



Delaware Interagency Collaborative to End Homelessness Phase 1 Report and Recommendations

TO: Governor Matt Meyer

FROM: Director of the Delaware State Housing Authority Matthew Heckles



DATE: December 18, 2025

SUBJECT: Phase 1 Report and Recommendations – Delaware Interagency Collaborative to End Homelessness

Recommendations

The Delaware Interagency Collaborative to End Homelessness represents the first coordinated statewide effort to strengthen Delaware's homelessness response system. This phase places importance on urgent stabilization and system alignment, focusing on the components that directly affect individuals and families in crisis: emergency shelter, navigation services, and street outreach.

The Collaborative has created a roadmap for achievable interventions that can be implemented quickly while laying the infrastructure for long-term transformation. The recommendations intend to improve access to safe shelter, connect individuals to supportive resources, and ensure that public investment is both efficient and equitable.

Equally important, the recommendations reflect the voices of people with lived experience of homelessness, service providers, and community stakeholders who participated in listening sessions and surveys. Their perspectives underscored recurring challenges: fragmented intake processes, inconsistent service availability across counties, and a lack of sustainable exit options from shelters. The Collaborative has prioritized solutions that directly address those barriers and that can be scaled statewide.

Taken together, these actions will help Delaware create a coordinated, compassionate, and data-driven crisis-response system -- one capable of meeting people where they are while providing clear pathways to permanent housing.

1. Reaching People Where They Are

- Expand street outreach teams and encampment response initiatives to identify and engage individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness.



- Reimagine and revitalize the coordinated intake process to simplify access to emergency housing and ensure these scarce resources are efficiently used.
- Consolidate administration and investment in homelessness prevention programs to improve efficiency, accessibility, and consistency statewide.

2. Emergency Shelter and Navigation

- Establish Hope Centers in Kent and Sussex counties, modeled on the successful New Castle County Hope Center.
- Support the existing New Castle County Hope Center to maintain low-barrier entry.
- Consolidate and align state funding sources to ensure equitable and sustainable shelter operations.

3. Enhanced Discharge, Exit, and Transition Strategies

- Create 150 units of Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) with integrated services to ensure long-term stability for people who require that level of services.
- Expand the State Rental Assistance Program (SRAP) to accept referrals directly from shelters for people who will be successful in community-based housing with appropriate supportive services.
- Streamline and consolidate administration of Rapid Re-Housing programs to reduce barriers and increase efficiency for people who will not require long-term rental subsidies but do need assistance getting resettled.

Executive Summary

The Delaware Interagency Collaborative to End Homelessness (the “Collaborative”) was established under Executive Order #8 by Governor Matt Meyer to coordinate statewide initiatives to reduce homelessness by 50% and end youth homelessness within five years. Armed by a cross-sector membership of agency leaders, county and municipal executives, legislators, and nonprofit partners, the Collaborative represents Delaware’s first unified effort to align housing, health, and human services under a single strategic platform.

From April to December 2025, the Collaborative focused on strengthening emergency shelter, navigation, and street outreach for those defined as literally homeless. Guided by data, community feedback, and input from individuals with lived experience, this focused approach



produced targeted recommendations to improve Delaware's homelessness response system. These include expanding outreach services, increasing emergency shelter capacity, consolidating program administration, and enhancing discharge and transition supports.

The recommendations outlined in this memo serve as the basis for ongoing work across agencies and partners. The Collaborative's next phase will focus on implementing successful models that lead to increasing data integration, street outreach, shelter capacity, and supportive housing to ensure Delawareans have access to safe, stable housing.

Introduction and Background

Governor Matt Meyer established the Delaware Interagency Collaborative to End Homelessness through Executive Order #8, creating a statewide leadership body to coordinate policy, funding, and service delivery for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The problem the Collaborative set out to address was clear: Delaware's homelessness rate is rising, and the state's homelessness and housing system is not currently structured or equipped to meet the growing needs of housing-insecure residents. The high level of commitment from providers and partners across the state has always been evident; however, these efforts are a fragmented system, and the result is a system with too many gaps and too many people falling through them. Recognizing this challenge, the Governor convened a group inspired to bring policy innovation to an issue in urgent need of it. The Collaborative had several guiding examples to build upon, such as the successful conversion of a hotel off I-95 into the New Castle County Hope Center shelter and the creation of Georgetown's pallet village, demonstrating how creative solutions could make a real difference.

After our first meeting, the Collaborative quickly realized its shared purpose: to work together to reimagine a system that meets the needs of housing-insecure Delawareans at every step of their journey into and out of homelessness. Through a comprehensive process of data collection, public engagement, and agency collaboration that spanned all three counties and numerous municipalities, the Collaborative developed a blueprint designed to expand outreach, increase shelter capacity, and strengthen supportive housing statewide.

Through this integrated approach, Delaware seeks not only to respond to homelessness but to prevent it -- strengthening cross-sector partnerships, streamlining service delivery, and fostering long-term solutions that ensure every Delawarean has access to a safe and stable home.



Guiding Philosophy

The Collaborative focused its efforts on driving systemic change. Homelessness is a serious and growing issue both across the country and here in Delaware, and we have been motivated by this reality to ensure that our work is built upon existing data, systems initiatives, and the ongoing dialogue around homelessness service delivery. We intentionally spent little time reanalyzing the problem or revisiting general data and trends – we did not want to admire the problem. We wanted to focus on collaboratively aligning efforts towards solutions.

In the same spirit, this report builds upon the information already available on the Collaborative’s website and intentionally foregoes extensive data analysis. Instead, it provides direct and actionable recommendations on how the State of Delaware can improve the delivery of services to individuals experiencing homelessness.

Collaborative Membership and Structure

The Collaborative is composed of 15 members appointed by the Governor, representing key state agencies, local governments, legislative leadership, and nonprofit partners. Members include:

- **State agencies:** Department of Education (DOE), Department of Labor (DOL), Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families (DSCYF), Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA), and Department of Correction (DOC).
- **Local Government:** County Executives from New Castle, Kent, and Sussex counties; Mayors of Dover and Wilmington.
- **Legislative Leadership:** Representative Kendra Johnson, Chair of the Housing Committee and Senator Elizabeth Lockman, Chair of the Senate Housing Committee.
- **Nonprofit and Continuum of Care Partners:** Housing Alliance Delaware (HAD) and the Delaware Continuum of Care (CoC).

The role of each member of the Collaborative included:

- Advise the Governor on homelessness policy and resource coordination.
- Review and align programs, policies, and funding across state agencies.



- Recommend cross-agency collaboration and the expansion of effective models, such as the Hope Center.
- Ensure data-informed decision-making and equitable resource allocation statewide.

Meeting Summaries & Key Engagements

In 2025, the Collaborative convened regularly to ensure data, evaluate progress, and establish strategic priorities. In each meeting summary, you'll find links to the presentations, materials,

May 13, 2025

The inaugural meeting of the Delaware Interagency Collaborative to End Homelessness focused on establishing the group's mission and understanding the current state of homelessness in Delaware. DSHA Director Matthew Heckles opened by outlining goals: evaluating the homelessness system, identifying service gaps, and improving coordination across agencies. Presentations by the [Housing Alliance Delaware](#) and [DSHA](#) reviewed data showing a record high in the Point-in-Time (PIT) count and rising homelessness across all counties, particularly among older adults, youth, and veterans. Members discussed the need to focus not just on housing supply but on improving the system's ability to connect people quickly to available housing and resources.

During the "Around the Horn" session, each agency shared its current efforts and challenges. Discussions highlighted the fragmented nature of the system, time-limited funding, and opportunities for collaboration. Several agencies - such as DHSS, DOC, DOE, DSCYF and the counties - shared specific initiatives ranging from vouchers to re-entry planning to youth programs. The group agreed that DSHA would gather additional data on populations experiencing homelessness, funding streams, and existing programs. Over the following 60 days, the Collaborative assessed what works, identified system gaps, and planned public listening sessions. The next meeting was scheduled for July 8, 2025, to review progress and initial findings.

July 8, 2025

The second meeting built upon May's discussions, centering on the results of a statewide survey assessing how agencies invest in and deliver homelessness services. Director Heckles emphasized that the Collaborative's role is to unify entities with funding responsibilities and guide strategic improvements. DSHA's Alex Modeas presented findings based on [HUD definitions](#), focusing on three populations: those literally homeless, at-risk, and fleeing domestic



violence. Discussion centered on refining data, understanding funding overlaps, and prioritizing individuals currently unsheltered or in shelters. Members debated systemic barriers such as time-limited shelter stays, the need for permanent supportive housing, and potential legislative or regulatory changes to improve service delivery.

The group agreed to refine and resubmit survey responses with a clearer focus on programs serving the literally homeless. DSHA agreed to prepare a new survey to identify barriers to shelter access. Key next steps include broadening data collection to cover outreach, navigators, supportive services, and emergency housing; mapping shelter providers and funding sources; and reviewing best practices from other states. The meeting concluded with announcements of the upcoming University of Delaware Homelessness Conference on August 14, 2025, and a plan to convene again before that event to align progress and coordinate ongoing efforts.

August 14, 2025 - University of Delaware Homelessness Conference

On August 14, 2025, the University of Delaware (UD) - through its Center for Community Research & Service (CCRS) and Institute for Public Administration (IPA) - hosted the one-day conference titled “Homelessness in Delaware 2025: Local and State Responses Amidst Federal Retrenchment.”

At the conference, the Delaware Interagency Collaborative to End Homelessness (“the Collaborative”) had the opportunity to present its progress and strategic direction. The presentation reviewed the underpinnings of the Collaborative, Executive Order 8 establishing the Collaborative, and highlighted recent meeting outcomes and next-phase priorities.

Following the floor presentation, Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA) Director of Strategic Initiatives Alex Modeas moderated a panel discussion featuring key leadership: Aundrea Almond, Chief Implementation Officer for Governor Matt Meyer, and Steven Yeatman, Secretary of the Department of Services for Children, Youth & Their Families (DSCYF). The discussion centered on three core themes: emergent challenges and system gaps identified by the Collaborative, opportunities for cross-agency collaboration and innovation, and policy-level solutions to drive the next stage of the state’s homelessness strategy.

The conference also featured a presentation by Rachel Stucker, Executive Director of Housing Alliance Delaware, on the state’s proposed “Blueprint for Solving Homelessness.” The Blueprint was developed with the support of the Collaborative and directly informed many of the Collaborative’s recommendations.



The event served as a platform to showcase the Collaborative’s work and as a forum to connect stakeholders across state agencies, nonprofit providers, and research institutions. It publicly positioned the Collaborative as a central organizing mechanism for the state’s efforts to reduce and end homelessness in the coming years.

September 10, 2025

The third meeting started with DSHA staff presenting updates on the “Unhoused, Not Unheard” outreach and awareness campaign, which aims to educate the public and gather input through statewide listening sessions and digital engagement. Following that, Dr. Steve Metraux from the University of Delaware analyzed the Collaborative members’ survey findings detailing how over \$4 million in State funds and \$3 million in CoC funding for homeless services is distributed across Delaware. His presentation highlighted funding recipients and sources - federal, state, county, and private - and showed that most resources support temporary housing and rapid rehousing programs. For example, CoC-funded programs play a central role in sustaining Delaware’s crisis-response infrastructure, including administering the centralized intake system and delivering rapid rehousing assistance. Another example would be how DHSS investments support critical transitional operations, such as the motel/hotel voucher program and the Transitional Housing Operations Grant. He also reviewed shelter capacity by county, noting significant variations and ongoing gaps in available beds statewide.

The meeting concluded with Rachel Stucker and Housing Innovations presenting Delaware’s Blueprint for Solving Homelessness, a reform plan outlining key system gaps and six strategic priorities, from expanding affordable housing and shelter capacity to improving coordination and case management, and inviting the Collaborative to partner in shaping its implementation.

September 29, 2025

The meeting opened with a presentation summarizing Collaborative survey feedback on top emergency shelter and prevention priorities. Participants emphasized refining prevention strategies to focus on those at greatest risk of homelessness, considering systemic improvements, and framing prevention as both cost-effective and cyclical rather than linear. There was agreement on maintaining concise, memo-style reporting and including broader outreach components - such as street engagement and support for individuals facing mental health or substance use challenges.



The group also discussed operational improvements, including adjustments to centralized intake, data sharing through HMIS, and the sustainability of Hope Center models across different counties. Members considered funding structures, service accessibility, and coordination between state and local entities. After reviewing the recommendations, a motion to submit them was approved unanimously. The meeting concluded with plans to establish subcommittees, potentially following the model of the Affordable Housing Production Task Force, with continued participation from cabinet agencies and quarterly Collaborative meetings.

Community Outreach and Public Engagement – “Unhoused, not Unheard”

A cornerstone of the Collaborative’s process has been intentional engagement with individuals and communities who directly experience or interact with homelessness. From the outset, DSHA was committed to ensuring that our work was informed by those closest to the issue. Our approach was important; we did not ask people to come to us, we went to them. Through resource-based listening sessions, surveys, and digital engagement, the Collaborative gathered critical insights on barriers, needs, and opportunities for system improvement. We hosted these events – free and open to the public -- in communities across the state.

Listening Sessions:

The listening sessions were designed to bring us into direct conversation with people who have lived experience with homelessness, as well as with community stakeholders and service providers. We heard firsthand from shelters and organizations about the resources they need to support their residents’ and clients’ success, and we shared those with the Collaborative to help us develop actionable policy recommendations that strengthen Delaware’s homelessness system. These sessions raised awareness about existing resources and programs, guided our collective conversations and informed our final recommendations.

Sessions were held across all three counties to ensure geographic and demographic representation:

- Dover Public Library - August 11, 2025
- New Castle County Hope Center – August 25, 2025
- Wilmington Homelessness Task Force – August 26, 2025
- Georgetown Public Library - August 27, 2025
- Food Bank of Delaware (Milford) - September 8, 2025



- Harrington Public Library - September 25, 2025
- Seaford at Redemption City - October 16, 2025
- Middletown at Friendship House, Church on Main – December 15, 2025

Unhoused, not Unheard
Join us for a resource-based listening session

**What's being done
and what's needed?**

Monday, September 8 | 2 p.m. - 4 p.m.
The Food Bank of Delaware
102 Delaware Veterans Blvd.
Milford, DE 19963

Digital Engagement:

The Collaborative’s website and [QR code campaign](#) invited public input through a short, online survey, encouraging Delawareans to “share your experiences, thoughts, and ideas to end homelessness.” This digital outreach expanded participation from those unable to attend in-person sessions and provided an anonymous option for sharing opinions and ideas.

McKinney-Vento

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is a federal law that aims to support children and youth who are experiencing homelessness by addressing the challenges they face enrolling, attending and succeeding in school. It ensures that homeless children and youth have access to public education and other services, regardless of their housing situation.

Literally Homeless

When an individual or family lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This includes people living in shelters, cars, abandoned buildings, or places not meant for habitation.

4,416 Homeless Students in Delaware



Low Barrier Shelter

A low-barrier shelter is an emergency housing option with minimal entry requirements. It welcomes people regardless of sobriety status, identification, criminal history, and if they have pets, making it easier for those in crisis to get off the streets and access support.

Share your input and experiences with The Collab:

Scan Me

<https://www.delawarestatehousingauthority.com/apps/collaborative/enf-barrier-shelter/>



DSHA worked with GIC to create a video to educate the public on factors that lead to homelessness and the obstacles and barriers to secure, stable housing. The video features an individual who shared how they moved into transitional housing after becoming homeless in Delaware.

Watch [video](#).

Service Provider Engagements:

Director Heckles and DSHA staff have visited service providers on-site to discuss perspectives on homelessness and opportunities for collaboration. These service providers include, but are not limited to:

- Dover Interfaith



- Family Promise
- Friendship House
- House of Hope
- Ministry of Caring
- New Castle County Hope Center
- Redemption City
- Springboard Collaborative
- West End Neighborhood House
- YMCA
- YWCA

Next Steps

Looking ahead, the work of the Delaware Interagency Collaborative to End Homelessness will continue and deepen its focus on the systems and structures that shape housing stability in our state. Building on the progress made through emergency shelter, navigation, and outreach initiatives, the Collaborative will prioritize strengthening data sharing across agencies, enhancing pathways to employment, and conducting a comprehensive analysis of service provider capacity. These steps will allow us to respond to homelessness in real time and ensure that the resources and workforce supporting individuals and families are sustainable, effective, and equitable.

Future efforts will emphasize best practice policy development and cross-sector coordination in areas that directly intersect with housing insecurity, including health, criminal justice, and civil rights. Special attention will be given to populations at critical transition points, such as individuals reentering the community from the Department of Correction, homeless youth and students, and those navigating institutional discharge planning. By focusing on these intersecting issues, the Collaborative affirms its commitment to building a coordinated, inclusive, and evidence-driven response to homelessness that evolves with the needs of Delawareans and sets a clear path toward long-term housing stability.

To accomplish the implementation of these initiatives, we need to align the Collaborative members' focus areas with specialized leaders in Delaware. Through the creation of working groups, we intend to make the implementation phase collaborative and communicative with essential partners across the state. These working groups will include (but will not be limited to):



- **Outreach & Engagement:** Expand Street outreach, encampment response, and improve outreach for those who are experiencing unsheltered homelessness.
- **Coordinated Entry & Data Systems:** Reform the coordinated intake process and build a more consolidated data-sharing system.
- **Prevention & Eviction Diversion:** Improve homelessness prevention programs and further incorporate legal/financial intervention in eviction prevention.
- **Hope Center Expansion:** Establish Hope Centers in Kent and Sussex counties, supporting the New Castle County Hope Center, and ensuring we have the necessary emergency shelter resources.
- **Shelter Capacity & Operations:** Support existing shelters across the state and coordinate improvements with partners.
- **Supportive Services:** Improve navigation and case management and incorporate trauma-informed practices.
- **Youth Homelessness Services:** Improve shelter and services for intact families to include children under the age of 18 and young adults from foster care and the justice system.
- **Homelessness in Schools:** Limit barriers experienced by students who are experiencing homelessness.
- **Exit Strategies:** Focus on aligning partners and funding to increase permanent and transitional supportive housing and rapid re-housing.
- **Civil Rights & Advocacy:** Advocate for groups disproportionately affected by homelessness, analyzing implications of federal policy on Delaware, and building a stronger network of community and advocacy organizations.