



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

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**HOUSING / HOMELESS
SERVICES
ANNUAL REPORT
For Calendar Year 2015**

May 2016

EMERGENCY HOUSING / HOMELESS SERVICES - 2015

Emergency Housing Placements

In 2015, the Monroe County Department of Human Services (MCDHS) made 7,455¹ emergency housing placements for individuals and families. This represents a 12% decrease from the 8,485 emergency housing placements made in 2014.

Year	Families	Individuals	Total	Change from Previous Year	% change	Total Cost	Average cost per placement
2011	2559	6113	8672	-232	-3%	\$4,755,997	\$548
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

In 2015 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 2015 emergency housing placement numbers do not include Monroe County residents that were placed in domestic violence shelters outside of Monroe County. In 2015, an additional \$384,224.45 was issued for out-of-county domestic violence placements.

Leading Causes for Emergency Housing Placements in 2015

The primary cause of homelessness in 2015 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 65% of the total emergency housing placements that were made in 2015.

The second leading cause of homelessness in 2015 was a result of being released from an institution without a plan for permanent housing. Institutions include hospitals, substance abuse treatment programs, Monroe County Jail and other jails and prisons. This cause represented 12% of the total emergency housing placements that were made in 2015.

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

Emergency Housing Placement Causes 2011-2015

<u>Cause of Homelessness</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
Eviction by Primary Tenant	63%	63%	68%	64%	65%
Release from Institution	15%	14%	11%	13%	12%
Eviction by Landlord	7%	8%	6%	8%	7%
Arrived from out of county	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%
Domestic Violence	6%	6%	5%	7%	7%
Fire	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%
All other causes	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%

Emergency Housing Placements – Youth

In 2015, 465 youths (ages 16-21, unduplicated) were placed in emergency housing. As some youths experienced multiple bouts of homelessness, the total number of youth placements into emergency housing for 2015 was 858. Of the total youth placements made in 2015, 54% were placed in the adult shelter system, 45% were placed in the youth shelter system and 1% were placed in hotels.²

Emergency Housing Placements – Youth (ages 16-21) 2011-2015

Year	Youths Placed	Change from Previous Year	% change	Total Placements	Change from Previous Year	% change
2011	828	-62	-7%	1,409	-102	-7%
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%

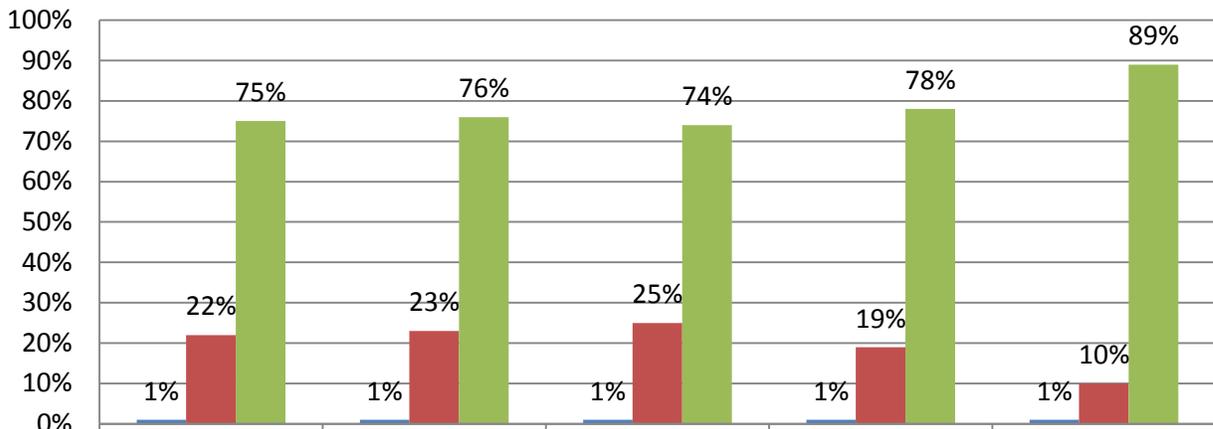
Emergency Housing Placements – Shelters, Hotels and Leased Houses

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. 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 2015, 89% of the emergency housing placements were made at homeless shelters. Hotel placements accounted for 10% of the total emergency housing placements, and leased houses 1%. Monroe County has actively worked with emergency housing shelters to reduce the number of placements made in hotels. It is important to note that 34% of emergency housing placements made in 2006 were made in hotels. The 2015 rate of hotel placements is the lowest we have seen since that time.

² These percentages are based on the unduplicated numbers.

Emergency Housing Placements in Shelters, Hotels, and Leased Houses 2011-2015



	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Leased Housed	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Hotels	22%	23%	25%	19%	10%
Shelters	75%	76%	74%	78%	89%

Average Length of Stay

The goal of MCDHS is to assist homeless residents in securing appropriate permanent housing as quickly as possible. In 2014, MCDHS changed the way we determine the length of a MCDHS paid “stay” in shelter. Previously when clients were moved between placement sites, the length of stay at each site was calculated as a distinct placement and the overall length of stay was diluted. In 2014, we updated our methodology to include all placements that occur with less than 5 days in between to be counted as one emergency housing episode. The time spent in all placements count as one “episode” to calculate the MCDHS paid length of stay in emergency housing. MCDHS believes this more accurately represents the length of stay in MCDHS paid shelter settings. As a result of this change in calculation in 2014, the average length of MCDHS paid placements increased for both families and individuals that were placed in either a shelter, a leased house or a hotel.

In 2015 MCDHS fully implemented weekly 1 on 1 Independent Living Plan (ILP) meetings with individuals and families placed in emergency. The purpose of these meetings is to ensure that DHS Housing staff is meeting with every individual placed in emergency 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 emergency housing including weekly documented apartment search efforts. The ILP process has contributed to a reduced length of stay in emergency shelter for single individuals and families placed in leased houses for 2015. The average length of stay for individuals and families placed at a hotel increased by 1 day in 2015. This is attributed to the increased capacity at shelters as in previous years hotels were used at a higher rate when shelters were full and households would be moved to shelters as soon as space became available. The current population being placed in hotels is primarily individuals that are not able to cope in a congregate shelter setting and therefore their entire emergency housing stay must be in a hotel setting.

AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY

	Families				Individuals		
	2014	2015	Change		2014	2015	Change
Hotels	4	5	+1		4	5	+1
Shelters	17	17	NC		15	13	-2
Leased Houses	39	25	-14		-	-	n/a

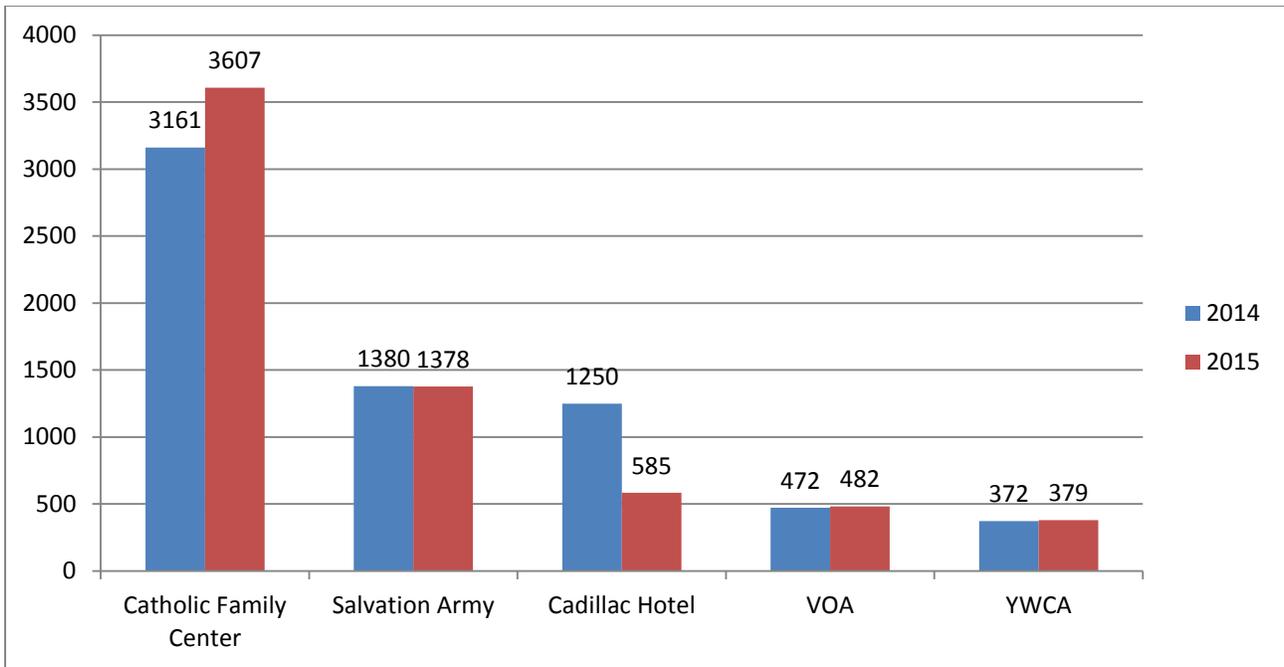
Available Beds

During 2015, MCDHS contracted with various community agencies for approximately 439 emergency 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.

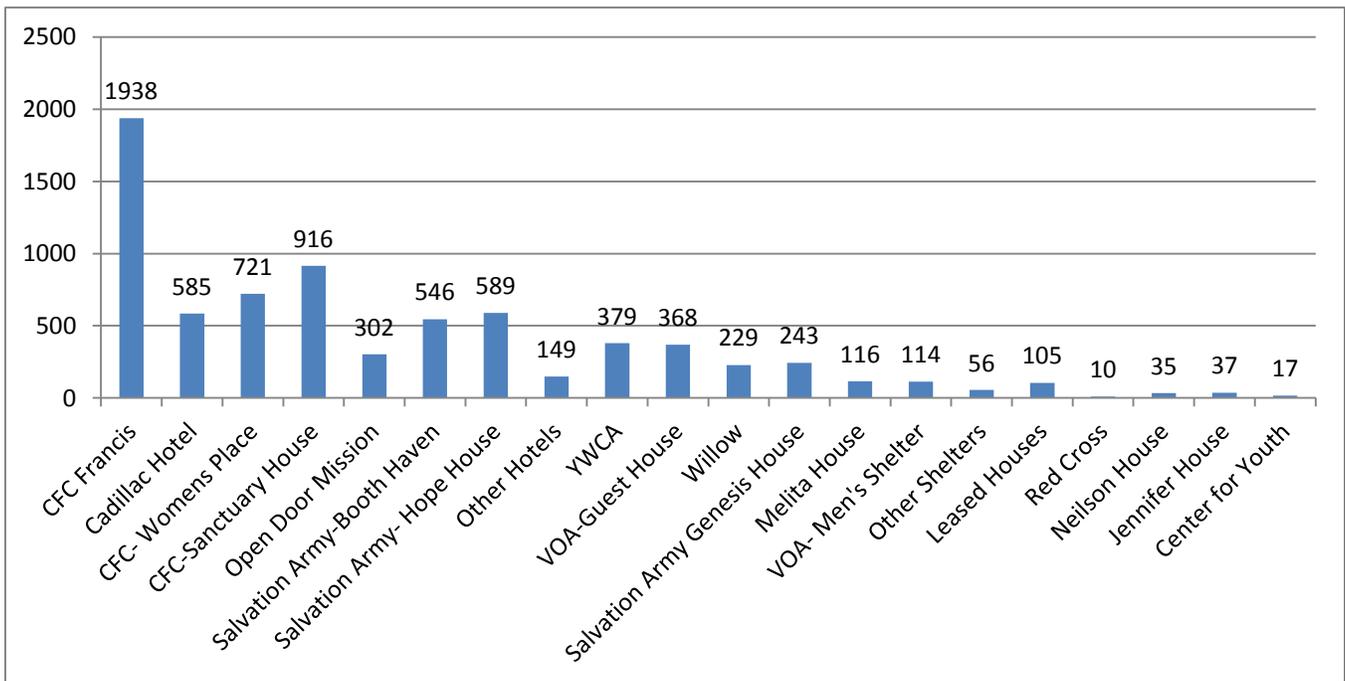
Emergency Facilities with MCDHS Contracts

Alternatives for Battered Women (ABW)	40 beds	Individuals with children
Catholic Family Center- Francis Center	36 beds	Single men
Catholic Family Center – Sanctuary House	49 beds	Women – single and with children (17 rooms)
Catholic Family Center – Women’s Place	43 beds	Women – single and with children (18 rooms)
Center for Youth	13 beds	Youth (16-20) male or female
Melita House (Mercy Residential)	11 beds	Pregnant or Parenting female youth (16-20)
Open Door Mission	10 beds	Single men
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	53 beds	Families, single men or women with children (20 rooms)

2014/2015 TOP PLACEMENT SITES



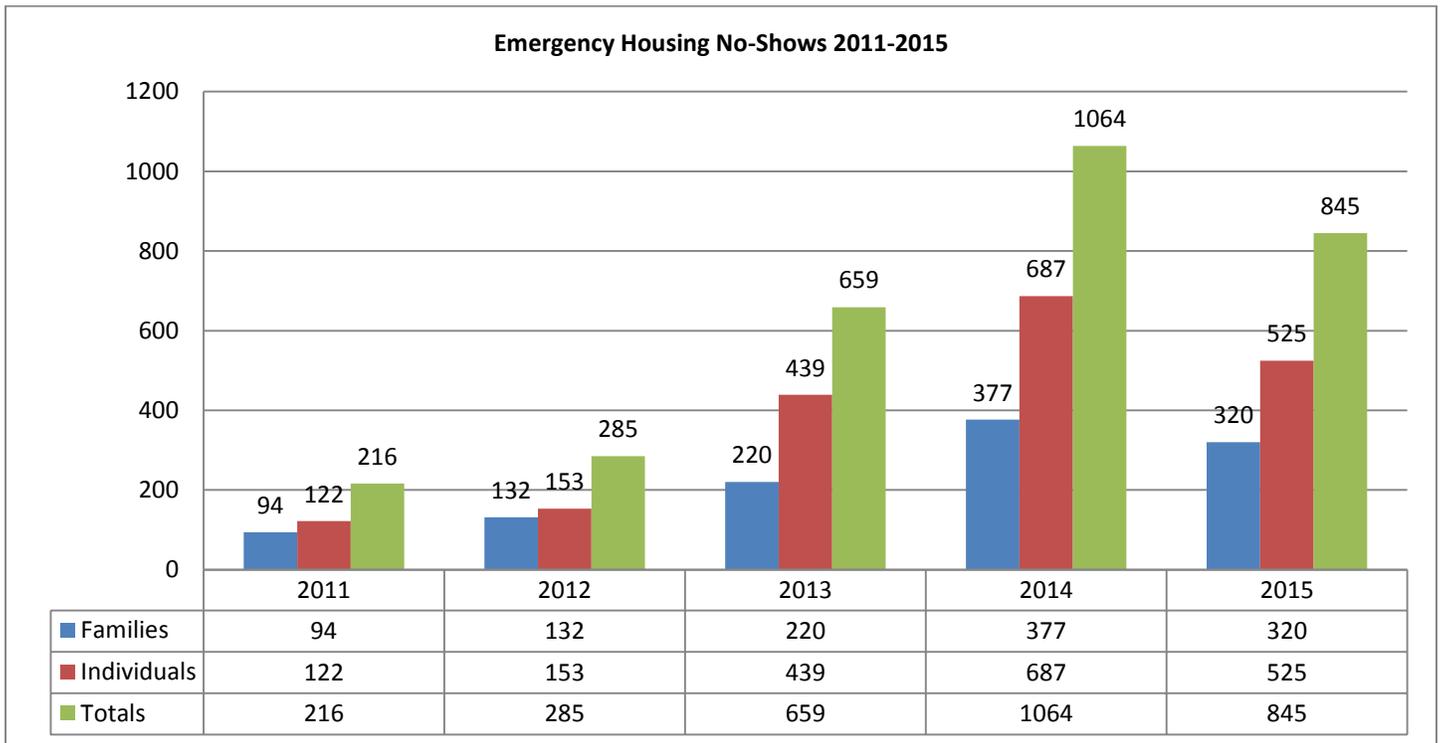
2015 Emergency Housing Placement Totals by Site



Emergency Housing No –Shows

Effective June 8, 2009, MCDHS established a policy regarding how certain “No Show” shelter placements are handled. When a family or individual is placed by the Emergency 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 MCDHS After-Hours process), the placement is paid for by MCDHS even if the client fails to show for the placement. The numbers in the “Emergency Housing Placement No Shows – 2011 – 2015” chart represents the No Show placements that were paid for by MCDHS. In 2015, a total of 845 no show placements were paid by MCDHS.

During 2015, an additional 528 (142 Family and 386 Individual placements) No Show placements were released and MCDHS did not pay for those placements.



In 2014, 3639 placements were made through After-Hours during non-business hours. 729 of these placements (20%) were made for callers in which erroneous information regarding their identity was provided. Evidence suggests that callers through After Hours who would not otherwise be eligible for Emergency Housing benefits through MCDHS provide inaccurate information to be placed at hotels, particularly on holidays and weekends. MCDHS staff have previously had limited resources during After Hours to be able to correctly identify and determine eligibility for callers. In 2015, improvements to the After Hours process, including the 211 collaboration and use of MCDHS laptops by After Hours staff helped to better determine MCDHS Emergency Housing eligibility and are reversing the trend in no show placement payments. In 2015 2,701 After Hours placements were made and the number of placements with erroneous information decreased to 289 (11%).

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 a transient lifestyle. 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.

In December 2010, the curriculum for half of the training sessions was revised to include a segment on Healthy Homes, specifically geared toward to lead poisoning. The goal of this portion of the training is to increase the tenant's knowledge and awareness of potential lead hazards. The participants are also given instructions, resource materials, and contact information to use in the event that they identify a potential lead hazard in their home. In August of 2011, this was expanded and now all TAT trainings include a segment on Healthy Homes and specifically lead poisoning. In July of 2013, educational information was added to the training regarding the identification, prevention and treatment of bedbugs.

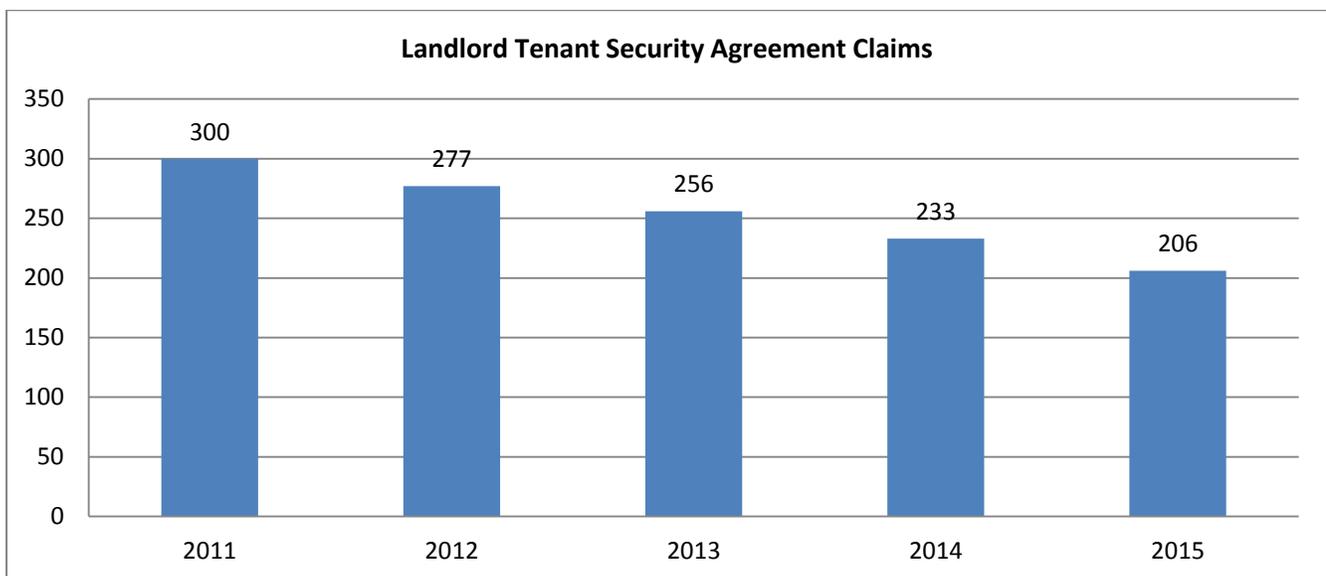
Surveys of participants consistently find that over 96% of those who respond felt that as a result of the presentation they were better able to identify lead hazards in their home. During 2015, 941 TA recipients attended TAT. Since its resurrection in September 2009 through December 31, 2015 there have been 8,504 participants in TAT.

Monroe County Department of Human Services' Emergency Housing Unit

The Monroe County Department of Human Services' Emergency 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 Emergency Housing Unit and other units within MCDHS:

- Emergency 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 Emergency Housing Unit provides the homeless 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 Emergency Housing Unit has a Senior Emergency Housing Specialist 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. In 2014, After Hours started a pilot in conjunction with 211 to coordinate after hours placement as a part of Coordinated Access. This collaboration was further expanded in 2015 to best serve the needs of the community during non-business hours.

- The Emergency Housing Unit is the central point of entry for MCDHS placement into emergency housing. Staff coordinate the placement of the homeless 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 Emergency 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 Emergency Housing Unit conducts periodic inspections of the emergency shelters and hotels to ensure that safe and sanitary housing is being provided to homeless residents.
- The Emergency 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 2015, there were 206 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, 340 households in Monroe County are receiving rent subsidies through this grant.
- Emergency Housing staff is a component of the Homeless MICA (Mentally Ill Chemically Addicted) Program. This program, funded by MCDHS's Office of Mental Health, uses a team approach to serving homeless MICA individuals. Staff from MCDHS, Strong Memorial Hospital, and Rochester Regional Health System 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, emergency, supportive and permanent housing. Case managers at Strong Memorial Hospital and Rochester Regional Health System provide linkages to mental health services and ongoing case management. During 2015, 296 homeless individuals with mental health issues were assisted through this program.

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:
 - 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.)
 - 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, Etc.)
- **Coordinated Access Task Force:** Established in April 2013, this task force defines homelessness as a community issue and brought together community stakeholders to devise and implement strategies for a community-wide response to homelessness.

The Task Force's vision statement is, "To create a coordinated access system to better assist the homeless and those at risk of becoming homeless in the greater Rochester and Monroe County area."

The vision for Coordinated Access locally is to:

1. Reduce episodes of homelessness and the number of bed placements through coordinated diversion strategies and tactics;
2. Ensure that everyone who needs emergency shelter is able to access and receive services;
3. Decrease the length of homeless episodes by moving households to permanent housing as quickly as possible.

- **Chronically Homeless Workgroup:** Since the closing of the Civic Center Garage removed access to a core group of chronically homeless individuals who had been staying there, this group evolved in 2014 from the “Civic Center Response Team”. 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 with other community partners to identify this group of 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.

In 2015 the group engaged with local law enforcement and CSX police and to establish a connection where law enforcement officials would reach out to the Chronically Homeless Workgroup to alert the group of known encampments so that a team could be deployed to the encampment to offer shelter and support services.

The CH workgroup solicited volunteers and facilitated a summer Point in Time count to document street homelessness during warmer weather in addition to the HUD mandated Point in Time count which occurs the last week of January each year.

The CH workgroup assisted residents of the community’s temporary winter shelters, REACH Home, St Joseph’s House of Hospitality and Dimitri House, in securing appropriate permanent housing prior to the closing of each facility and facilitating alternative temporary housing for those individuals without a permanent plan upon the closing of these temporary shelters.