

Conservation and Development Subcommittee – DOH Questions for Work Session

1. How many staff (i.e., filled positions) are funded from the General Fund? If staff members' time is charged to multiple sources, what are the full time equivalent (FTE) filled positions supported by the General Fund currently? **Currently, there are 13.5 FTE's filled, and 7.45 FTE's pending hiring in the current fiscal year, with a total of 20.95 positions supported by GF.**
 - a. Are there General Fund vacancies in the process of being filled? **Yes**
2. How many currently employed staff are funded from federal sources? How many are full time, part time, and durational? **40.5 filled FTE's are supported by federal sources. Of these, 10 FTE's are Durational. There are no PTE's.**
 - a. Can you list the major federal programs DOH administers and approximately how many staff (FTE) support each of them?
UniteCT - 9 Durational FTE's
CDBG-DR - 1 Durational FTE
Section 8 HCV - 2.55 Permanent FTE's
CDBG-SC - 5.15 Permanent FTE's
HOME/NHTF - 11.1 Permanent FTE's
3. Are any positions supported by state bond funds or any other non-appropriated state funding? **3 FTE's are supported by state bond or non-appropriated funding.**
4. Please provide a list of the cold weather shelters for this year. **See attached document**
5. Can you provide information on the number of people assisted per year through diversion? What is the average dollar amount of assistance per household that benefits? How is the program administered?
 - **Calendar Year 2022 – 7,141 households diverted**
 - **Calendar Year 2021 – 7,917 households diverted**
 - **Calendar Year 2020 – 7,461 households diverted**
 - **Calendar Year 2019 – 6,136 households diverted**

Currently there is no standard amount of funding for diversion. The Coordinated Access Networks (CAN) often leverage philanthropic or other resources for this flexible resource. In addition, many diversions may only require mediation and not financial assistance. Since many of these resources are not visible to DOH, we unfortunately do not have a reliable estimate on the average cost per diversion with financial assistance.

The program is currently administered by the CAN. When a household has an appointment with a CAN to analyze the housing crisis, the CAN intake worker engages in an interview to determine if the household can be diverted. At this time, the intake worker will attempt a wide variety of activities, including mediation and financial assistance to prevent a household from entering shelter

6. Given recent reporting that people with tenant-based rental assistance (e.g., federal Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers or state rental assistance) are struggling to use their vouchers, what is

the current situation on that? What are some possible policy solutions that lawmakers could pursue to address the issue of low utilization rates among other housing authorities?

The issue of voucher holders losing their vouchers for not being able to find a unit within 120 days is not an issue for anyone with a DOH Section 8 or RAP. When the pandemic struck, DOH immediately extended the amount of time a voucher holder could find a unit to at least one year. In fact, for those that were actively looking for a unit in March of 2020, we allowed those households to continue searching for a unit until 12/31/22, or over 21 months. Current voucher holders still have one year to find a unit and DOH's contractor continues to work with voucher holders that cannot find a unit in that time frame. DOH is willing to extend search times to ensure that all of our voucher holders have the ability to find a unit. Unfortunately DOH does not have jurisdiction over the administration over other Housing Authorities in the State that falls under the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). While HUD has been flexible in allowing Housing Authorities to set their own rules, it is ultimately up to each individual Housing Authority to make the decision on what is in the best interest of their operation.

7. For 2-1-1, how many (housing-related) staff are being supported and what are the operating hours for that service right now? What is the average wait time? What changes have been or will be implemented (e.g., hubs for the CANs) to address challenges?

The housing crisis line is open 8a-4p, seven days per week. Currently 2-1-1 has 21 staff dedicated for the housing crisis line, through June 30, 2023. In July, it will go back to 7 if there is no additional investment. Average wait time in January was 27 minutes while the longest delays are over an hour.

In consultation with 2-1-1, the CANs and DOH - it was determined to best to utilize all staff during the busiest hours of housing crisis calls to try and limit wait times as much as possible. During the pandemic housing crisis calls more than doubled which added stress to the system. Other efforts to reduce the wait times has been to create the HUBs, or physical locations where households can present and receive an intake appointment without 2-1-1. This will allow greater access to the system for those households that do not have access to a phone. In addition, the HUBs took over the responsibility for any follow up calls to 2-1-1, which make up approximately 25% of housing crisis calls, which would thus free up 2-1-1 housing crisis workers to assist first time callers.

8. Can you provide a trend analysis of the number of active vouchers for RAP and DOH-administered federal rental assistance for the past 4 years (including both the number being utilized and the approximate number being funded)?

a. Can you explain the reasons not all available state funding has been used?

Year	FED units authorized	FED units leased	State units authorized*	State units leased
June 2019	8226	7989	N/A	6418
June 2020	8350	8213	N/A	6529
June 2021	8572	8240	N/A	6506
June 2022	9029	8599	N/A	6502

March 2023	9029	8836	N/A	6502
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***Please note for the state units authorized, DOH has used funding authorized instead of a maximum amount of units to be leased to be as flexible as possible in responding to the needs of voucher holders.**

The legislature directs certain programs that receive funding for RAP certificates and DOH works with the State Agency responsible for providing referrals for that particular program. The reason for the surpluses in the past few years is slower than anticipated referrals from the Money Follows the Person, Nursing Home Rebalancing and CHESS programs. In particular, the CHESS program was a new program that needed federal Center for Medicare and Medicaid approval, which took some time. In previous fiscal years, DOH received no applications for the CHESS program, but in fy23, DOH has received enough referrals to fully utilize the allocation of funding. Currently the CHESS program is about 50% leased up with the other 50% of applicants searching for a unit. DOH believes the CHESS program will be fully leased up in FY 24, which will reduce some of the surplus. On a smaller scale, it is taking households longer to find units, due to the tight rental market which reduces utilization and creates surplus, but DOH is committed to allowing households to find units, as outlined above, even if it leads to unspent rental assistance.

9. What is DOH doing to ensure people in the intellectual and/or developmental disability (IDD) population have access to the housing they need?

DOH has been actively engaged with DDS to create more units of supportive housing for people with IDD. DOH and DDS collaborated on the IDASH initiative, which created housing for over 45 individuals with IDD in affordable housing settings. DOH and DSS in addition worked to amend CHFA's Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP) to include DDS as an eligible population for supportive housing. This has led to two other projects being completed serving an additional 29 people, and there are additional projects in the LIHTC pipeline. DOH has bond funds available for the creation of supportive housing and would certainly fund projects that have supportive housing component for people with IDD.

10. What is happening at this stage with UniteCT? Can you describe how much funding was transferred to the eviction prevention program, when that funding will all be spent, how much other funding is part of that program, and details on how the eviction prevention program works?

All cases for the original program have been paid or closed. By the end of March, all appeals from the original program will be reviewed and either the case will be reopened and processed, or closed permanently. \$11MM was transferred from the ERA2 allocation to the Eviction Prevention Fund, to be used in conjunction with \$1.5MM is state ARPA funding allocated by the Governor for the Rent Bank. As the volume of applications under the Eviction Prevention Fund continues to grow, additional funding from ERA2 may be allocated as well. With the current applications, there is about \$3MM that is committed to be spent as of this response. We anticipate increasing volume of requests as legal aide, mediators,

landlords and their attorneys become more familiar with the program and the process associated with accessing these funds. This initiative actually started in January 2023, although the Governor's Press Release did not go out until February so that we could work out the processes in advance, and forestall any issues. Included in this response is the one page flyer that describes the process, and additional details can be viewed at the Department's dedicated webpage: [Eviction Prevention Fund](#).

11. Can you direct the subcommittee to a Connecticut housing inventory with housing types broken down by region? [AFFORDCT LINK](#)