



CCSM Issues Subcommittee Final Board Approved: 01-22-2024

Critical Shortage of Stable Housing and Related Services

The Issue:

The Farmington Local Council has identified that the entire State of Maine is experiencing the lack of availability of permanent, stable housing and related services. It is long overdue to unstick the system. Services and housing remain insufficient or nonexistent to meet the demand. People who qualify for housing assistance, whether they experience mental health challenges or not, may need supportive services such as housing/resource navigation and case management. Additionally, people who are diagnosed with mental health challenges are incarcerated and jailed at much higher rates than people who may not experience mental health issues or carry a diagnosis. Case management staffing has been in the middle of a workforce shortage crisis. Staffing burnout also hinders support for individuals in need.

Recommendations:

1. The Farmington Local Council has further identified that current service gaps and no service availability exist in many areas. They do not have sufficient case management, resource navigation, and re-entry services throughout all of Maine which are critically needed. Potentially offering similar housing/resource navigation through positions such as more PATH navigators alongside case managers.
 2. PATH and other housing navigators need to frequent all mental health peer recovery centers, clubhouses, warming centers and shelters that do not already have these staff routinely working there.
 3. We are concerned that other housing navigators in emergency shelters will lose their
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existing funding which is set to expire next year. We recommend that DHHS do everything possible to advocate for this to return and even expand this program.

4. Some educational resources exist and are offered by shelters and/or community action programs on a limited basis. One example is Rent Smart, a module-based curriculum that guides renters to learn about their housing rights, laws, tenant, and landlord responsibilities, as well as additional housing/rental resources. Once someone completes this course, they receive a paper certificate that can be added to future rental applications. We would love to see this training expanded into diverse communities across the State.

5. We need to continue to increase the staffing of Intensive Case Managers in both jail facilities as well as individuals transitioning to the community. Adding them to homeless outreach teams would be essential.

6. There is also an annual county-specific Community Needs Assessment that is used through statewide community action programs to address gaps such as mental health and housing. We need to use the data in these reports to bolster actions the State is taking in these areas.

Expected Outcome:

Our expectation is that through a statewide concerted effort to prioritize the immediate needs of individuals who are without housing and supports will result in more individuals becoming successful in the communities of their choice and being able to start/move forward in their recovery journeys.

Resources:

[Modules – Rent Smart \(wisc.edu\)](http://wisc.edu)

Brought forward from: FARMINGTON LOCAL COUNCIL
