

# MASSACHUSETTS

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

The state report is a resource to inform donors and funders about the local context of social issues affecting at-risk populations. This analysis can be used to better understand current local trends and the unique social and economic situation in which the

social issue exists. The information below complements the social issue report and the guide to giving by drawing attention to local initiatives related to the social issue.

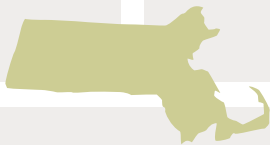
## FACTS: ENDING CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS IN MASSACHUSETTS

Number of cities/regions that are implementing strategic plans to end chronic homelessness<sup>1</sup>

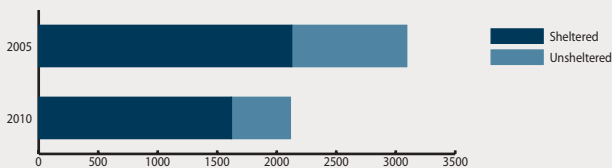
16  
2010

Housing stabilization rate of formerly chronically homeless persons 1.5 years after placement<sup>2</sup>

84%  
2010



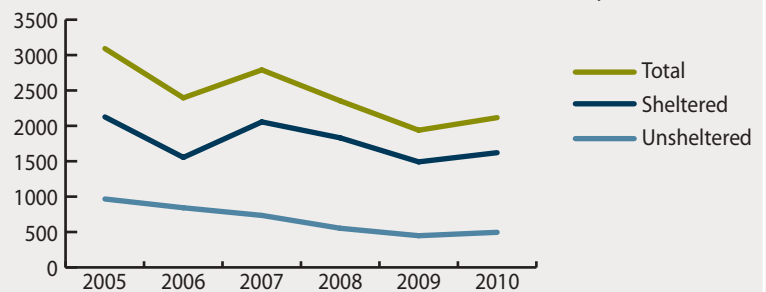
In Massachusetts, chronic homelessness has fallen by over 1,000 cases from 2005 to 2010 and the number of chronically homeless individuals who are living on the streets has fallen by nearly 50 percent.<sup>3</sup>



## SOCIAL ISSUE INDICATORS

Long-term success in ending chronic homelessness in a given region is evaluated using the total number of chronically homeless persons. This number is determined by local shelters using city-wide point-in-time (PIT) counts, in which volunteers count the number of homeless persons in shelters and on the street on a given night. PIT counts are analyzed in conjunction with other local data collected through shelter and street outreach to determine the number of chronically homeless persons. These data can be aggregated at the state, regional, and national levels.

POPULATION OF CHRONICALLY HOMELESS PERSONS, 2005-2010<sup>4</sup>



## WHAT'S HAPPENING IN MASSACHUSETTS

### PROGRESS IN MASSACHUSETTS

Massachusetts has seen a great deal of success in reducing the number of chronically homeless persons through housing first programs. From 2005 to 2010, the number of chronically homeless individuals dropped by 39 percent with more than 1,200 individuals obtaining permanent housing.<sup>5</sup> The period from 2008 to 2009 was particularly successful – more than 17 percent of the chronically homeless population was housed during a single year, one of the most substantial reductions in any state during that time period.<sup>5</sup> Specifically, the South Middlesex region, including Worcester and Framingham, has seen strong progress.

■ **Progress in Worcester highlights a successful local intervention:** In November of 2007, Worcester released a three-year plan to end homelessness in the city with the cooperation of Community Healthlink, the South Middlesex Opportunity Council, and Home Again. The plan called for a paradigm shift towards the housing first approach and reducing barriers to housing that previous approaches

enforced. By January 2011, the South Middlesex Opportunity Council housed the nearly all of the area's chronically homeless individuals.<sup>7</sup> After permanently housing most of the chronically homeless population, the People in Peril shelter in Worcester was repurposed as part of a triage system. It now offers chronically and temporarily homeless individuals specific interventions to address their unique situations. The intake process determines whether the individuals need permanent housing or short-term financial aid, and the triage center takes the appropriate steps to ensure that needs are met. Success in Worcester and the repurposing of the shelter created a significant cost savings to the city. Moreover, housing the chronically homeless has enabled the city to focus on keeping individuals in their homes and providing short-term services to temporarily homeless persons. With the guidance of the Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance, many communities in the state are seeing similar progress.<sup>8</sup>

## STATE POLICY TO END HOMELESSNESS

The federal government's Hearth Act of 2009 extended the McKinney-Vento Act of 1987, the principal federal legislation that addressed the issue of homelessness, and prioritized permanent housing for chronic homelessness at the national level. In response to the Hearth Act and the recommendations put forward by the Massachusetts Commission to End Homelessness, Massachusetts state and local governments prioritized permanent housing as a solution to chronic homelessness by shifting resources toward this approach.

■ **Massachusetts Commission to End Homelessness:** In March of 2007, the Commission was established to provide a plan to “house all those who are currently homeless and to prevent homelessness for those who are at-risk of becoming homeless.”<sup>9</sup> In January of 2008, the Commission released a five-year plan to end homelessness that focuses on preventing new cases and rapidly housing the homeless population.<sup>10</sup>

■ **Massachusetts Interagency Council of Housing and Homelessness (ICHH):** The ICHH was reinstated by Executive Order of Governor Deval Patrick in 2007 to lead the state initiative to end homelessness by convening related state agencies and creating ten regional networks across the state. Regional networks coordinate, integrate, and implement innovative services focused on securing permanent housing options for homeless individuals and families, and ultimately

lessen the need for emergency assistance shelters. ICHH also conducts planning and research to measure progress made toward ending homelessness and the impact of certain initiatives, such as housing first or homelessness prevention.

■ **Evidence of Support for Housing First:** In its 2010 budget, Massachusetts included funding for Home and Healthy for Good (HHG), a statewide housing first initiative, directed by the Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance.<sup>11</sup> This funding partially finances the operations of HHG to provide housing to chronically homeless persons and connect them to support services. The funding requires that HHG provides periodic assessment of the impact of the housing first program on state expenditures. As of December 2010, the program has housed 454 formerly chronically homeless persons. Of this, 235 have remained in supportive housing and 127 have found other permanent housing options, resulting in a stabilization rate of 84 percent. Based on data from 2006 to 2010, the program saves the state \$9,507 per person annually in Medicaid, shelter, and incarceration costs.<sup>12</sup> In addition to achieving high stabilization rates and significant government savings, HHG provides a valuable service to the housing first movement through its detailed research into housing first and its impacts. The state financing of HHG also indicates support for the program.

## REFERENCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

### ORGANIZATION

Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness (ICHH)

Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless

Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance (MHSA)

National Alliance to End Homelessness

### WEBSITE

[www.mass.gov/governor/ichh](http://www.mass.gov/governor/ichh)

[www.mahomeless.org](http://www.mahomeless.org)

[www.mhsa.net](http://www.mhsa.net)

[www.endhomelessness.org](http://www.endhomelessness.org)

## ABOUT SOCIAL IMPACT RESEARCH

Social Impact Research (SIR) is the independent research department of Root Cause, a research and consulting firm dedicated to mobilizing the nonprofit, public, and business sectors to work together in a new social impact market. SIR aggregates, analyzes, and disseminates information to help donors identify and support the most effective, efficient, and

sustainable organizations working to solve social problems. Modeled after private sector equity research firms, SIR produces research reports, analyzes philanthropic portfolios, and provides educational services for advisors to help their clients make effective and rigorous philanthropic decisions.

## ENDNOTES

1. United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, “Ten-Year Plan Update,” (2010).

2. Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance, “Home and Healthy for Good: A Statewide Housing First Program – Progress Report: March 2010,” Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance, (2010).

3. United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, “Homeless Populations and Subpopulations: Massachusetts, 2005-2010” (2010).

4. Sermons, M William and Peter Witte, State of Homelessness in America, National Alliance to End Homelessness, (2011).

5. Ibid.

6. Sermons, M William and Peter Witte, State of Homelessness in America, National Alliance to End Homelessness, (2011).

7. Worcester Telegram and Gazette, “PIP to Close: Worcester’s Efforts are Model for the Nation,” *Worcester Telegram and Gazette* (January 23, 2011).

8. Ibid.

9. Massachusetts Homeless Commission, “Report of the Special Commission Relative to Ending Homelessness in the Commonwealth,” Massachusetts Homeless Commission, (2007).

10. Massachusetts Department of Housing and Economic Development, “Commission to End Homelessness Releases Findings,” Massachusetts Department of Housing and Economic Development (2008), [http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eheadpressrelease&L=1&L0=Home&sid=Ehead&b=pressrelease&f=2008\\_01\\_11\\_homelessness&csid=Ehead](http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eheadpressrelease&L=1&L0=Home&sid=Ehead&b=pressrelease&f=2008_01_11_homelessness&csid=Ehead).

11. Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, “Preliminary Analysis: The Governor’s Fiscal Year 2012 Budget,” Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center (2011).

12. Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance, “Home and Healthy for Good: A Statewide Housing First Program – Progress Report: December 2010,” Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance (2010).