

Homelessness: Prevent and End Homelessness, and Improve Conditions for Residents Experiencing Homelessness

By Kate Coventry

The District's fiscal year (FY) 2020 budget should make big strides towards reaching DC's goal of making homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring. This includes housing for individuals, youth, and families experiencing homelessness, resources to help survivors of domestic violence stay safe and avoid homelessness, improved street outreach and homelessness prevention, and creating more public restrooms.

End Chronic Homelessness in the Next Four Years

Many DC residents have been homeless for years and suffer from life-threatening health conditions and/or severe mental illness. It is difficult to manage these conditions while homeless—[residents often die](#) from diseases that could be managed or prevented if they had homes.

The District should invest \$30 million in FY 2020 to make significant progress towards the goal of ending chronic homelessness in the next four years.

- **Permanent Supportive Housing:** \$27 million will fund Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) for 986 individuals. By providing affordable housing coupled with intensive case management services, PSH helps people stay in housing and improve their health, and saves a substantial amount of money as a result.
- **Targeted Affordable Housing:** \$3 million will provide Targeted Affordable Housing (TAH) for 154 individuals. TAH serves individuals who no longer need PSH services but still need affordable housing. This would open up expensive PSH slots for other homeless individuals. TAH also serves individuals in Rapid Re-Housing who still need help affording housing when the short-term RRH aid ends.



Build Comprehensive Street Outreach Network

Outreach to individuals experiencing homelessness and living outside currently operates through a loosely coordinated network of teams with a variety of funding sources – federal, local, and private. Over the past three years, DC nearly doubled its street outreach capacity through a federal grant. With this federal grant expiring at the end of FY 2019, DC needs to invest in a comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainably funded Street Outreach Network that aligns with Homeward DC, the Strategic Plan to end homelessness in the District. **An estimated \$3.5 million in new expenses is needed to fund a Street Outreach Network at full capacity.**

Prevent Individuals from Becoming Homeless and Help Those Who Do Exit Quickly

In FY 2019, the District launched Project Reconnect, a program that helps individuals who are newly homeless find alternatives to shelter such as reuniting with friends and families. **DCFPI and partners propose investing \$2 million to expand Project Reconnect and launch homelessness prevention for individuals at imminent risk of becoming homeless, because they are either facing eviction or are at risk of losing shared housing with friends or family.**

Help Survivors of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is one of the leading causes of homelessness and domestic violence service providers frequently must turn survivors away due to lack of capacity.

An investment for \$4 million will help survivors of domestic violence stay safe and avoid homelessness.

- **Emergency housing:** With \$1.94 million, 46 survivors fleeing domestic violence can access emergency/crisis housing.
- **Helping survivors stay in housing:** \$1.94 million in flexible funds will allow approximately 1,940 survivors to remain safely in their current housing.
- **Case management for survivors:** \$120,000 will fund a pilot mobile advocacy program to provide case management to survivors wherever they are living.

Tackle Family Homelessness

Many DC families are struggling with homelessness. **The District should invest \$5.87 million to provide Permanent Supportive Housing to 177 families. Additionally, the District should expand Targeted Affordable Housing to help families who need long-term affordable housing to avoid a return to homelessness.**

DC also needs to invest substantially more in [affordable housing](#) for families to reduce the number of families experiencing homelessness and housing instability.

End Youth Homelessness by 2022

Youth experiencing homelessness on their own are particularly vulnerable. Because of this vulnerability and the need for programming that meets their developmental needs, the District needs to make substantial investments in youth programs. With \$1.7 million, 50 youth with high needs can receive Extended Transitional Housing, which combines affordable housing with intensive services. For \$2.1 million, 50 youth can receive transitional housing. Adding 60 shelter beds for transition aged youth, youth aged 18 to 24, will cost \$1.3 million. An investment of \$975,000 will allow 30 youth to receive Rapid ReHousing. Finally, youth experiencing homelessness have asked for a mentoring program. An investment of \$250,000 will fund the creation of a pilot mentoring program. **In total, the District should invest \$6.3 million to make progress towards ending youth homelessness.**

Fund Two Public Restrooms and Launch Business Incentive Program

DC has only three public restrooms that are open 24 hours. This leaves many residents, particularly residents experiencing homelessness, with no place to go. DC recently passed legislation that will increase access to public restrooms, but these initiatives need to be funded in order to go into effect. **The District should invest \$336,000 in FY 2020 to pilot two 24-hour standalone public restrooms in high-traffic neighborhoods that currently lack them and offer incentives to businesses to open their bathrooms to the public.**