



*Department of **Human Services***
Monroe County, New York

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**HOUSING / HOMELESS
SERVICES
ANNUAL REPORT**

For Calendar Year 2016

May 2017

TEMPORARY HOUSING ASSISTANCE/ HOMELESS SERVICES – 2016

The Monroe County Department of Human Services Temporary Housing Assistance program underwent several noteworthy changes in 2016. New regulations and statutes at the State level placed increased focus on emergency housing applicants, recipients, shelter providers and local district practices. One of the most notable changes is the referencing of Emergency Housing as TEMPORARY HOUSING ASSISTANCE (THA). MCDHS is making this change along with several other policy and procedure updates. The change to THA is meant to emphasize the temporary nature of shelter placements and the goal of moving individuals experiencing homelessness to permanent housing solutions as soon as possible. Other changes in 2016 included the adoption of regulations related to Homelessness During Inclement Winter Weather, placement of individuals with income that exceed public assistance needs resulting in payment responsibility of the individual, and local certification requirements for facilities under OTDA Certification thresholds. These evolving requirements require increased coordination, cooperation and communication between MCDHS and community providers. We continue to work together with the homeless provider community to serve Monroe County residents in the most efficient and effective ways, while also complying with all applicable rules and regulations from New York State and the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA).

Temporary Housing Assistance (THA) Placements

In 2016, the Monroe County Department of Human Services (MCDHS) made 7,815¹ temporary housing placements for individuals and families. This represents a 4% increase from the 7,455 temporary housing placements made in 2015.

| Year | Families | Individuals | Total | Change from Previous Year | % change | Total Cost | Average cost per placement |
|-------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2012 | 2720 | 5628 | 8348 | -324 | -4% | \$4,948,940 | \$593 |
| 2013 | 2678 | 6179 | 8857 | 509 | 6% | \$4,908,746 | \$554 |
| 2014 | 2674 | 5811 | 8485 | -372 | -9% | \$4,948,029 | \$583 |
| 2015 | 2318 | 5137 | 7455 | -1030 | -12% | \$4,631,902 | \$621 |
| 2016 | 2424 | 5391 | 7815 | +360 | 4% | \$4,743,783 | \$607 |

In 2016 a concerted effort was made by the Department of Human Services and homeless services providers to reduce the number of hotel placements. Service providers increased their capacity and became more flexible to accommodate intact families and male heads of households. The increased cost per placement is due to this change as shelter per diems are higher than the nightly cost of a hotel as shelters provide essential services, meals, toiletries, etc.

The 2016 emergency housing placement numbers do not include Monroe County residents that were placed in domestic violence shelters outside of Monroe County. In 2016, an additional \$313,288.08 was issued for out-of-county domestic violence placements.

¹ The number of temporary housing placements made is not unduplicated, and does not include canceled placements or certain no show placements.

Leading Causes for Temporary Housing Assistance Placements in 2016

The primary cause of homelessness in 2016 continued to be eviction by the primary tenant. Individuals and families residing in the homes of relatives or friends are often asked to leave due to overcrowded conditions, substance abuse, domestic disputes, family breakups and strained relationships. This cause represented 69% of the total emergency housing placements that were made in 2016.

The second leading cause of homelessness in 2016 was a result of being released from an institution without a plan for permanent housing. Institutions include hospitals, substance abuse treatment programs, jails and prisons. This cause represented 11% of the total emergency housing placements that were made in 2016.

Temporary Housing Assistance Placement Causes 2012-2016

| <u>Cause of Homelessness</u> | <u>2012</u> | <u>2013</u> | <u>2014</u> | <u>2015</u> | <u>2016</u> |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Eviction by Primary Tenant | 63% | 68% | 64% | 65% | 69% |
| Release from Institution | 14% | 11% | 13% | 12% | 11% |
| Eviction by Landlord | 8% | 6% | 8% | 7% | 7% |
| Arrived from out of county | 6% | 6% | 6% | 6% | 5% |
| Domestic Violence | 6% | 5% | 7% | 7% | 6% |
| Fire | 1% | 2% | 1% | 1% | 1% |
| All other causes | 2% | 2% | 1% | 2% | 1% |

Temporary Housing Assistance Placements – Youth

In 2016, 479 youths (ages 16-21, unduplicated) were placed in temporary housing. As some youths experienced multiple bouts of homelessness, the total number of youth placements into temporary housing for 2016 was 845. Of the total youth placements made in 2016, 56% were placed in the adult shelter system, 44% were placed in the youth shelter system. No youth were placed in hotels.²

Temporary Housing Assistance Placements – Youth (ages 16-21) 2012-2016

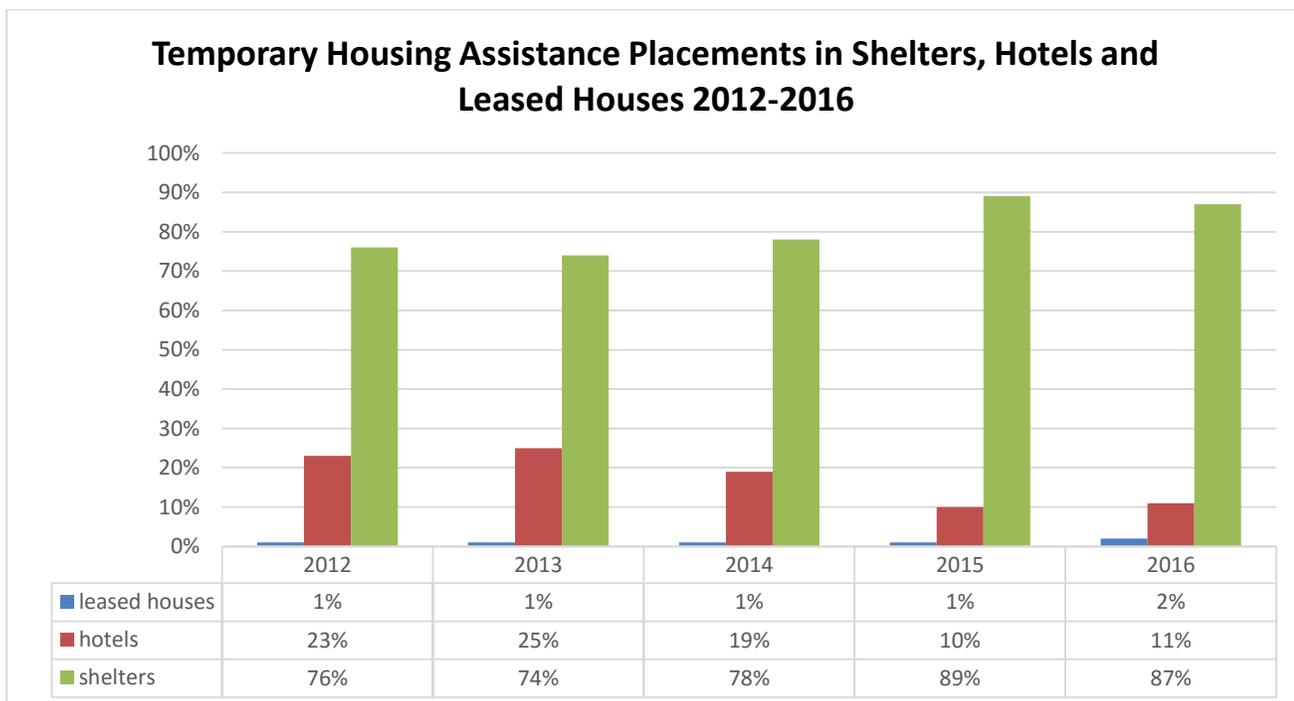
| Year | Youths Placed | Change from Previous Year | % change | Total Placements | Change from Previous Year | % change |
|-------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| 2012 | 727 | -101 | -12% | 1,276 | -133 | -9% |
| 2013 | 630 | -97 | -13% | 1,016 | -260 | -20% |
| 2014 | 523 | -107 | -8% | 934 | -82 | -9% |
| 2015 | 465 | -58 | -11% | 858 | -76 | -8% |
| 2016 | 479 | +14 | +3% | 845 | -13 | -2% |

² These percentages are based on the unduplicated numbers.

Temporary Housing Assistance Placements – Shelters, Hotels and Leased Houses

Shelters and leased houses provide case management services that are not provided at a hotel. When making a placement, shelters are always utilized first, and a hotel placement is only made when a shelter bed or leased house is unavailable. In some situations, hotel placements are utilized when a shelter option is not appropriate based on the household circumstances. MCDHS Emergency Housing Unit staff work with those families and individuals who have been placed in a hotel to move them as quickly as possible to a shelter or leased house.

In 2016, 87% of the temporary housing assistance placements were made at homeless shelters. Hotel placements accounted for 11% of the total temporary housing assistance placements, and leased houses 2%. Monroe County has actively worked with temporary housing assistance providers to reduce the number of placements made in hotels. It is important to note that 34% of temporary housing placements made in 2006 were made in hotels. In 2016, MCDHS continued to hold hotel placements to some of the lowest levels seen since that time.



Average Length of Stay

The goal of MCDHS is to assist homeless residents in securing appropriate permanent housing as quickly as possible. In 2016 MCDHS continued full implementation of weekly 1 on 1 Independent Living Plan (ILP) meetings with individuals and families placed in temporary housing. The purpose of these meetings is to ensure that DHS Housing staff is meeting with every individual placed in temporary housing on a regular basis to review the household's circumstances and to address any barriers they may face in securing permanent housing. The ILP meetings also focus on the households responsibilities while residing in temporary housing including weekly documented apartment search efforts. The ILP process has contributed to a fairly consistent length of stay in temporary housing for single individuals and families placed in leased houses for 2016. While we saw a slight decrease in the average length of stay for families placed at a hotel, we saw a 7 day increase in the length of stay for individuals placed in hotels. This increase is correlated to serving higher need individuals, who often have significant mental health issues preventing a placement in a shelter setting. The lack of case management for these individuals (which would be provided in a shelter setting) contributes to the

increased length of stay, as MCDHS Housing staff are often providing significant assistance to move the person to permanent housing.

| | Families | | | Individuals | | |
|---------------|----------|------|--------|-------------|------|--------|
| | 2015 | 2016 | Change | 2015 | 2016 | Change |
| Hotels | 5 | 3 | -2 | 5 | 12 | +7 |
| Shelters | 17 | 17 | NC | 13 | 13 | NC |
| Leased Houses | 25 | 24 | -1 | - | - | n/a |

Available Temporary Housing Assistance Beds

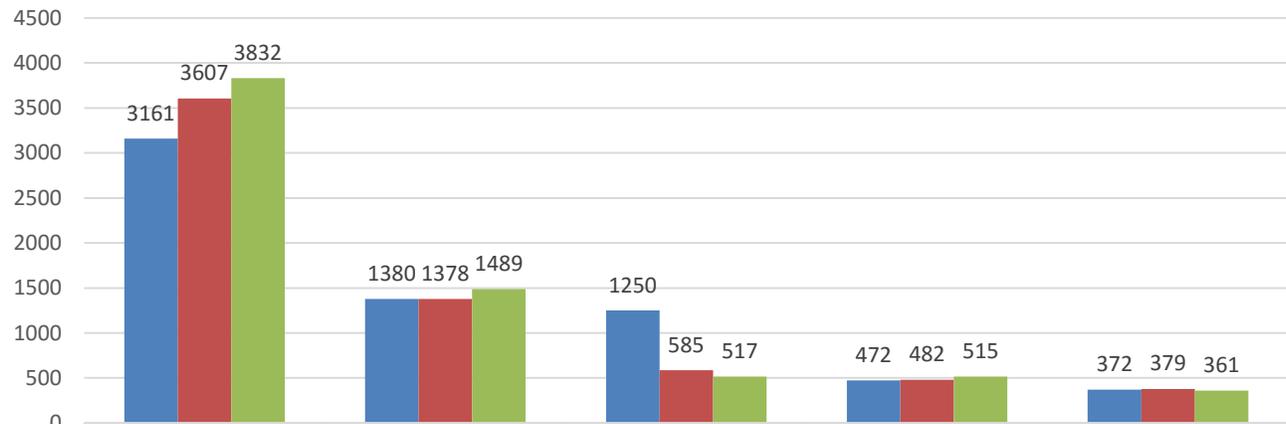
During 2016, MCDHS contracted with various community agencies for approximately 427 temporary housing assistance beds for homeless individuals and families. These are approximate numbers as rooms can be reconfigured based on need, and some of the shelter beds are “moved” between various programs when necessary. When the shelters are unable to accommodate a placement, MCDHS utilizes various hotels and motels across Monroe County.

The Department of Human Services issued a request for proposals for Temporary Housing Assistance in 2016 and starting in 2017 has finalized new contracts with our temporary housing providers. The goal of these new contracts is to improve consistency among providers as well as renew provider focus on support services and upfront assessments that will lead to locating and retaining permanent housing. While this community has seen a loss in transitional and pregnant/teen parenting programs, several providers continue to offer transitional shelter programs which allow individuals and/or families with multiple barriers or special needs the ability to further stabilize for three or more months before moving on to other permanent housing options.

Contracted Temporary Housing Assistance Facilities

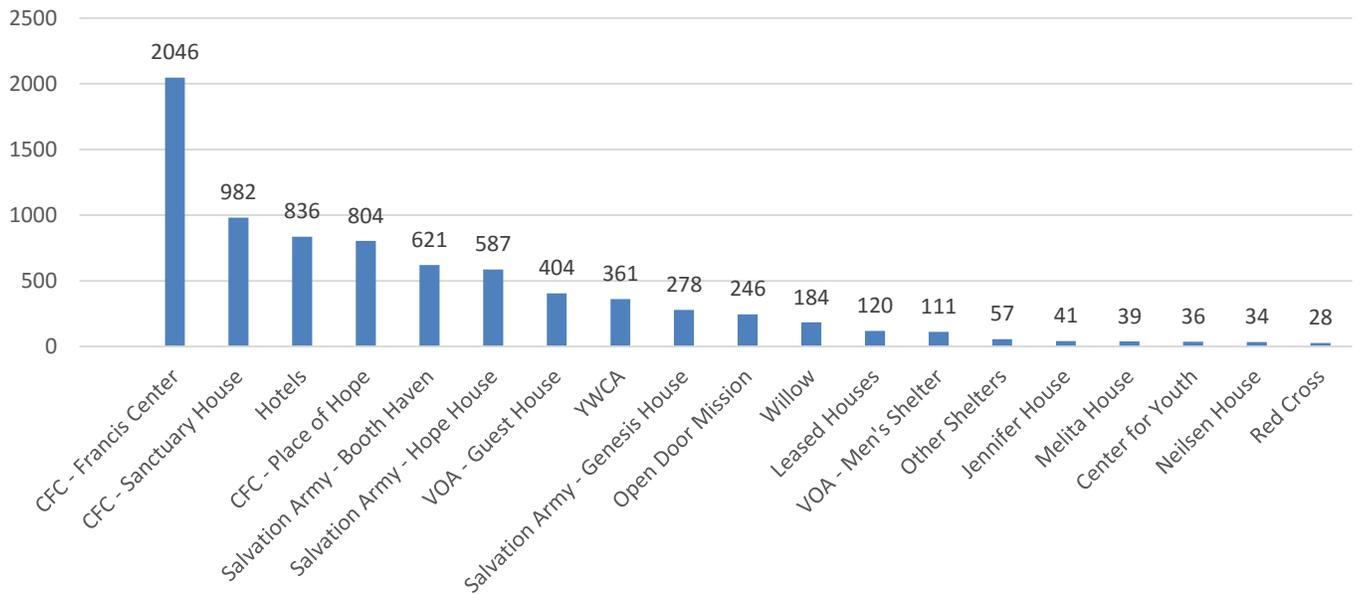
| | | |
|--|---------|--|
| Willow Domestic Violence Center | 49 beds | Individuals with children |
| Catholic Family Center – Francis Center | 36 beds | Single men |
| Catholic Family Center – Sanctuary House | 46 beds | Women – single and with children (17 rooms) |
| Catholic Family Center – Place of Hope | 43 beds | Families, couples and singles (18 rooms) |
| Center for Youth | 13 beds | Youth (16-20) male or female |
| Salvation Army Men’s Shelter- Booth Haven | 39 beds | Single men |
| Salvation Army Youth Shelter – Genesis House | 14 beds | Youth (16-21) male or female |
| Salvation Army Women’s Shelter – Hope House | 19 beds | Single women |
| Tempo Development (Temple B’rith Kodesh) | 58 beds | Families (11 units) |
| VOC Richards House | 6 beds | Single men (Veterans) |
| Volunteers of America – Guest House | 44 beds | Families, couples and singles (12 rooms) |
| Volunteers of America - Men’s Shelter | 4 beds | Single men |
| YWCA | 56 beds | Families, single men or women with children (20 rooms) |

Top Temporary Housing Assistance Placement Sites 2014-2016



| | Catholic Family Center | Salvation Army | Cadillac Hotel | VOA | YWCA |
|--------|------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----|------|
| ■ 2014 | 3161 | 1380 | 1250 | 472 | 372 |
| ■ 2015 | 3607 | 1378 | 585 | 482 | 379 |
| ■ 2016 | 3832 | 1489 | 517 | 515 | 361 |

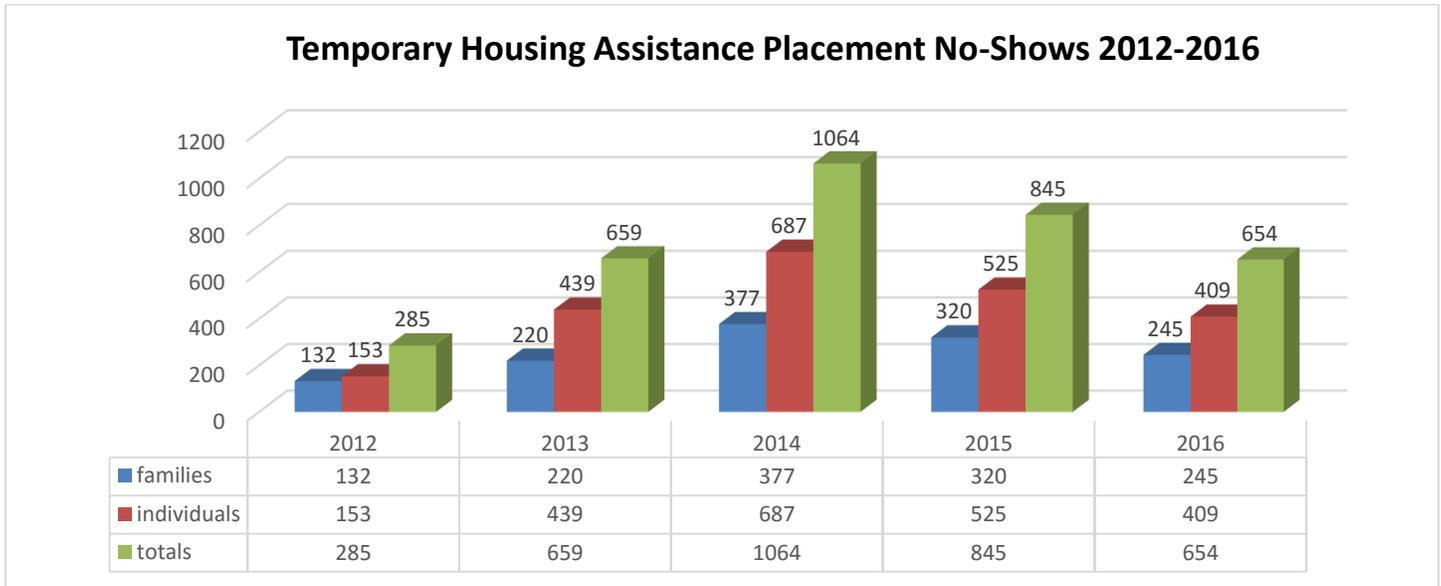
2016 Temporary Housing Assistance Placements by Site



Temporary Housing Assistance Placement No –Shows

When a family or individual is placed by the Housing Unit they are instructed to report to the shelter by 5:30 PM. If they have not arrived by 6:00 PM, their placement is canceled and their bed(s) are once again made available for other homeless individuals and families. When the placement is made during non-business hours (through the After-Hours process), the placement is paid for by MCDHS even if the client fails to show for the placement. The numbers in the “Temporary Housing Assistance Placement No Shows 2012 – 2016” chart represents the No Show placements that were paid for by MCDHS. In 2016, a total of 654 no show placements were paid by MCDHS.

During 2016, an additional 812 (218 Family and 594 Individual placements) No Show placements were released and MCDHS did not pay for those placements.



After Hours Placements

In 2015, 2,701 placements were made through After-Hours during non-business hours. 289 of these placements (11%) were made for callers in which erroneous information regarding their identity was provided. Past evidence suggested that callers through After Hours, who would not otherwise be eligible for Temporary Housing Assistance through MCDHS, provided inaccurate information to be placed at hotels, particularly on holidays and weekends. Since 2015, improvements to the After Hours process, including the 211 Coordinated Access process and use of laptops by After Hours staff, has helped to better determine MCDHS Temporary Housing eligibility. In 2016 2,210 After Hours placements were made – a decrease of 491 or 18%. The number of placements with erroneous information also decreased significantly to 137 (6%, down from 11% in 2015).

Tenant Accountability Training

In September 2009, MCDHS, the City of Rochester and the Housing Council collaborated to offer TAT. The goal of TAT is to assist recipients of Temporary Assistance (TA) in achieving their highest level of self-sufficiency. The training focuses on the value of being a good tenant and neighbor, along with the costs to the individual, their children and the community of housing instability. The client’s attendance is considered a continuing eligibility requirement for TA, and failure to attend would be cause to discontinue the client’s TA grant. Circumstances that warrant a referral to TAT include: two moves within the last 12 months, a former landlord has filed a claim on a Landlord Tenant Security Agreement for \$500 or greater, two emergency housing placements within a 12-month period, the head of household is under the age of 21, administrative

discretion, a TA household that contains a child under the age of 6 and is residing in the areas that have been identified by the City of Rochester as posing the highest risk of exposure to lead poisoning, or a request from a city, town or Housing Council inspector, the Health Department, a MCDHS case worker or investigator.

The training curriculum has been enhanced in recent years to include information on maintaining an environmentally healthy home, preventing lead poisoning and the identification, prevention and treatment of bedbug infestations.

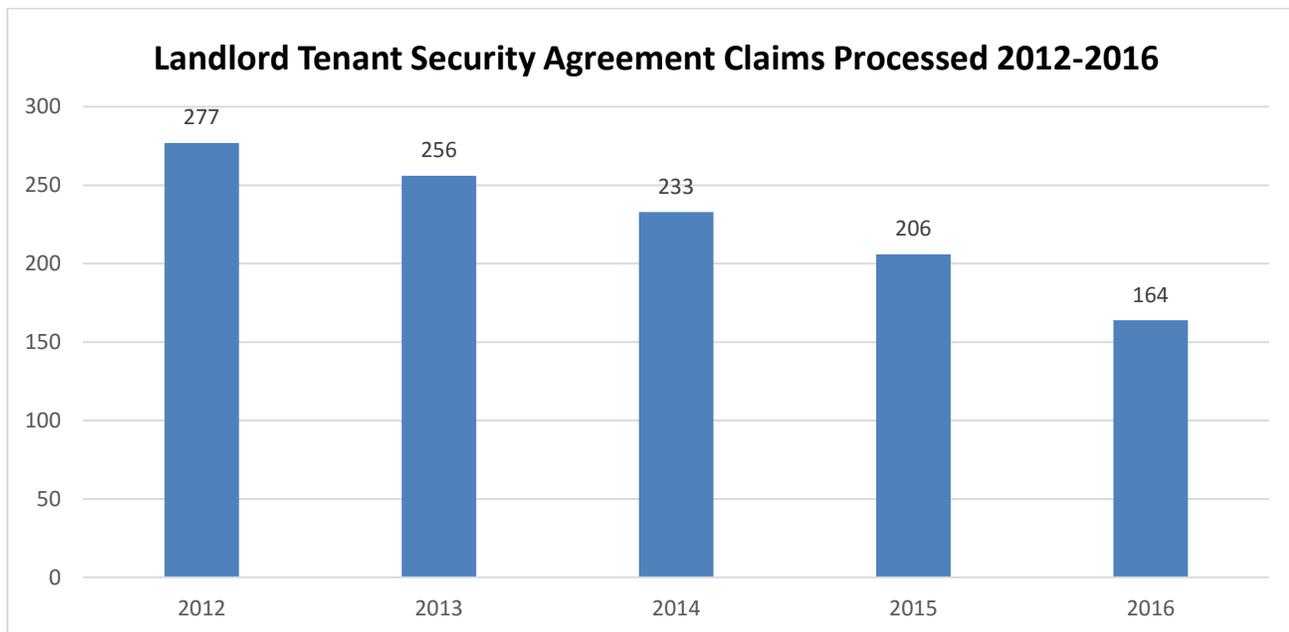
Surveys of participants consistently find that over 96% of those who respond felt that as a result of the training they were better able to identify lead hazards in their home. During 2016, 373 TA recipients attended TAT. Since its resurrection in September 2009 through December 31, 2016 there have been 8,877 participants in TAT.

Monroe County Department of Human Services Housing Unit

The Monroe County Department of Human Services Housing Unit was established to serve the emergency needs of the homeless and the housing needs of the low-income residents in our community. The following services are provided by the Housing Unit and other units within MCDHS:

- Housing Unit staff work with shelter providers to assist residents in securing financial assistance, locating housing and providing relocation services such as moving, utility turn-on and acquiring essential furniture and appliances.
- The Housing Unit provides homeless individuals and families with housing assistance and linkages to other County staff, including: Adult Protective, Child Protective, Financial Assistance, Mental Health, Youth Bureau, Probation, as well as community service providers.
- The Housing Unit has a Senior Examiner designated as a single point of entry for any youth between the ages of 16 to 18 that are homeless and/or applying for cash assistance as the head of household. MCDHS staff conducts investigations to locate responsible adults, or, in the event no adult is available, work with community providers to locate appropriate permanent housing and link the youths to needed services.
- MCDHS operates an after-hours placement line: 442-1742. After-hours telephone coverage is available during non-business hours to provide emergency assistance to the homeless. Since 2014, After Hours has worked in conjunction with 211 Lifeline to coordinate after-hours placement as a part of Coordinated Entry. 211 Lifeline focuses on diversion and warm transfer to DHS when diversion is not possible. If DHS is unable to facilitate placement 211 will seek hospitality beds and facilitate placement if and when beds are available
- The Housing Unit is the central point of entry for MCDHS placement into temporary housing. Staff coordinate the placement of homeless individuals and families into available beds. A daily census is taken at the shelters and hotels to maximize use of available beds and identify and address any client-specific barriers to relocation into permanent housing.
- Screening of all homeless individuals and families who are not receiving Temporary Assistance to determine eligibility for temporary housing assistance. When appropriate, expedited Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, personal needs allowances and assistance with first month's rent are issued.
- The Housing Unit operates a Landlord "Hotline": 753-6034. Questions and concerns are resolved quickly, and in many instances have prevented evictions. Staff work directly with landlords to resolve agency/landlord disputes.
- The Housing Unit conducts periodic inspections of the shelters and hotels to ensure that safe and sanitary housing is being provided to temporary housing assistance recipients.

- The Housing Unit operates the Rent Withholding Program which works to ensure that buildings with open health and safety violations occupied by Temporary Assistance recipients are brought up to code compliance. When necessary, rental payments are withheld until major violations are corrected.
- MCDHS issues a Landlord Tenant Security Agreement (LTSA) in lieu of a cash security deposit. The LTA secures the landlord against tenant-caused damages and unpaid rent up to a maximum amount equal to two months of the household's Temporary Assistance shelter allowance. The Emergency Housing Unit is responsible for processing claims made on Landlord Tenant Security Agreements. In 2016, there were 164 claims filed on Landlord Tenant Security Agreements. There has been a steady decline in the number of LTSA claims that are being filed annually. MCDHS does not maintain statistics on the number of Landlord-Tenant Security Agreements that are being issued each year, but there has been a decline in the number of inspections that are being done related to the LTA process. While there may be several factors that are causing this it is felt that more landlords are requiring cash security deposits. The Community Homeless Coordinator holds monthly meetings with landlords to review the LTSA process and encourage more landlords to accept the LTSA to increase the number of property options available to DHS clients.



- Provide emergency payments to financially eligible home-owners which include payments to prevent tax or mortgage foreclosures or help with necessary repairs to maintain current occupied housing.
- MCDHS, in partnership with the Rochester Housing Authority (RHA), operates a Shelter Plus Care grant. The Shelter Plus Care program is funded through HUD and provides rent subsidies to low-income households. This program helps house homeless individuals and families in which the head-of-household suffers from mental illness, chronic substance abuse and/or other disabilities. Rochester Housing Authority manages the rental subsidies and MCDHS Emergency Housing Unit staff assists in determining preliminary eligibility. Ongoing case management services are provided by various agencies in the community. Currently, 359 households in Monroe County are receiving rent subsidies through this grant.
- Housing staff is a component of the Homeless MICA (Mentally Ill Chemically Addicted) Program. This program, funded by Monroe County Office of Mental Health, uses a team approach to serving homeless MICA individuals. Staff from MCDHS and Providence Housing Development Corporation Street Outreach Team work together and are able to draw upon the resources of their respective agencies. The program is

able to assist these individuals in securing financial assistance, temporary, supportive and permanent housing. PHDC Street Outreach staff provides linkages to mental health services and ongoing case management.

Monroe County Department of Human Services staff are also active participants in the following organizations:

- **Homeless Services Network:** This organization facilitates networking, coordinating, training, consulting and fundraising among individuals who work for, or with agencies who provide high-quality, accessible and effective health, social, housing and other services to individuals who are homeless. Members represent approximately 60 community agencies, including County and City departments. In 2015 the Homeless Services Network became the official stakeholder body of the Rochester and Monroe County Homeless Continuum of Care.
- **Homeless Continuum of Care Team:** This team, comprised of staff from Monroe County, the City of Rochester, and the Homeless Service Providers' Network, facilitates and evaluates the implementation of the local Homeless Continuum of Care Plan. Each year, this group is responsible to coordinate the community's submission for the HUD Super NOFA. This includes collecting community data, ranking proposals to meet community needs and writing the Rochester/Monroe County application for HUD funds.
- **"Rapid Re-Housing Services" Program:** This team functions as a collaboration of community partners. Some of the key elements of this collaboration include:
 1. A staff person that will work in conjunction with DHS staff in developing a pool of potential landlords that will have housing readily available for our homeless clients. As part of this process, they will identify and address any issues that landlords may have to renting to our clients. (I.E. Landlords who are reluctant to accept a Landlord Tenant Security Agreement.)
 2. A staff person who will work with DHS and shelter staff in locating appropriate housing for families that have traditionally presented challenges throughout the housing process. (I.E. Large families, disabled, eviction history and poor credit)
- **Coordinated Entry:** The vision for Coordinated Entry is to:
 1. Ensure that everyone who needs emergency shelter is able to access and receive services.
 2. Reduce episodes of homelessness and the number of bed placements through coordinated diversion strategies and tactics.
 3. Utilize DHS or 2-1-1 as the only entry points into the homeless services system. Eliminating "side doors" ensures equitable access to necessary services.
 4. Emergency shelters and outreach programs will use the common assessment tool (VI-SPDAT) that is supported in our community. DHS now requires shelters with whom they contract to conduct this assessment with all households.
 5. Decrease the length of homeless episodes by moving households to permanent housing as quickly as possible.

6. Permanent Supportive Housing, Shelter Plus Care, and Rapid Re-Housing programs will be expected to fill beds/vacancies from a single prioritization list that will be accessible in the HMIS

Coordinated Entry will be fully implemented across all housing programs by January of 2018.

- **Chronically Homeless Workgroup:** The MCDHS Community Homeless Coordinator co-chairs this group and it became a committee of the Continuum of Care with the charge of addressing the needs of all of the chronically homeless in our community. Along with members of the CoC, the Monroe County Department of Human Services, Rapid Rehousing, the Veterans Administration, Rochester Regional Health System, faith based providers, community volunteers and community shelter and homeless services providers, this group continues to work to identify chronically homeless individuals, their specific needs and remove any barriers they face. The group regularly goes out where the chronically homeless members of our community are, to offer options, case management, apartment searching and other services.

Homelessness During Inclement Winter Weather

On 12/16/16, Governor Cuomo issued Emergency Regulations 304 and 304.1 *Homelessness During Inclement Winter Weather*. The emergency regulations directed all local social service districts and local police agencies to take all necessary steps to identify individuals reasonably believed to be homeless and unwilling or unable to find the shelter necessary for safety and health in inclement winter weather and move such individuals to the appropriate sheltered facilities. Monroe County Department of Human Services did the following to provide services required by this emergency regulation:

Sent a team of three County staff out from 7:00 to 10:00 pm on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings. Outreach included:

- travel to locations within Monroe County where homeless “encampments” are known or suspected to exist
- Non-confrontational outreach to homeless individuals identified with offer of a shelter placement and transportation to the shelter
- Coordinate placement into available shelter beds for those wanting shelter
- Accept referrals from local law enforcement to visit suspected homeless encampments or individuals and offer shelter and transport (example may be individuals suspected of living in their cars)
- Referral to local law enforcement for any individuals encountered who appears to be a danger to themselves or others and at risk of harm were they to remain unsheltered (as directed in the emergency regulations and referenced in Mental Hygiene Law 9.41)

Between December and March DHS staff conducted dozens of outreach efforts. We also accepted referrals of eligible individuals from 211/Lifeline and as clients walked into our offices. In total, 270 otherwise ineligible individuals were placed in Temporary Housing under these emergency regulations.

Shelter Supplement Program

Monroe County has been approved to implement a shelter supplement program for 125 families who are facing imminent homelessness. The shelter supplement will promote housing stability for TANF and SN –MOE families living in Monroe County. Families who might otherwise be placed in emergency housing will be diverted from entering shelter by utilizing the shelter supplement as an incentive to the landlord to allow the family to remain in the current housing. TA clients benefit from increased housing stability and are expected to

utilize the additional support to work towards self-sufficiency. Households are eligible for the supplement for up to a 12-month time period.