experience working conditions that hinder their ability to access affordable and quality housing. The condition of farmworkers is further exacerbated by a plethora of legal, cultural, and geographic circumstances that often keeps this population in the shadows of American society and contributes to their economic marginalization. Additionally, farmworkers in the United States have often been ethnic minorities or immigrants.

Data for farmworkers is generally lacking in large-scale surveys and data collection instruments such as homeless estimates. But farmworkers experience high rates of residing in crowded conditions, extremely substandard housing, or unhoused situations such as sleeping in cars, tents, or under trees near agricultural sites.<sup>2</sup>

# APPROACH



## Preventing and Eliminating Homelessness in Rural Illinois

*Photo: Rory Doyle There is More Work to Be Done*

# APPROACH

The Housing Assistance Council partnered with the Supportive Housing Providers Association (SHPA) and the Illinois Department of Human Services to undertake a multifaceted approach to its data and information collection effort to inform strategies, solutions, and policies to help eliminate homelessness in rural Illinois.

The project team conducted three primary data and information collection, analysis, and synthesis activities to develop the final recommendations.

## Information Collection

**Community, Stakeholder, and Expert Input.** To help inform the development of strategies and recommendations, the project solicited community, stakeholder, and expert perspectives on the prevalence, characteristics, and dynamics of homelessness in rural Illinois. The project captured this stakeholder information through three primary processes:

### *Listening Sessions.*

- A) **Past Homelessness Listening Sessions:** The project conducted a review and synthesis of transcripts from recently conducted listening sessions on homelessness in Illinois. This information was provided to the project team by the Illinois Department of Human Services.
- B) **Place-Based Listening Session on Rural Homelessness:** The project team convened an in-person listening session to solicit community, stakeholder, and expert feedback on the issue of homelessness in rural areas of the state. In partnership with SHPA and IL OPEH, HAC held a five-hour hybrid listening session on April 13, 2023, hosted in Bloomington, IL – a part of the Central Illinois CoC, which is categorized as Largely Rural. Focused on rural capacities, resources, and policies, the 68 registered participants engaged in robust conversations. This event convened multiple representatives from each of the state’s five Largely Rural Continuums of Care.

**Targeted Interviews.** To provide additional and more targeted information the project team conducted a series of interviews with community members, stakeholders, and state employees to better understand homelessness dynamics, efforts, and resources in rural areas of the state. HAC conducted six follow-up interviews throughout May 2023 – discussing best practices, local services, and resource discrepancies with rural organizations and experts. This activity interviewed at least one representative from each of the state’s five Largely Rural CoCs and a state official.

*Supply Side Assessment.* To help contextualize the stakeholder input and better understand what resources are available and how they are used in rural areas, the project undertook a summary review of various housing and homeless characteristics and state, federal, local, and other housing programs and efforts with a particular focus on rural utilization and alignment.

## Synthesis and Analysis

Project team members compiled and categorized the collected information. The information was quality control checked and validated for accuracy and alignment. This information was synthesized and analyzed to help develop an action plan and final recommendations.

# PREVENTING AND ENDING HOMELESSNESS IN RURAL ILLINOIS



# FINDINGS



## Preventing and Eliminating Homelessness in Rural Illinois

*Photo: Shawn Poynter. There is More Work to Be Done*

# FINDINGS

## What's Working?

### Activities, Resources, and Services in Illinois that Address the Needs of Those Experiencing or at Risk of Homelessness

Rural CoC employees are community experts. Across the board, organizations working directly with the rural homeless community are dedicated to their clients, mission, and communities. During the targeted interview process, CoC providers stated that their organizations excelled at knowing the communities they served. With the majority of providers being from these areas, rural CoCs are staffed with individuals that have invested interest. Additionally, many of these programs have a surprisingly low turnover rate, compared to other CoCs nationwide, due to their personal investment.

Much of the connection and expertise within rural CoC care providers comes from being local advocates. This type of dedication and local knowledge cannot be trained, but it can be harnessed to create more success.

*“Our organization does a really good job of looking at each situation uniquely in order to find services for clients who may otherwise not have access to them.”*

*- Central IL CoC Representative*

Rural CoCs are meeting clients where they are. Illinois programming finds creative solutions to address individuals' specific situations. Rural service providers combine a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) with other data portals to better track individuals utilizing different supportive services. Additionally, rural CoCs understand the complex nature of homelessness in their communities. Often, they can connect individuals who do not fit the traditional definition of homelessness to the necessary services. Their programming both molds to clients' needs and also enables them to take on larger caseloads and assist people who otherwise might not qualify for their services.

**Rapid rehousing works in rural Illinois.** HUD defines rapid rehousing as an intervention that focuses on connecting families experiencing homelessness to permanent housing, while offering financial assistance and other supportive services.<sup>3</sup> Case managers work with families even after they have been housed, offering rental assistance, goal setting, and other supportive services to help maintain housing. The goal of the rapid rehousing approach is to limit a person's time of homelessness. Many CoC representatives agreed that providing supportive services after being at housed is what proved most successful for people experiencing homelessness. Their rapid rehousing programs allow local CoC agencies to quickly help individuals or families experiencing homelessness to return to permanent housing.

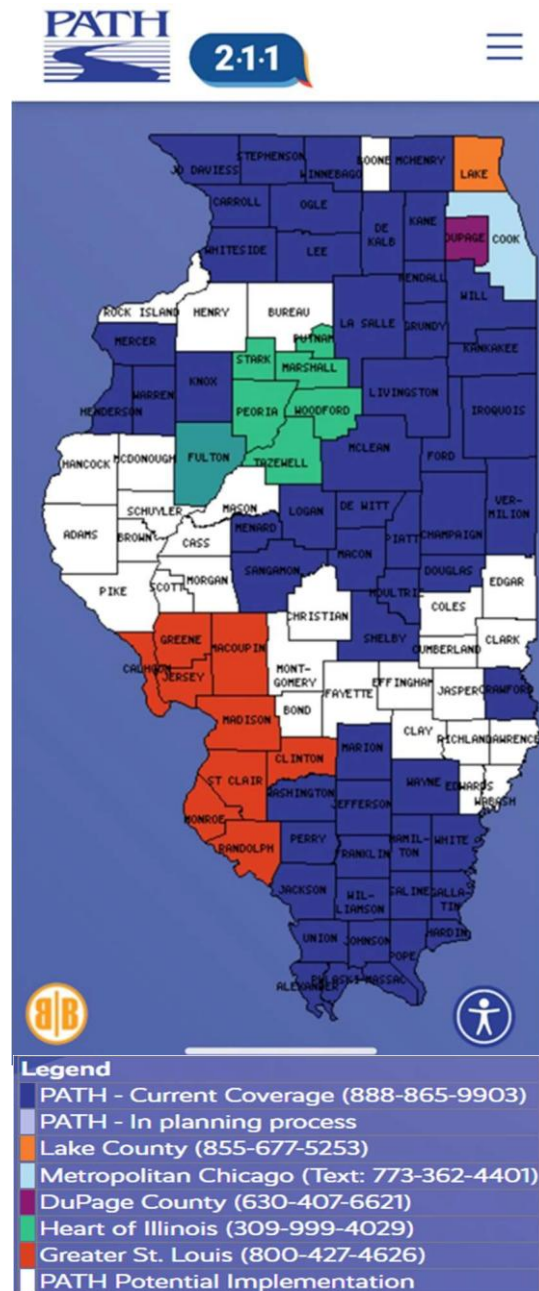
**Landlord risk mitigation funds incentivize landlords to rent to people experiencing homelessness.** Supply side housing dynamics are important in the rural homelessness conversation. Nationwide, most rental housing is owned by small- to medium-sized landlords. The ownership structure of rental housing in rural communities tends to be even more localized. In rural rental markets, rental properties tend to be smaller and are also more likely to be owned by individuals who may be less able to weather a loss of rental income. Approximately 45 percent of rural renters live in single-family homes, compared to only 19 percent in cities and 34 percent in suburbs.

Landlord risk mitigation funds support rural CoCs who are struggling to find affordable housing solutions for their clients. Rural CoCs are able to connect with landlords to provide them additional reassurance when renting to unhoused individuals. These funds typically allow landlords to be reimbursed for damages up to a certain amount. This innovative approach has allowed supportive service providers to connect clients to additional affordable housing units in their area. Although this pilot is not yet available in all rural CoCs in the state, it has shown initial success with the hopes of replicating it in other localities.

*“While I do have relationships with landlords and I do care about facilitating those, it's really all about the clients.”*

*– Southern IL CoC Representative*

Collaboration with other services in the area provides a holistic approach that helps stabilize people experiencing homelessness.



Case managers reported they often use services like 211 to make referrals or find services for their community. There are over two hundred 211 agencies in the United States, operated by United Ways, Community Action Agencies, and local crisis centers. 211 connects communities to local human services resources, and in some states 211 includes departments such as Adult Protection Services and direct linkage to the Homeless Management Information System.

211 agencies collect data from each call and provide reports on the number of callers, the reason for the call or their need, if a referral was made or if the need was unmet. The data collected can be used for decision making, program assessments, and resource allocation.

211 agencies are typically split between counties in each state. Illinois has six 211 subagencies: PATH, Lake County, Metropolitan Chicago, DuPage, Heart of Illinois, and Greater St. Louis. Most of the counties in both rural South Central CoC and West Central CoC lack 211 coverage, and in the Northwestern CoC rural counties Henry and Bureau are also missing out on this important resource.

Case managers who have access to the 211 agencies in Illinois's Rural CoCs use it to connect unhoused community members with local resources like supportive services, substance use disorder and mental health services, housing, shelter, food pantries, and more. Services

providers benefit from linking with other local human service agencies to provide wraparound services to build long term stability for the unhoused.

Individuals directly seeking services or CoC representatives utilize this resource to help locate services nearby.

Additionally, case managers meet with local behavioral health and other health services to create referral systems that are easier for people experiencing homelessness to access. Emergency shelters collaborate with motels, and others build relationships with local businesses to create programs like the recycling furniture program. Rural CoCs report that working with YouthBuild to develop skills is beneficial for youth aging out of foster care.

The accompanying map illustrates coverage of Illinois's 211 service areas. The counties in white, all of which are in Largely Rural CoCs, currently do not have 211 programming.

Rural CoC representatives stated the importance of collaborating with each other in order to find creative solutions. Participation in the Community Advisory Council on Homelessness has helped give rural communities a place at the table. Although rural CoCs may experience the challenges listed above, suburban, and urban CoC share some rural characteristics and have been able to learn a lot from rural CoCs' innovative approach to common issues within the field.

*"I enjoy every minute of it. It's a difficult job, but it's very rewarding when you are able to see people transitioning from homelessness into their own place."*

*– Northwestern CoC representative*

Professional development opportunities are useful for direct service providers. Although there was a mix between some people having too many professional development training courses on their calendars and others stating they wish they had more, overall, the rural homeless providers overwhelmingly stated that professional development trainings work. They build direct service providers' capacity, so they in turn provide better services to their communities.

Additionally, rural CoCs are collaborating with other service providers throughout the state to meet their needs. Professional development and trainings on topics such as grant writing, fundraising, landlord risk mitigation, and more have helped rural CoC representatives advocate successfully for their clients.

Rural CoCs found funding for transportation such as bus passes through COVID-19 funds was valuable. Rural communities often lack transportation, or the transportation services run sparingly. During the COVID-19 pandemic, more resources were directed to providing transportation to rural communities to help connect them to valuable resources. This programming directly impacted individuals experiencing homelessness. Rural CoC representatives stated that these

funds assisted unhoused individuals in getting to their health appointments, staying connected to their case managers, and other services needed to help them get housed.

## **What's Missing?**

### **Activities, Resources, and Services Needed in Illinois to Address the Needs of Those Experiencing or at Risk of Homelessness**

Rural CoCs cover larger areas with relatively few staff. Geographic and spatial dynamics are important considerations when assessing effective solutions for rural homelessness. Rural places have relatively few people living across a large geographic area.

As a result, rural CoCs and service providers may travel great distances to assist their clients, creating time constraints on how many visits they can make per day, per week, and per month and requiring some staff to be on call 24 hours a day. Moreover, due to funding constraints, rural CoC organizations are operating with fewer staff members, further limiting their outreach capacity. Overall, these limitations restrict access to vital services needed to assist those experiencing homelessness or seeking supportive services.

Resources from COVID relief funding are ending. COVID-19 disrupted nearly every aspect of life, culture, and economics in rural America. The pandemic revealed uneven and tumultuous economic circumstances across the nation. These conditions spilled over into the housing markets, yielding housing price increases at all-time highs, limiting housing supply, and putting millions of people in tenuous housing situations of eviction or foreclosure. Supply chain problems and building material shortages have only served to exacerbate scarce housing and rising prices.

Many Americans were buoyed by large scale federal unemployment benefits and economic stimulus. Some of that federal investment is still making its way into many rural communities, while other pandemic-related resources have ended. Notably, the Centers for Disease Control's eviction moratorium ended in 2021. There were, and are still, substantial potential collateral impacts to almost all sectors of the housing market. Housing instability is particularly concerning for rural renters who typically have lower incomes, less savings, greater employment uncertainty or safety concerns due to COVID, fewer protections, and less ability to weather economic shocks compared to homeowners.

Along with other major public service providers, rural CoCs received a necessary influx in federal and state funding to help manage the initial effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the pandemic and additional funding ending, rural service providers are struggling to keep programming available to the most vulnerable populations.

Broadband access is limited, making it difficult for unhoused people to sign up for resources. Access to broadband information technology is often considered necessary for economic viability in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially as web-based technologies become increasingly essential. Rural communities' distance from urban economic hubs has placed even greater importance on broadband services. Broadband access in rural areas improves employment, small business development, healthcare, educational opportunities, public safety, and delivery of services for people with disabilities.<sup>4</sup> Unlike more densely populated areas, however, rural counties often struggle with access to broadband.

With many homeless services and programming offered through online portals, individuals experiencing homelessness in rural counties often struggle with registering for services. Although many rural CoCs have hubs where broadband is more easily accessible, transportation options are also more limited – creating many barriers to services.

### ***How We Define Homelessness Impacts How We Address the Issue***

*Defining homelessness has been a topic of debate among federal, state, and local governments as well as individuals with lived expertise and service providers. Under the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act (HEARTH Act), HUD identifies four categories of people experiencing homelessness:*

- 1) Individuals and families who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes a subset for an individual who resided in an emergency shelter or a place not meant for human habitation and who is exiting an institution where he or she temporarily resided;*
- 2) individuals and families who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence;*
- 3) unaccompanied youth and families with children and youth who are defined as homeless under other federal statutes who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition; and*
- 4) individuals and families who are fleeing, or are attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member.*

**Chronic homelessness** *occurs when an individual has been living in one of the above for 12 months continuously or on at least four separate occasions in the last three years, where the combined occurrences total at least 12 months.*<sup>5</sup>

*I would love to see a more cohesive definition of homelessness that better corresponds with funding so we can help individuals that need help."*

*- Listening Session Participant*

Mental health is directly linked to homelessness and rural CoCs need more resources. Rural homeless advocates in Illinois repeatedly expressed the importance and need for more mental health services – with fewer barriers and prerequisites – for individuals experiencing homelessness. Rural CoCs are relying on rural health providers that are already at capacity in order to provide vital mental health services to their clients. As has been the case historically across the U.S., mental health is a huge factor for individuals experiencing homelessness to address their housing needs. Rural CoCs need more funding to address the mental health needs of their clients and connect them to local health care providers. Many rural CoCs must reach out to other counties to help clients seeking health services. With transportation being another huge barrier, however, CoCs need resources that are more readily available.

With the absence of substantial economic growth in rural areas, employment opportunities for homeless persons, especially formerly incarcerated persons, are scarce. Employment opportunities in rural areas are often limited or pay low wages which makes it difficult for homeless people to meet their basic needs, including housing. This is especially true for homeless people with a criminal background. Economic development and professional growth opportunities and services could help with success rates within rural CoCs.

Rural CoCs have trouble providing shelter to people experiencing homelessness due to limited space. Some rural communities have shelters, but the spaces are limited. In some instances, rural communities administer programs and resources strictly defined by county boundaries, leaving some individuals without a place to go. Along with strict shelter rules, this means many people experiencing homelessness are unable to access shelters and accompanying services.

Rural CoCs do not have the funds or capacity to provide appropriate and sufficient supportive services. Supportive services are essential to helping those who have experienced homelessness maintain housing. A wide variety of services are needed, including life skills training, transportation assistance like gas cards or bus passes, rental assistance, utility deposits, employment assistance and job training, childcare, moving costs, as well as case management to assist in mitigating evictions and referring people experiencing homelessness to other services.

*"I was struck by the fact that as good as the folks in these CoC's are, with solid organizational programming, when the special rural NOFA came out, Illinois did not get a lot of money. Individual Continuums did not feel like they had the capacity to apply."*

*-Illinois State Official*

Formerly incarcerated and justice involved persons re-entering their communities in rural areas do not have access to housing, supportive services, and other programs. People experiencing homelessness leaving jail or prison struggle to find supportive services to match their needs. Persons with criminal backgrounds often have challenges finding housing, employment, and shelters. Specialized supportive services such as employment searching, peer mentorship, and life skills provide stabilization for justice involved persons facing homelessness. The Secretary of State has put together resource guides for all counties across the state to better assist unhoused formerly incarcerated persons during the re-entry process.<sup>6</sup> In this guide, individuals are given contact information to a variety of agencies that can assist with re-entry and re-housing.

The lack of market and subsidized housing stock is the number one concern among CoCs.

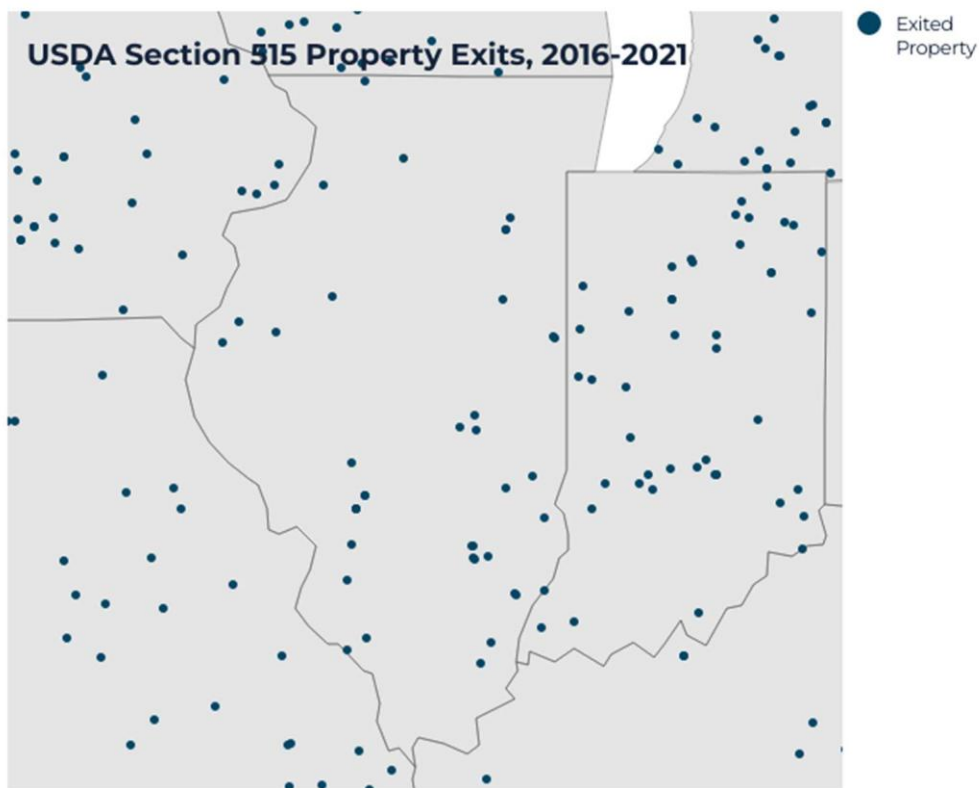
Rural housing markets do not always mirror national trends. But the increasingly limited housing supply – especially for affordably priced housing has become a crisis in rural communities too. Lack of housing options was repeatedly noted and referenced by homeless and housing providers in Illinois as a major and growing obstacle to help address homelessness in rural areas of the state. The shortage of affordable housing extends across the housing spectrum, but the lack of affordable housing options is most acute among households renting and seeking rental housing in rural Illinois. Rental housing is generally less prevalent in rural areas for an array of factors, and in many rural communities there is a dearth of good quality rental units at any price point. The rental homes that are available in rural areas are often not affordable either. According to Housing Assistance Council tabulations of the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) over 136,000, or 42 percent of renters in rural and small-town communities were considered housing cost burdened.

Approximately 15 percent of homeowners in rural Illinois were also cost burdened.

*"We do not have shelters in our rural spaces anymore, they have completely closed down."*

*- Listening Session Participant*

There are limited affordable housing options in rural communities, and they are increasingly diminishing. A good example of this decrease can be illustrated through the loss of affordable rural rental homes subsidized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Section 515 Rural Rental Housing properties financed by USDA are an important source of rental housing in many rural communities. Since the program's inception in 1963, Section 515 Rural Rental Housing loans have financed nearly 28,000 rental properties containing over 533,000 affordable apartment homes across rural America.<sup>7</sup> A recent US senate report noted "the alarming number of multi-family housing mortgages scheduled to mature in the next few years. As these mortgages mature, projects and units will be removed from USDA's affordable rural housing program, placing very low income rural residents in jeopardy of untenable rent increases and possible eviction." Between 2016 and 2021, 39 USDA Section 515 properties with 495 rural rental units in Illinois exited the portfolio. Illinois had the 10<sup>th</sup> largest loss of Section 515 units in the nation over this time period.<sup>8</sup>



## Rural CoCs Attempt to Connect Clients to Necessary Services and Programming<sup>910</sup>

Rural CoCs discussed resources in depth. There is an obvious lack of reentry programs in rural CoCs. Impacted by low economic growth and low housing stock, rural service providers have trouble connecting unhoused persons leaving the correctional system to resources and housing with appropriate supportive services. Expungement programs, tailored job searches, and community allow for reintegration and reduce recidivism.

	Emergency and Transitional Housing	Supportive Housing	Housing for Older Adults & People Living with Disabilities	Youth Homeless Services	Homeless Prevention Services	Re-Entry Programs
Bloomington Central IL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Southern IL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rock Island, Moline/North Western, IL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
South Central IL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
West Central IL	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X

Homeless prevention programs include rental assistance, legal services for evictions, aid with obtaining public assistance, relocation assistance, and other emergency response funding to prevent homelessness.

Other homeless services include housing search, drop-in center, health services, and case management specific to unhoused persons.

As youth homelessness continues to increase, Rural CoCs stated there is a need for more services for this population, along with professional development opportunities to support this special population.

### Rural CoCs and Agencies Are Not Able to Provide Sufficient Housing Programming

When looking at the summary of available housing programming in rural CoCs (as seen in the table above), it can give the illusion that these areas' housing programs are well stocked. However, once broken down into the number of properties, that illusion is shattered. It is important to remember that these CoCs house many counties, making the numbers of properties shown below insufficient.

	Number of Emergency and Transitional Housing Properties	Number of Supportive Housing Properties in Rural CoC	Number of Housing Properties for Older Adults & People Living with Disabilities in Rural CoC
<b>Bloomington Central IL</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Southern IL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Rock Island, Moline/North Western, IL</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>South Central IL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>West Central IL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>

### Rural CoCs and Agencies Are Not Able to Provide Sufficient Supportive Services

Similarly, looking at the breakdown of the number of agencies that provide and connect individuals to necessary supportive services in rural areas, Illinois is under serving. The availability of these services directly impacts the success of these individuals.

	Number of Agencies with Youth Homeless Services in Rural CoCs	Number of Agencies with Youth Homeless Services in Rural CoCs	Number of Agencies with Re- Entry Programs in Rural CoCs	Number of Agencies with Other Homeless Services in Rural CoCs
<b>Bloomington Central IL</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Southern IL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Rock Island, Moline/North Western, IL</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>South Central IL</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>West Central IL</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>

# STRATEGIES



## Preventing and Eliminating Homelessness in Rural Illinois

*Photo: Jennifer Emerling. There is More Work to Be Done*

# STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO ELIMINATE HOMELESSNESS IN RURAL ILLINOIS

## 1. Illinois Should Increase Rural CoC Capacity and Coordination Through Dedicated Staff

As detailed above, the five Largely Rural Illinois CoCs are doing a remarkable job providing effective housing and supportive service interventions to prevent and end homelessness. They are composed of highly collaborative organizations, which served them in good stead during the pandemic: they redeployed existing resources and emergency COVID-19 relief to address the vastly changed economic and public health reality.

This said, these CoCs face significant capacity restraints. Like most Largely Rural CoCs, they lack dedicated staff, in contrast to large urban CoCs such as Chicago. And unlike many states, where a lead state agency will dedicate staff to support a Balance of State CoC that covers all or most of the state's rural areas, these five CoCs are largely on their own when it comes to applying for annual HUD McKinney-Vento funding and other potential federal resources.

This has already proven a challenge when new federal resources, even those specifically targeted to rural homelessness, have become available. Specifically, when HUD issued a special notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) that included \$55 million set aside for rural CoCs and indicated that Illinois rural CoCs were formulaically eligible for awards totaling up to \$7,174,693,<sup>11</sup> only the South Central Illinois CoC had the bandwidth to apply, receiving an award of \$283,911.<sup>12</sup> Substantial funding that could have served those experiencing or at risk of homelessness in rural Illinois was instead distributed to other states, often in the form of multimillion-dollar awards to Balance of State CoCs.

State staff within the OPEH dedicated to supporting the state's primarily rural CoCs could have a dramatic impact. State staffing support in identifying and responding to federal and other non-state funding opportunities (i.e., those they are not precluded from handling due to state conflict-of-interest/procurement law) would prevent Illinois from again "leaving money on the table" when it comes to precious resources targeted to or usable for addressing rural homelessness. Additionally, such staff could facilitate coordination and alignment among the five CoCs as well as potentially explore whether the existing number and geographic boundaries continue to make sense (HUD has instituted incentives within the CoC NOFA for continuums to consider merging).

## **2. Illinois Should Consider Modifying Funding Structures to Include CoCs as Eligible Grantees**

Illinois's five primarily rural CoCs are longstanding and experienced. They represent the planning and implementation body of HUD-funded homelessness response, which serves as the foundation for homelessness response system more broadly. Yet, beyond the annual HUD McKinney-Vento homelessness assistance grants and the occasional emergency or periodic funding initiatives (e.g., Emergency Housing Vouchers, Special Unsheltered and Rural Homelessness NOFO), few funding streams flow directly through CoCs. Rather, member organizations or participating local jurisdictions must braid together federal and state funding streams for which they may be eligible to address the housing and services needs of households experiencing homelessness. While the state cannot alter the administration of federal programs, it may wish to consider leveraging the CoC structure by making CoCs eligible entities for some of the state's programs targeted to preventing and ending homelessness. Oregon recently took this step, modifying its funding eligibility criteria in response to recommendations made by a Task Force on Homelessness and Racial Disparities in Oregon.<sup>13</sup>

## **3. Illinois Should Support Expansion of Successful Rural Housing Navigation, Landlord Outreach, and Risk Mitigation Strategies**

Both available public and private financing resources and nonprofit housing developer capacity are too limited for nonprofit housing preservation and development to be the sole strategy for addressing the dramatic shortage of housing in rural areas that is sufficiently income-targeted to contribute to preventing and ending homelessness. It is critical, therefore, that private landlords be enlisted, which requires their willingness to house individuals and families experiencing or at-risk of homelessness and to accept publicly funded rent subsidies (e.g., Housing Choice Vouchers). Many, however, are hesitant to do so, given their perception, and sometimes past experience, that these individuals and families are problematic tenants and that government-administered programs are overly bureaucratic. (Notably, nonprofit landlords express the same concerns, particularly with respect to households that have a history of substance abuse and/or mental health challenges.)

Nationwide, communities have found success in deploying a range of strategies including: 1) housing "navigators" who help guide individuals/families to appropriate housing; 2) dedicated staff who conduct initial outreach to landlords and can serve as intermediaries between landlords and tenants when issues arise, resolving them before they metastasize; and 3) "risk mitigation funds" that provide additional protection and/or expedited resolution of claims for property damage, beyond a standard security deposit. The Helping Hands/Heartland House-based model that supports all of the above activities in the Peoria and Springfield areas has proven

quite effective at enlisting and retaining landlords – nonprofit and for-profit – to participate in a range of funding streams targeted to homelessness (e.g., Emergency Housing Vouchers). We would note the especially innovative public-private partnership structure: the single full-time staffer is funded jointly by a county, city, and township. Meanwhile, private philanthropy seeded the landlord risk mitigation fund.

The state could encourage expansion of these activities through direct funding, dedicated staff time, and/or outreach to philanthropy.

#### **4. Illinois Should Consider Expanding the Range of Eligible Populations and Activities in Rural Areas for Some of its Targeted Homelessness Funding**

We heard often of the frustration of rural CoCs and individual housing and service providers with having to restrict HUD-funded assistance to the “HUD definition” of homelessness (which is narrower than that of the Department of Education’s McKinney-Vento programs). In rural areas, the line between literally homeless and precariously housed is harder to discern, and the “hard edges” of HUD’s Homeless Assistance Grants’ eligible populations and activities are especially difficult to implement for the public and private nonprofit sector responding to homelessness in rural Illinois.

It is unlikely that the statutorily mandated definition of homelessness governing HUD’s McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants will change in the near future. Neither the Biden-Harris Administration nor Congress is likely to have the political appetite, or be able to build sufficient bipartisan momentum to reopen this controversial issue. Critically, however, the HEARTH Act – which reauthorized HUD’s homelessness programs in 2009 – recognized that rural homelessness differs from urban homelessness in ways that demand greater flexibility. Through the authorization of a separate Rural Housing Stability Program (for which Congress never appropriated funding), later replaced by expanded authorities under the base CoC program provided by annual appropriations bills, Congress provided HUD with the authority to deploy HUD homeless assistance funding more flexibly in rural areas. This was reflected in the above-mentioned Special NOFO, which – in rural areas only – permitted CoCs to:

- Serve precariously housed households as well as those experiencing literal homelessness; and
- Seek funding for home repair, capacity-building, rent and utilities and other activities that would be ineligible for urban CoCs.<sup>14</sup>

The State of Illinois may wish to review its targeted homelessness programs to determine whether similarly “flexing up” their population eligibility and/or eligible activity categories for rural areas of the state would be impactful.

## **5. Illinois Should Expand Its “211” Coverage to the Entire State**

Easily connecting community members or service providers to 211 can save time and transportation resources in rural CoCs by providing information like hours, program and/or county guidelines. Community members are given contact information or directly connected to a provider to make appointments, verify their services or funding.

Expanding 211 coverage for the state would allow service providers and communities to work together to implement a holistic, collaborative, and time-efficient approach to connecting unhoused community members to local resources. It will also provide necessary data to assess programs and resource allocation in rural areas as rural CoC service providers can enter their agency data to reach more participants. Service providers from each rural county in Illinois would place their agency in the 211 databases, connection to these supportive services in rural communities can have a positive long-term effect on the unhoused community. Given the large geographies covered by rural CoCs, expanding 211 coverage to all of them could be highly impactful.

## **6. Illinois Should Provide Resources to Rural CoCs to Support Their Ability to:**

- 1) Access Accurate, Real-time Homelessness Data More Frequently Than the Annual PIT; and**
- 2) Identify the “Hidden Homeless”/At-Risk**

While the listening session and targeted interviews revealed that the PIT and HMIS have been essential additions to the effort to address rural homelessness since their inception, they fall short of what rural CoCs need now. First, like their urban counterparts, the rural CoCs are finding that the one-time, once-a-year snapshot of homelessness provided by the PIT does not provide sufficient real-time, actionable data on a dynamic population. Increasing access to quality real-time data on homelessness is the foundation of the Built for Zero<sup>15</sup> movement, in which Community Solutions works with local communities to reach functional zero for various sub-populations (with Rockford, Illinois<sup>16</sup> being the first city in the nation to do so for veterans and chronic homelessness). The state of Illinois may wish to consider becoming a statewide partner<sup>17</sup> in Built for Zero or – in the alternative/interim – providing resources for the state’s primarily rural CoCs to purchase periodic data queries throughout the year from their HMIS vendors.

Second, stakeholders we spoke to confirmed what federal policymakers have known since enactment of the HEARTH Act: the picture of homelessness differs in rural communities compared to urban and suburban settings. This manifests in both a greater challenge in conducting a PIT and a less clear line between those who meet HUD’s definition of homelessness versus those who are at-risk/precariously housed. As a result, while the PIT count and HMIS for primarily rural CoCs – as well as

primarily urban/suburban CoCs with substantial rural coverage – are helpful as far as they go, they do not go far enough when it comes to identifying the “hidden homeless”/most precariously housed in rural communities. Accordingly, the state may wish to consider providing a competitive grant funding pool to support CoCs that propose innovative and effective ways to conduct a supplemental count of these individuals and families in rural census tracts.

## **7. Illinois Should Provide Funding for Transportation in Rural CoCs to Connect Clients Experiencing Homelessness to Needed Supportive Services**

Participants in the listening session and targeted interviews spoke repeatedly of the transportation challenges faced by their residents/clients. Access to supportive services and clinics or hospitals that provide health, mental health, and/or substance abuse supports requires travel over a larger area in rural communities, frequently coupled with lack of a well-developed public transportation network.

While stakeholders made clear this has been a longstanding issue in serving rural populations experiencing or at risk of homelessness, now is an opportune moment for the state to focus on addressing it. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is providing billions of dollars to states and localities to support transportation infrastructure, including over \$20 billion to provide public transit<sup>18</sup> in a full range of communities (e.g., nearly \$893 million to support Federal Transit Administration Rural Formula Grants) and modes of transportation (e.g., competitive grants to support low/no carbon emissions in buses and bus facilities<sup>19</sup>). As these funds flow to and through the state (and local/regional grantees), the state – through the OPEH and other intra/intergovernmental mechanisms – should target new federal resources and existing state/local matching funds to this critical need.

## **8. Illinois Should Target Supportive Services Funding to Close the Housing Stability-Focused Case Management “Gap” in Rural Communities**

Providers repeatedly emphasized the lack of sufficient “supportive services” funding in rural communities. As we drilled down on the issue with listening session participants and targeted interviewees, however, it became clear that within this broad category the most urgent and compelling need was for case management focused on obtaining and maintaining housing. Such case managers help unhoused community members overcome barriers to housing attainment and long-term stability such as moving costs, childcare, utility deposits, and other financial outlays. They also serve as an initial bridge to other social services systems that can provide education, employment assistance and job training, mental health, substance use disorder treatment, and life skills training.

This case management function is characterized by a silo-busting approach with a mindset that the job description is to do “whatever it takes” to help an unhoused community member to locate, obtain, and maintain housing irrespective of the funding source that pays the position’s salary. We heard repeatedly from dedicated people who are fulfilling this function in primarily rural CoCs. Unfortunately, there are far too few of them to meet the need; many are taking on this function despite being supported only to provide a narrower set of services by a targeted public funding “silo” (e.g., mental health, substance abuse, healthcare), and nearly all are overwhelmed by unsustainable case management ratios given the geographic dispersion of their clients. The OPEH and any additional staff capacity focused on rural CoCs (should the state choose to follow recommendation 1 above) would be well-served to focus on identifying new resources to target to this function as part of a rural homelessness strategy.

## **9. Illinois Should Invest Increased and Targeted Housing Resources into Rural Communities**

The occurrence of homelessness is one of the most acute indications that a community’s or region’s overall housing system is broken. Conversely, one of the most effective resources to prevent and eliminate homelessness is simply the availability of good quality housing that is affordable to residents of communities, urban, suburban, and rural. Increasing the stock of housing across the spectrum is essential to this dynamic. A single entity cannot solve this issue. Rather, a cohesive ecosystem of disparate agencies and services are integral to the approach. A whole of government and market response is needed including federal, state, local and market actors.

At the federal level a greater coordination and engagement between state and federal stakeholders with rural specific resources and focus is recommended. While not well known in the housing world, USDA has been providing substantial and consistent housing resources to rural communities since the 1950s. The agency has funded the construction, purchase or repair of over 5.1 million rural housing units. Rural Housing Service (RHS) loans, grants and related assistance provide low-income families the opportunity to achieve affordable homeownership; provide affordable rental housing to families, the elderly and migrant and seasonal farmworkers; support low-cost home repair for an aging rural housing stock; and help create strong local housing infrastructure through capacity building. Greater engagement and coordination between the State of Illinois and USDA could provide enhanced opportunities to increase the affordable housing stock and community facilities in rural Illinois.

Also at the federal level, capacity challenges make it difficult for rural places to compete for funding with larger metropolitan areas. HUD formula allocation

programs like the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and the HOME Investment Partnerships Program, which have been critical affordable housing resources, have not served rural areas proportionately. Rural communities often also lack the scale to access financing tools such as Project-Based Vouchers, Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA), and the Rental Assistance Demonstration to recapitalize public housing. Increased involvement from state and local entities in regulatory and legislative efforts such as streamlining of HUD programs could better tailor federal programs to rural community and resident needs and increase the stock of affordable housing in rural communities.

A prime example of state and federal partnership is the development of quality rental housing through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit. The LIHTC is arguably the most important resource for creating and maintaining affordable rental housing. Over 13,000 properties were allocated LIHTC funding during the 2006-2016 time frame, approximately 25 percent of which were in rural areas. Rural places were almost twice as likely to receive competitive awards of tax credits as to receive tax credits tied to tax-exempt bonds. Improving LIHTC to better serve rural areas, including designating rural and tribal areas as Difficult Development Areas, encouraging rural and tribal set asides in state Qualified Allocation Plans, and exploring new tax credits to serve rural housing needs would all increase the stock of affordable housing in rural Illinois.

## **10. Illinois Should Consider Expanding Additional Housing Resources to Farmworkers**

Precariously housed households need homeless services as well. Rural CoCs in Illinois have proven capable of meeting clients where they are, and the state should consider expanding their programming to include farmworkers. According to Investigate Midwest, although Illinois employs outreach workers responsible for protecting farmworkers from precarious living situations as part of the federal and state partnership referred to as the Monitor Advocate System, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the state contacted zero farmworkers.<sup>20</sup>

With much of rural Illinois designated as farmland, the State needs to reassess its approach to outreach and housing services to include farmworkers. Through the Monitor Advocate System, Illinois has five offices located near large populations of farmworkers – however, “only three employ bilingual staff, and just one employs someone with farmworker background.”<sup>21</sup> Whether or not this is coordinated with the Department of Labor, the State should consider expanding rural homeless programming to include oversight of farmworker housing to better protect vulnerable and at-risk populations from homelessness.

# LOOKING FORWARD

Through this project, Illinois has initiated an innovative approach to addressing homelessness, especially in rural areas. HAC commends SHPA and the IL OPEH for their dedication to this underrepresented population.

Moving forward, HAC believes it is imperative to continue with a special focus on expanding rural CoC programming, services, and funding. By proactively reassessing where rural communities are regularly and pivoting resources, programming, and policies accordingly, Illinois will be able to lead the nation in properly combatting homelessness.

Allowing space for active dialogue and information sharing is key. The Home Illinois Summit provides the necessary forum for this continued effort. Ensuring sessions where rural communities have the platform to discuss, solve problems, and share best practices will elevate rural voices.

Rural homelessness may look different, but the response needs to be adequately understood and resourced for all communities if the nation wants to address homelessness in urban, suburban, and rural communities.



*Photo: Shawn Poynter. There is More Work to Be Done*

# APPENDIX A. HOMELESS RESOURCES IN RURAL ILLINOIS

Emergency and Transitional Housing Providers	County/Counties	CoC
BCMWS Community Services	Bond, Clinton, Marion, Washington	Southern Illinois
CEFS Economic Opportunity Corporation	Christian, Clay, Effingham, Fayette, Montgomery, Moultrie, Shelby	South Central Illinois, Southern Illinois
Continuing Recovery Center	Montgomery	South Central
Courage Connection	Douglas, Piatt	South Central
Crosspoint Human Services	Edgar	South Central
Embarras River Basin Agency	Clark, Coles, Crawford, Cumberland, Douglas, Edgar, Jasper	South Central
Illinois Valley Public Action to Deliver Shelter (PADS)	Bureau, LaSalle, Marshall, Putnam	Northwestern
Mattoon Area PADS	Coles, Cumberland, Effingham, Shelby	South Central
MCS Community Services	Cass, Morgan, Scott	West Central
Mid Central Community Action, Incorporated	McLean	Central Illinois
Salvation Army - Quincy	Adams, Brown, Cass, Hancock, Henderson, McDonough, Morgan, Pike, Schuyler, Warren	West Central
Samaritan Well	McDonough	West Central
Shawnee Development Council, Incorporated	Alexander, Hardin, Johnson, Massac, Pope, Pulaski, Union	Southern Illinois
Stopping Women Abuse Now (SWAN)	Clay, Crawford, Edwards, Effingham, Jasper, Lawrence, Richland, Wabash, Wayne	South Central, Southern Illinois
Tri-County Opportunities Council	Bureau, Carroll, LaSalle, Lee, Marshall, Ogle, Putnam, Stark, Whiteside	Northwestern
Two Rivers Regional Council	Adams, Brown, Pike, Schuyler	West Central
Western Illinois Regional Council	McDonough	West Central
Project NOW	Henry, Mercer	Northwestern

<b>Supportive Housing Providers</b>	<b>County/Counties</b>	<b>CoC</b>
CEFS Economic Opportunity	Christian, Clay, Effingham, Fayette, Montgomery, Moultrie, Shelby	South Central
Centerstone	Bond, Jersey	Southern Illinois
Coles County Mental Health Center	Coles	South Central
Courage Connection	Douglas, Piatt	South Central
Crosspoint Human Services	Clark, Edgar, Iroquois	South Central, Central Illinois
Embarras River Basin Agency	Clark, Coles, Crawford, Cumberland, Douglas, Edgar, Jasper	South Central
Goodwill Industries Central Illinois	Ford, Fulton, Grundy, Hancock, Henderson, Henry, Knox	Northwestern, West Central, Central Illinois
Henry County Housing Development Group	Henry, Stark	Northwestern
Mid Central Community Action, Incorporated	McLean	Central Illinois
Project NOW	Henry, Mercer	Northwestern
Salvation Army – Galesburg	Cass, Christian, Knox, , Moultrie, Shelby	Northwestern, West Central, South Central
Southern Illinois Coalition for the Homeless	Alexander, Clay, Clinton, Crawford, Edwards, Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Johnson, Lawrence, Marion, Massac, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Randolph, Richland, Saline, Union, Wabash, Washington, Wayne, White, Williamson	Southern Illinois CoC
YWCA of Quincy	Adams	West Central

<b>Providers of Housing for Older Adults and People Living with Disabilities</b>	<b>County/Counties</b>	<b>CoC</b>
Amanda Brooke Apartments	McLean	Central Illinois
Angler's Manor	McLean	Central Illinois
Cardinal Community Manor	Mercer, Warren	Northwestern
Carpenter Management Company	Shelby	South Central
Catholic Charities, Diocese of Springfield	Cass	West Central
Countryside Manor Apartments	Lee	Northwestern

<b>Providers of Housing for Older Adults and People Living with Disabilities</b>	<b>County/Counties</b>	<b>CoC</b>
DAK Management	Ford	Central Illinois
DAK Management - Meadowlane Senior Apartments- Warren	Warren, Ogle	Northwestern, West Central
Diamond Development	Marion, Wayne	Southern Illinois
Greencastle Of Sterling	Whiteside	Northwestern
Englewood Group	Washington	Southern Illinois
Lutheran Social Services Of Illinois - Meadow Ridge Apartments	Stephenson	Northwestern
Mercer County Housing Authority	Mercer	Northwestern
Mid-Northern Management	McLean	Central Illinois
Lincoln Towers - Bloomington	McLean, Stephenson	Central Illinois, Northwestern
Otto Real Estate - Walnut Grove	Douglas	South Central
Palen Real Estate	Iroquois, Livingston, Ford, LaSalle	3 Central, 1 Northwestern,
Phoenix Towers	McLean	Central Illinois
Pioneer Property Management - Washington Senior Apartments	McLean	Central Illinois
Richland County Housing Authority	Richland	Southern
Robert Cottingham Property Management	Iroquois, Ford, Logan	Central Illinois
Villa Ridge I, Villa Ridge II, Willowbrook Apartments	Iroquois	Central Illinois
Haun Management	Lee	Northwestern
Haun Management - Cozy Haven Homes	Mercer, Ogle	Northwestern
Haun Management - Milledge Villa Apartments	Carroll	Northwestern
Haun Management - Village Green Keithsburg	Mercer	Northwestern
Henderson County Housing Authority	Henderson	West Central
Home Based Property Management	Jo Daviess County	Northwestern
Housing Authority of Pulaski County	Pulaski	Southern Illinois
JAKKS Management	Saline, Ogle	Southern Illinois, Northwestern
Lutheran Social Services of Illinois - Lincoln Manor	Ogle	Northwestern
Lutheran Social Services of Illinois - Prairie Ridge Apartments	Stephenson	Northwestern

<b>Providers of Housing for Older Adults and People Living with Disabilities</b>	<b>County/Counties</b>	<b>CoC</b>
Lutheran Social Services of Illinois - Rolling Meadows Senior Housing	Christian	South Central

Mercer County Housing Authority	Mercer	Northwestern
Mid-Northern Management	McLean	Central Illinois
Lincoln Towers - Bloomington	McLean, Stephenson	Central Illinois, Northwestern
Otto Real Estate - Walnut Grove	Douglas	South Central
Palen Real Estate	Iroquois, Livingston, Ford, LaSalle	Central Illinois, Northwestern
Peppermint Square	Stephenson	Northwestern
Shawnee Enterprises	Saline, Ford	Central Illinois, Southern Illinois
South Cottage Village	McLean	Central Illinois
TM Associates	LaSalle, Ogle	Northwestern
Villa Apartments	Stephenson	Northwestern
WDC Management	Carroll, Dewitt, LaSalle, Lee, Logan, Fulton	Central Illinois, Northwestern, West Central

<b>Youth Homeless Services Providers</b>	<b>Counties</b>	<b>CoC</b>
Project Now	Mercer	Northwestern
Project Oz	McLean	Central Illinois
Arrow Leaf	Alexander, Pope, Union, Vienna	Southern Illinois
Center For Youth and Family Solutions	Knox	Northwestern
Centerstone	Williamson	Southern Illinois
ComWell	Randolph	Southern Illinois
Egyptian Public and Mental Health Department	Saline	Southern Illinois
Midwest Youth Services	Morgan	West Central
One Hope United	Effingham, Jefferson, Richland	South Central, Southern Illinois
Youth Service Bureau of Illinois Valley	LaSalle	Northwestern
Night's Shed	Franklin	Southern Illinois
National Runaway Safeline	ALL	ALL

<b>Homeless Prevention Services Providers</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>CoC</b>
BCMw Community Services	Bond, Clinton, Marion, Washington	Southern Illinois
CEFS Economic Opportunity Corporation	Christine, Clay, Effingham, Fayette, Montgomery, Moultrie, Shelby	Central Illinois
Chestnut Health System	McLean, Logan, Mason	Central Illinois
Crosswalk Community Action Agency	Jackson, Jefferson, Franklin, Williamson	Southern Illinois
Embarras River Basin Agency	Clark, Coles, Crawford, Cumberland, Douglas, Edgar, Jasper	South Central

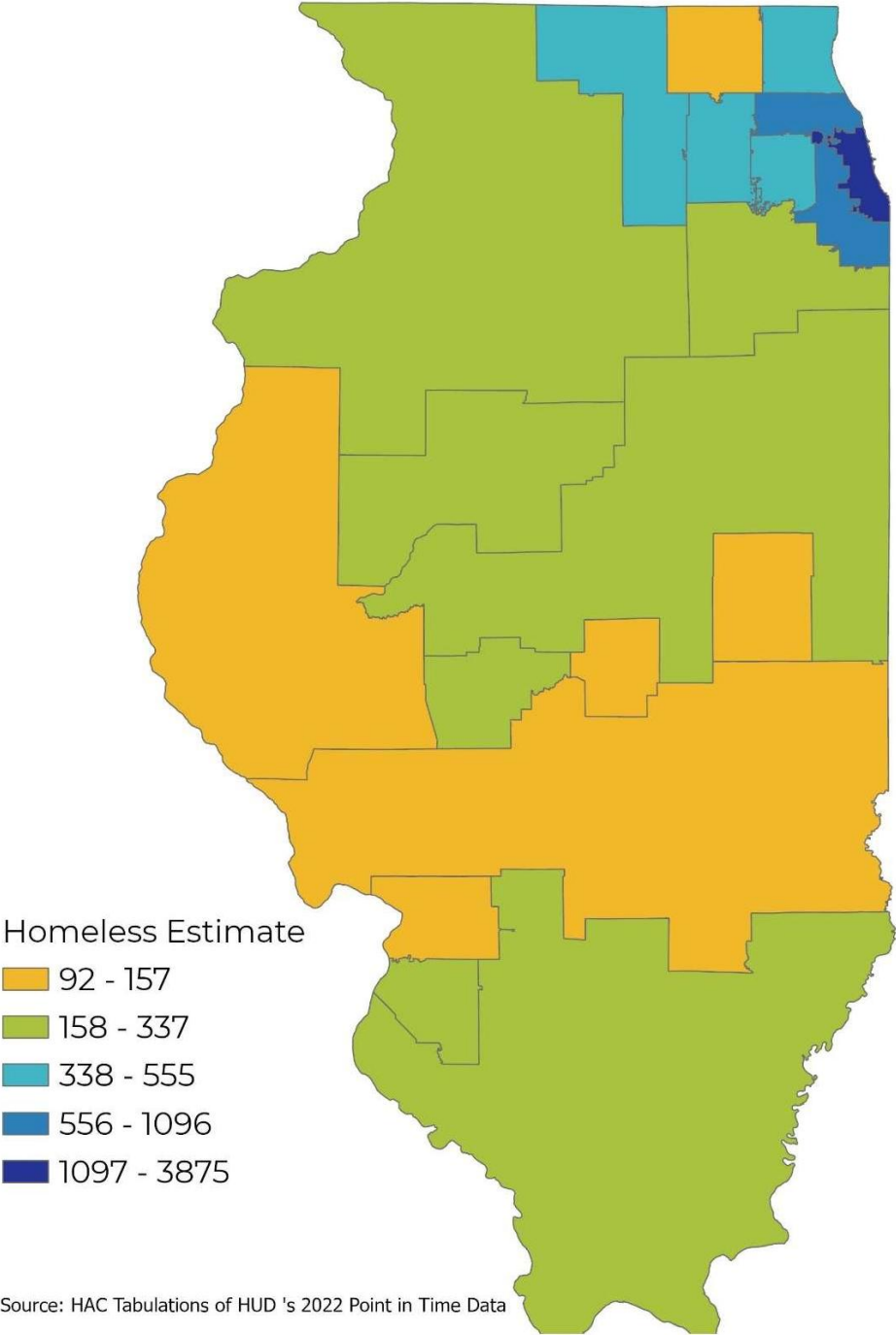
Illinois Valley Economic Development Corporation	Calhoun, Greene, Jersey, Macoupin	South Central
MCS Community Services	Cass, Morgan, Scott	West Central
Prairie State Legal Services	Boone, Fulton, Mercer, Whiteside, Woodford	Northwestern
Project NOW	Henry, Mercer	Northwestern
Rockford Human Services Department	Boone, Winnebago	
Salvation Army - Galesburg	Knox	Northwestern
Salvation Army - Quincy	Adams, Brown, Cass, Hancock, Henderson, McDonough, Morgan, Pike, Schuyler, Warren	West Central
Samaritan Well	McDonough	West Central
Shawnee Development Council, Incorporated	Alexander, Hardin, Johnson, Massac, Pope, Pulaski, Union	Southern Illinois
Western Illinois Regional Council	McDonough	West Central

<b>Re-Entry Program Providers</b>	<b>County/Counties</b>	<b>CoC</b>
YWCA McLean County	McLean	Central Illinois
Centerstone	Franklin, Jackson, Williamson	Southern Illinois
Joy Care Center/Jobs Partnership	Bloomington	Central Illinois
TASC	Jackson	Southern Illinois

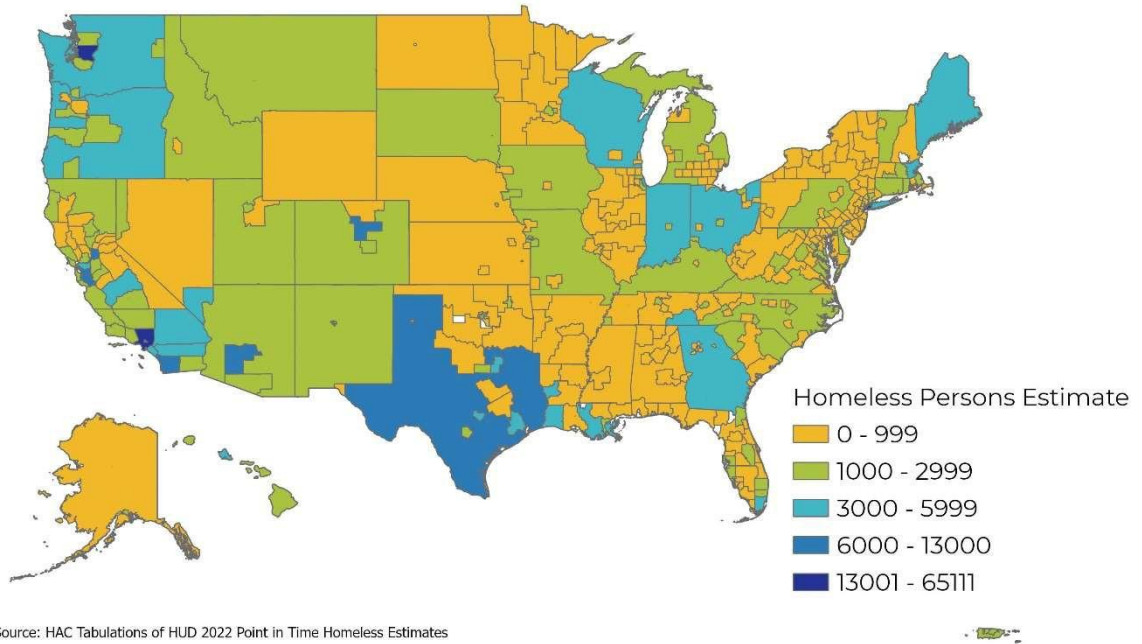
<b>Homeless Services Providers</b>	<b>County/Counties</b>	<b>CoC</b>
Catholic Charities, Diocese of Springfield - Effingham	Effingham	South Central
Cass County Health Clinic - Virginia Office	Cass	West Central
McLean County: Fuse	McLean	Central Illinois
Salvation Army of Bloomington - Safe Harbor Shelter And Social Service Center	McLean	Central Illinois
YWCA Quincy	Adams	West Central
Southern Illinois Coalition For The Homeless	Williamson	Southern Illinois
Project Now	Henry, Mercer	Northwestern
Embarras River Basin Agency (ERBA)	Douglas, Edgar, Lawrence, Jasper, Greenup, Richland, Edgar, Jasper, Crawford, Cumberland, Coles, Clark	South Central
Cruisin' Outta Poverty Services	McLean	Central Illinois



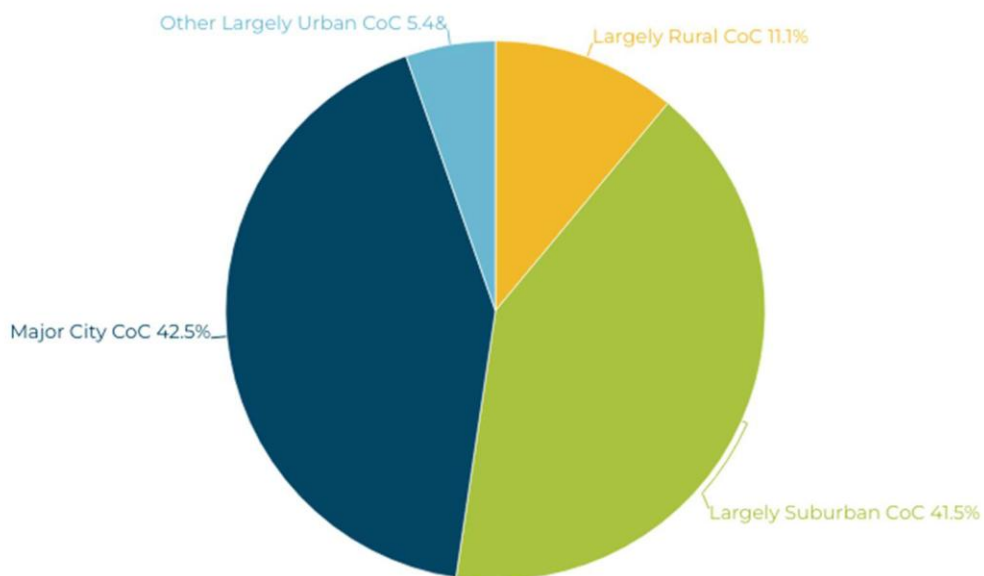
# Illinois Homeless Estimates by Continuum of Care, 2022



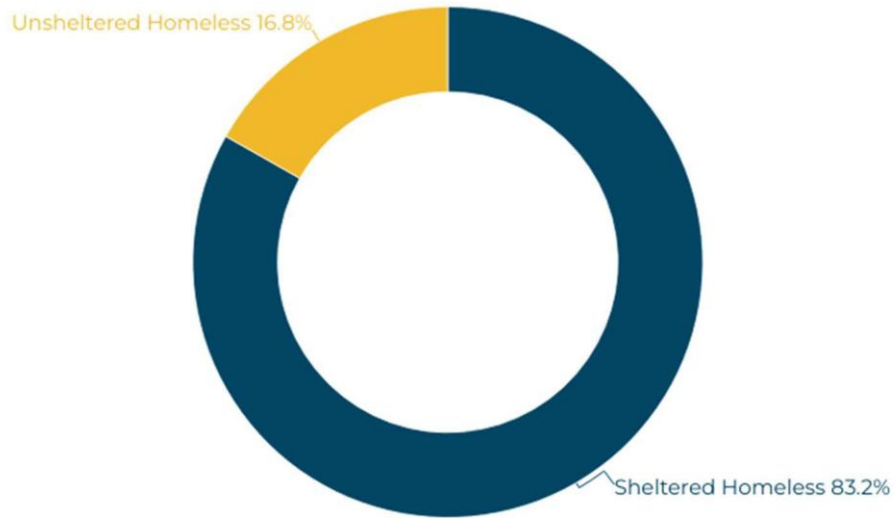
## Homeless Estimate by Continuum of Care, 2022



## Illinois Homeless Estimates by CoC Residence Type, 2022

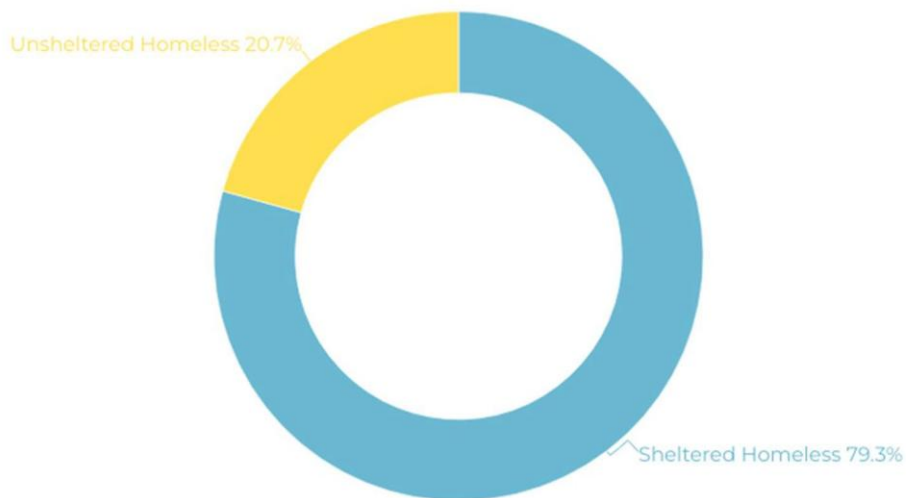


## Rural Illinois Homeless Estimates by Shelter Status, 2022



Source: Housing Assistance Council Tabulations of HUD 2022 Point In Time (PIT) data

## Illinois Homeless Estimates by Shelter Status, 2022

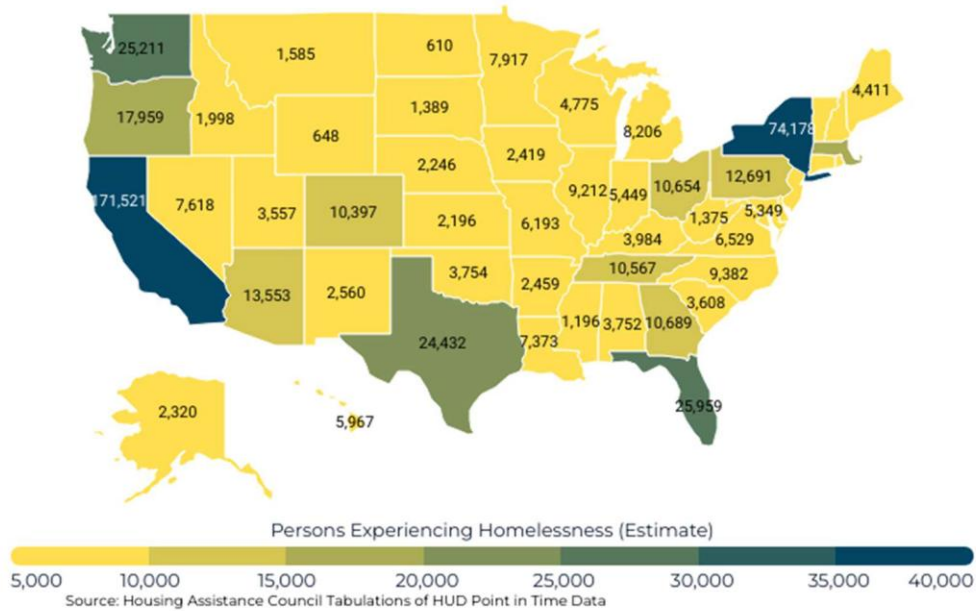


Source: Housing Assistance Council Tabulations of HUD 2022 Point In Time (PIT) data



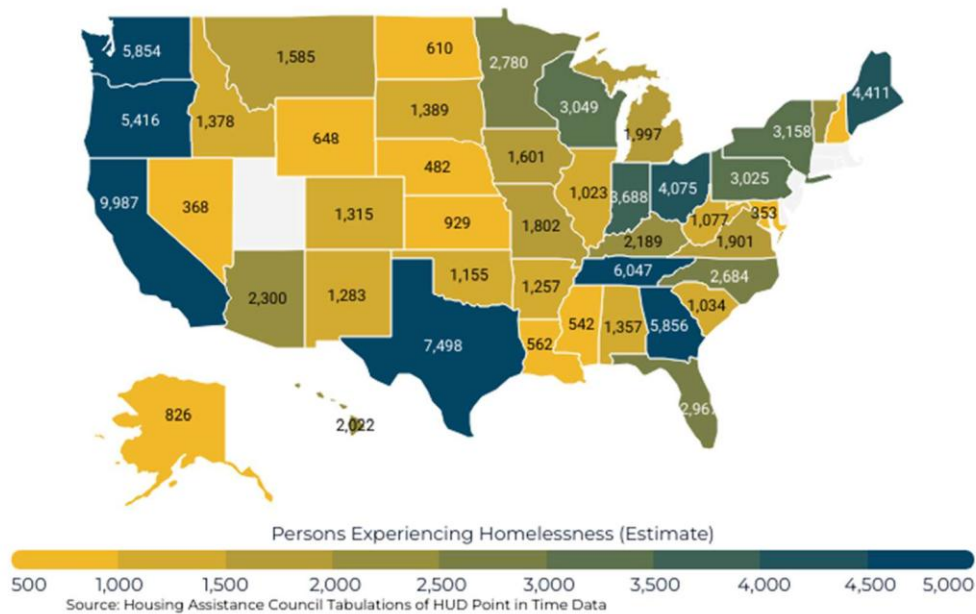
## Homeless Estimates (Sheltered and Unsheltered) 2022

By State



## Largely Rural CoC Homeless Estimates 2022 (Sheltered & Unsheltered)

By State



# NOTES

<sup>1</sup> “Crowded Housing in United States,” America's Health Rankings, United Health Foundation, accessed June 27, 2023, [https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/crowded\\_housing](https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/crowded_housing).

<sup>2</sup> Ilene J. Jacobs and Patrick Saldaña, “Farmworker Homelessness in Imperial County, California,” *Rural Voices*, March 2016, <https://ruralhome.org/wp-content/uploads/storage/documents/rural-voices/rvmarch2016.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> “Rapid Re-Housing,” U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, accessed June 27, 2023, <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Rapid-Re-Housing-Brief.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Caius Z. Willingham and Areeba Haider, “Rural Broadband Investments Promote an Inclusive Economy,” Center for American Progress, July 12, 2021, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/rural-broadband-investments-promote-inclusive-economy/>.

<sup>5</sup> HUD regulations, 24 CFR §91.5, <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-24/subtitle-A/part-91#91.5>.

<sup>6</sup> Secretary of State (S.O.S) Office, Resources for the Following Areas: Kankakee, Iroquois, Livingston, McLean, accessed June 29, 2023, <https://www.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/idoc/communityresources/documents/10-iroquois-kankakee-livingston-mclean-resource-guide>.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Feinberg. Rural Research Brief: Rural America is Losing Affordable Rental Housing at an Alarming Rate. Housing Assistance Council. Washington, DC. March 2, 2022. <https://ruralhome.org/update-maturing-mortgages-usda-section-515-rural-rental-housing-program/>

<sup>8</sup> Senate Report to accompany S. 1603, the fiscal year 2018 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, S.Rept. 115-131 (July 20, 2017), <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CRPT-115srpt131/pdf/CRPT-115srpt131>.

<sup>9</sup> Illinois Department of Human Services, accessed June 27, 2023, [IDHS: Illinois Department of Human Services \(state.il.us\)](https://www.idhs.gov/IDHS%3A%20Illinois%20Department%20of%20Human%20Services%20(state.il.us))

<sup>10</sup> United Way 2-1-1, accessed June 25, 2023, [United Way 211 - Path Crisis 211](https://www.unitedway.org/2-1-1)

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, “HUD’S Continuum of Care Supplemental to Address Unsheltered and Rural Homelessness (Special NOFO),” September 30, 2022, [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/comm\\_planning/coc/specialCoCNOFO/supplemental](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/coc/specialCoCNOFO/supplemental).

<sup>12</sup> “HUD Announces \$486 Million in Grants and \$43 Million for Stability Vouchers to Address Unsheltered and Rural Homelessness,” U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, April 17, 2023, [https://www.hud.gov/press/press\\_releases\\_media\\_advisories/HUD\\_No\\_23\\_079](https://www.hud.gov/press/press_releases_media_advisories/HUD_No_23_079).

<sup>13</sup> “HB 2100 Task Force on Homelessness and Racial Disparities,” State of Oregon, accessed June 27, 2023, <https://www.oregon.gov/ohcs/get-involved/pages/hb-2100-task-force.aspx>.

<sup>14</sup> “Rural Setaside Included in Major New HUD Homeless Funding Initiative,” Housing Assistance Council, September 19, 2022, <https://ruralhome.org/rural-homelessness-setaside/>.

<sup>15</sup> “Built for Zero,” Community Solutions, accessed June 27, 2023, <https://community.solutions/built-for-zero/the-movement/>.

<sup>16</sup> Kaitlyn Ranney, “Rockford, Illinois: Functional Zero Case Study,” Community Solutions, July 13, 2020, <https://community.solutions/case-studies/case-study-rockford-illinois-reaches-and-sustains-functional-zero-for-veteran-and-chronic-homelessness/>.

<sup>17</sup> “Built for Zero State Initiatives,” Community Solutions, accessed June 27, 2023, <https://community.solutions/built-for-zero-state-initiatives/>.

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<sup>18</sup> “President Biden, USDOT Announce More than \$20 Billion for Communities of All Sizes to Support Transit This Year,” Federal Transit Administration, April 6, 2022, <https://www.transit.dot.gov/about/news/president-biden-usdot-announce-more-20-billion-communities-all-sizes-support-transit>.

<sup>19</sup> “Low or No Emission and Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Competitive Programs FY2022 Notice of Funding,” Federal Transit Administration, March 7, 2022, <https://www.transit.dot.gov/notices-funding/low-or-no-emission-and-grants-buses-and-bus-facilities-competitive-programs-fy2022>.

<sup>20</sup> Sky Chadde and Johnathan Hettinger, “Government System for Protecting Farmworkers Plagued by Staff Turnover and Lack of Outreach,” Investigate Midwest, March 2, 2023, <https://investigatemitwest.org/2023/03/02/government-system-for-protecting-farmworkers-plagued-by-staff-turnover-and-lack-of-outreach/>.

<sup>21</sup> Chadde and Hettinger.