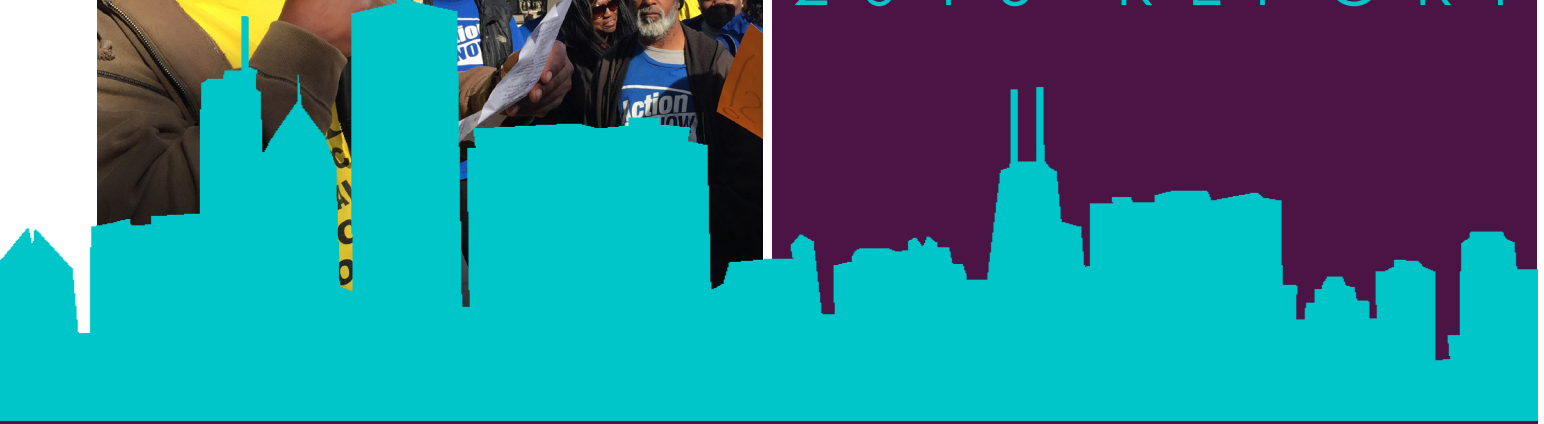




CHICAGO
COALITION
FOR THE
HOMELESS
2015 REPORT



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

At the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (CCH), public policy specialists, legal aid attorneys, and community organizers advocate for and with people impacted by homelessness – families, unaccompanied youth, ex-offenders and low-wage workers. Together, we work to preserve a shelter safety net, develop affordable rental housing, and protect access to schools, fair wage jobs, and basic human services.

Extensive outreach is offered to the homeless community. The intent is to empower people discouraged by poverty and homelessness, inform them of their options, and engage those who are interested in advocacy. Field organizers offer outreach at 25 shelters across Chicago, reaching more than 5,000 people each year, including parents, low-wage workers and ex-offenders. This includes bi-lingual outreach in four shelters for Spanish-speaking families, youth and adults. Another organizer offers creative writing outreach in four shelters serving families and single adults. Outside of Chicago, a statewide organizer mobilizes agencies in nine communities, with focus on Aurora, Rockford, and Waukegan. Additionally, our youth attorneys reach 2,000 youths at shelters, drop-in centers, street venues, and Chicago public high schools.

CCH pairs its advocacy with community organizing. We believe that effective advocacy gives voice to people impacted by poverty and homelessness. Community leaders who are homeless or recently homeless collaborate with the staff in developing and presenting our advocacy. We have active leadership committees, including an Education Committee of homeless students and parents. From outreach, CCH staff develops a leadership base of more than 450 homeless people of all ages. Homeless leaders are core to CCH advocacy – they testify at legislative hearings, attend rallies, talk to the media, and meet with aldermen, legislators and government agency leaders.

With 16 advocacy trips to Springfield in 2015, CCH organizers trained and transported 463 people, including 388 homeless and recently homeless leaders, and 75 student and community leaders. Our leaders were affiliated with 35 service providers, schools and universities from Aurora, Bellwood, Bolingbrook, Champaign, Naperville, Palos Heights, Waukegan, Wheaton, and neighborhoods all over Chicago. They advocated for funding and adequate tax revenue in the face of large cuts proposed in the governor's budget.



HOMEWORKS

In mid-November, CCH launched its new signature campaign, HomeWorks. Working with housing providers and parent leaders, our multi-year campaign will create affordable housing for homeless families and improve school services for homeless students.

Geographically diverse affordable housing opportunities across Chicago would increase stability and quality school access for homeless families. The campaign will build a strong coalition of parents and housing providers to push for

significant new resources, including 500 family-sized housing units from the Chicago Low-Income Housing Trust Fund.

And the need is clear: CCH found that 13,054 families experienced homelessness in Chicago in the 2014-15 school year. Yet fewer than 1% – or 123 families – access permanent affordable housing on average each year.

THE LAW PROJECT

The Law Project at CCH is the state's only legal aid program dedicated solely to the civil legal needs of homeless people. In FY15, five CCH attorneys closed 407 cases for 358 clients, a year's increase of 36%. Of these, 45 clients (12.6%) needed help with two or more legal issues. Clients included 24 children and 90 teens with education issues (28% of caseload) centered on enrollment, residency, fee waivers, and access to special education, tutoring or transportation to school. Another 264 cases (65%) affected youth with civil legal needs, such as access to Medicaid or health care (15.5%), public benefits (7.5%), or legal ID documents (36%), mostly birth certificates that youth cannot access without an attorney's help. CCH covers the filing fees, a total of \$2,415 in FY15.



Clients were 66% African American, 19% Latino, 14% white, and 1% other ethnicities. They were 58% female and 43% male, 17% of youth were LGBT, and 7% had diagnosed disabilities. Five percent of clients lived outside Chicago, in 19 suburbs. Of 315 individual youth clients, ages 13 to 24, 48% were high school age and 64% were unaccompanied – throwaway teens, former state wards, and very young adults who were homeless without support of family or legal guardian.

Three youth attorneys staff a mobile legal aid clinic called Youth Futures. They run weekly outreach at 10 shelter and drop-in programs, and via a rotating schedule of legal clinics at Chicago high schools. Youth Attorney Beth Malik runs weekly clinics at Teen Living Programs, a Center on Halsted program for LGBT youth, and in the high schools. Graham Bowman joined the staff as youth health attorney in September, after completing a two-year Equal Justice Works fellowship. He runs weekly sessions at drop-in centers run by Teen Living Programs and La Casa Norte. Diane O'Connell, herself a formerly homeless teen, began working part-time with Youth Futures in July. She meets youth clients during monthly outreach at The Crib and Ujima youth shelters, The Night Ministry health bus, Neon Street Dorms, and street venues frequented by youth.

A bilingual case coordinator fluent in Spanish handles client intake, including calls to our toll-free helpline. The Law Project distributed more than 20,000 informational brochures this year on issues faced by homeless students, youth, and families, with Spanish versions of each. The legal staff ran 26 professional trainings for more than 1,900 attorneys, youth service providers, social workers, law students, and school homeless liaisons. This includes a webinar for 90 homeless liaisons in the Chicago Public Schools, during which Graham Bowman explained a minor consent to health care law he authored in 2014.

Recent clients include a 10-year-old girl told by her Chicago school that she could not return for fifth grade this fall. The girl and her mother are doubled-up, and had moved from one relative's home to another outside the school attendance area. CCH advocated with the CPS homeless education office, and had to do so repeatedly: The principal refused to allow the girl to reenroll, saying she lived outside school boundaries – though state and federal law recognizes the child as homeless. Our staff accompanied the family to school to finalize the girl's return days before classes started.



HOMELESS YOUTH

For our *No Youth Alone* campaign, CCH mobilizes a Youth Committee of 40 youth providers to advocate on shared issues – 27 providers from Chicago, six from the suburbs, and seven from downstate. Meeting together monthly with our policy staff and attorneys, the committee works

on shared concerns, including funding issues.

The Youth Committee drafted a Youth Vulnerability Index that will be used by Chicago's Central Referral System when it ranks homeless people for priority access to permanent supportive housing. Providers' concern was that issues unique to youth left them without access under vulnerability indices currently in use.

Youth attorney Beth Malik co-runs a weekly group for street youth. Now in its 11th year, the group moved in March from the North Side to Ujima youth shelter on the South Side, where it is co-led with Unity Parenting and Counseling.

YOUTH MANUAL

Working with 49 volunteer attorneys from the Baker & McKenzie law firm and United Airlines, our legal staff produced a resources guidebook for homeless youth in Illinois.

The 17-chapter guidebook, *Homeless Youth Handbook: Legal Issues & Options*, was released in January. It is available online at www.homelessyouth.org, with more than 3,000 copies mailed to schools and youth service providers throughout Illinois.



The comprehensive guide offers practical answers to the legal issues faced by homeless youth, from education, health care and housing to consumer and credit issues. The handbook also provides tools for dealing with key issues that often cause or compound homelessness, such as domestic violence, sexual exploitation, mental health issues and substance abuse.



MOBILE APP

Youth health attorney Graham Bowman began a project to develop a mobile phone app for use by homeless youth and providers in Chicago. Working with technical staff from the Young Invincibles, the app will be ready for use by August 2016.

Homeless youth in Chicago have a variety of resources available to them. But too often they are required to rely on word-of-mouth or referrals to learn where youth shelters, health clinics, legal aid and other services are located. When an overnight shelter is unavailable, youth are left scrambling, unaware that a bed may be available at a nearby shelter. The app will provide youth with real-time information while offering phone numbers for key resources and referrals, including health clinics and drop-in centers.

Youth health attorney Graham Bowman will convene focus groups of homeless youth and youth providers to inform the design and development of the app. After its launch, he will train 50 providers on how to help youth access and use the app.

AFFORDABLE REQUIREMENT ORDINANCE

CCH was a partner in a six-group coalition that persuaded the Chicago City Council to strengthen its Affordable Requirements Ordinance in March. The regulations govern what housing developers must do to provide affordable housing on projects that require a zoning change, a planned development designation, use of city land or a city subsidy.

Though not in full effect for 18 months, it increases the requirements and in-lieu of fees charged to developers that fail to set aside enough affordable housing units for low wage households. Mayor Emanuel's administration predicted the tougher ordinance will generate 1,200 housing units and \$90 million in fees, half of which is to be paid to the Chicago Low-Income Housing Trust Fund's rent subsidy program. With partners, CCH gave input into which prospective ARO map is used to designate various developer fees in neighborhoods.

REENTRY PROJECT HOUSING PILOT

The CCH Reentry Project persuaded the Chicago and Cook County housing authorities to adopt pilot programs we designed that allow select ex-offenders to access housing without waiting at least five years.

Launched this year, each pilot will house up to 50 ex-offenders over three years, either rejoining family or in their own housing if their name comes up on a waitlist. People are recommended for housing by select reentry service providers, including St. Leonard's Ministries, Safer Foundation, Lutheran Social Services, and south suburban Respond Now, which placed the pilots' first two clients this year.



This summer, the CCH Reentry Project participated in a HUD phone conference with Chicago, Cook County, New York City and Los Angeles County housing authorities, all of which piloted re-entry housing programs. In November, HUD issued a guidance report that recommended "best practice" programs that offer housing access, like these pilots.



WAGE CAMPAIGN

CCH mobilized 150 sheltered workers this year to rally with Fight for \$15, pushing for a \$15 hourly wage for fast food and retail workers. This campaign is credited with helping prod the City Council to adopt a minimum wage increase to \$10/hour, which took effect in July, and will increase to \$13/hour by 2019.

LOWER WACKER DRIVE

In January, CCH reached an out-of-court agreement with the city of Chicago in our two-year "city sweeps" case. It provides a fairer policy when city crews move out the belongings of homeless people sleeping on Lower Wacker Drive or under the Wilson Avenue viaduct. Co-counseled with Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, and the law firm of Hughes Socol Piers Resnick & Dym, CCH represented 17 people whose personal property was seized and destroyed. For the 16 surviving clients, the city promised priority services. Nine clients secured housing since the case began, and one young woman completed drug treatment and enrolled in college.



The agreement requires 24-hour notice before off-street cleanings, allowing people to avoid disposal of

vital belongings. The Department of Family and Support Services will be the lead in informing people and providing information on housing and services. A list of permissible possessions has been detailed. Confiscated items must be tagged, with seven days to reclaim possessions.

CCH monitors implementation, with twice-a-month outreach to youth and adults who live in outdoor settings in Chicago. Our legal staff continues to advocate with the city to ensure that they are honoring the intent of the agreement.



SPEAKERS BUREAU & MEDIA

We build community support with our Speakers Bureau and media outreach. During FY15, the Speakers Bureau's 15 homeless leaders reached an audience of 4,481 people at 90 venues, usually school, university, civic and religious groups. The Bureau also organizes audiences that show interest in collaborating further: our student teams mobilized 252 students from 11 colleges/universities, three CPS high schools, and a youth provider to advocate with city and state officials.

Staff and leaders are featured often in mainstream media, including the Chicago Sun-Times, Chicago Tribune, Equal

Voice News, and WBEZ Public Radio. Our website averages about 10,000 visits a month, and includes a blog with 90 articles a year written by staff and volunteers. CCH has more than 6,900 Facebook followers, growing more than 80% this year, and 3,600 Twitter followers, 50% more than a year ago. Social media posts can also be accessed on the home page of our website, www.chicagohomeless.org.

SCHOLARSHIPS

This fall, CCH increased the amount of its renewable college scholarships by \$500, to \$2,500 a year. The scholarship is awarded to students who experienced homelessness while in high school.

Since 2004, CCH has awarded more than \$240,000 in aid to 50 students. Twelve of 15 (80%) scholarship winners from the classes of 2012 through 2014 are progressing through college to earn a bachelor's degree. Eighteen scholarship students started or returned to college this fall.



FINANCES

CCH does not accept government funding. Instead, when we advocate for public support, it is for the programs that shelter, house and assist homeless youth, families and vulnerable adults.

In FY15, 4,771 individual donors provided 40% of CCH's revenue. CCH's FY15 audit shows revenues of \$2.4 million were less than 1% over expenses. Ranked three to four stars by Charity Navigator since 2007, our charity relies on support from foundations, business sponsors, donors, and special events, including a spring Hopefest concert.

UPCOMING EVENTS

HOMELESS MEMORIAL SERVICE
December 21, 2015
Old St. Patrick's Church

JUSTICE CIRCLE RECEPTION
February 25, 2016
Baker & McKenzie

CHEERS FOR CHANGE
Winter 2016

RAVENSWOOD 5K
April 24, 2016
Wilson & Hermitage Avenues

FLEET FEET Sports
www.FleetFeetChicago.com

FINISH

HOPEFEST
Spring 2016
Park West

SCHOLARSHIP AWARD CEREMONY
June 2016
Loyola Law School

GOLF OUTING
August 2016
Wilmette Golf Club

RIOT FEST
September 2016

FOR MORE INFORMATION
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