



Homelessness is one of the most difficult experiences people have in our community, resulting in 5,244 people in Erie County experiencing the traumatic instability that results from losing housing.

Compared to 2019, the number of people experiencing homelessness has decreased by 8.7%, though its persistence remains cause for concern. Efforts in the community to reduce homelessness among particular subpopulations such as the chronically homeless or veterans have been successful due to data-driven, targeted efforts to ensure there are sufficient housing resources available that meet these population's needs. The same tactics can be applied to the broader community through efforts to secure more affordable, sustainable housing. The common denominator for everyone lost their housing is that they lived circumstances where they could not afford it.

The data in this report, unless otherwise stated, comes from the Homeless Management Information System, which uses self-reported client-level information that is recorded on intake by homelessness alleviation providers. All data in this report is aligned with federal fiscal years. FFY2019 is October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019. Data about community demographics comes from the American Community Survey, 2014-2018 Five Year Estimates.

Key Findings

Annual Counts of People Experiencing Homelessness

	2018 HMIS	2018 Estimated Total Count	2019 HMIS	2019 Estimated Total Count	% Change
NY-508	5550	7872	5344	6963	-11.55%
Erie County	4289	5742	4271	5244	-8.68%

Table 1: Overall homelessness in Erie County

- 5,244 people experienced homelessness in Erie County this year, down 8.7% from the number of people reported last year
- Despite only being 13.4% of Erie County's population, black people made up more than half (53.3%) of all clients experiencing homelessness
- Children made up nearly a quarter of the population (988 children) of those experiencing homelessness in Erie County
- 69.5% of clients served were single adults; 68.2% of single adults served identified as male
- 85.8% of the 494 adults in family households identified as female
- 29.4% of clients left for a permanent housing destination after exiting from a program

Demographics of Homelessness

Household Type and Homelessness

Household Type	Female	Male	Gender Non-Conforming	Trans Female (MTF, Male to Female)	Trans Male (FTM, Female to Male)
Single Adult	31.4%	68.3%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%
Families	86.0%	14.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Couple with No Children	47.5%	52.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Female Single Parent	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Grandparent(s) and Child	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Male Single Parent	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Relative	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Two Parent Family	51.9%	48.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Table 2: Gender breakdown of household types based on all heads of households and their spouses/partners experiencing homelessness (3372 clients)

Household Type	Count of Households	% of Households	Count of Clients	% of Clients
Single Adult	2970	86.9%	2970	69.6%
Families	447	13.1%	1300	30.4%
Couple with No Children	20	0.6%	40	0.9%
Female Single Parent	374	10.9%	1074	25.2%
Grandparent(s) and Child	3	0.1%	6	0.1%
Male Single Parent	21	0.6%	57	1.3%
Other Relative	1	0.0%	3	0.1%
Two Parent Family	28	0.8%	120	2.8%
Grand Total	3417		4270	

Table 3: Family type distribution of the households experiencing homelessness (1 single adult = 1 household)

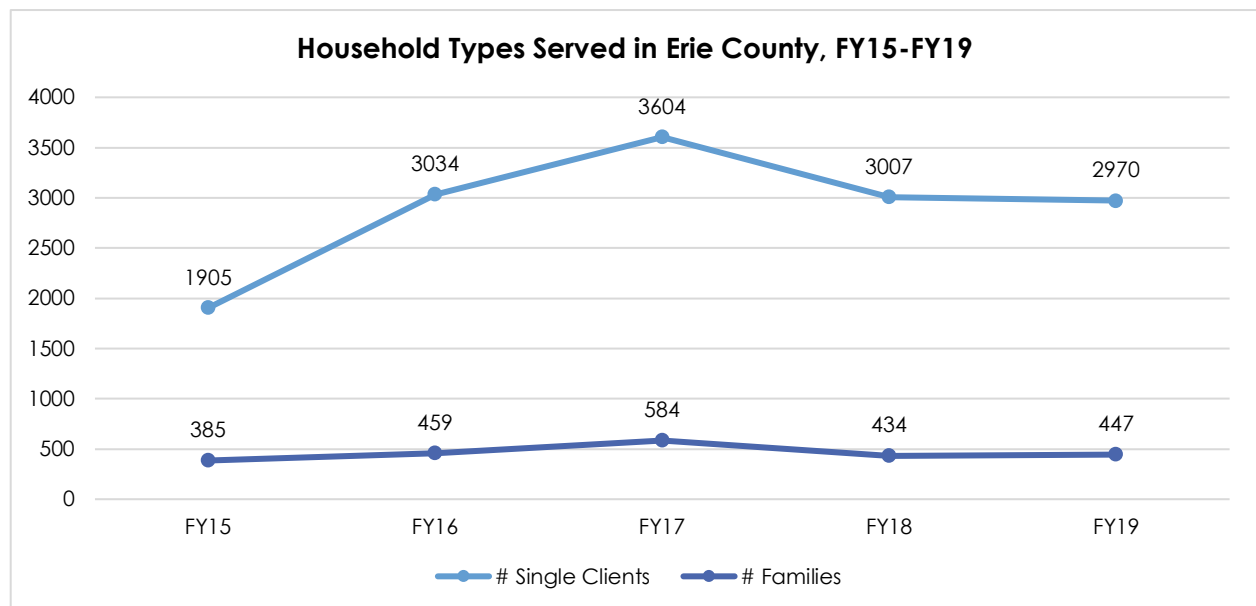


Figure 1: A look at the changes in the number of single clients and total families entering the homeless system over time.

Race, Ethnicity, and Homelessness

Race	% of People Experiencing Homelessness	% of All City of Buffalo Residents	% of All Erie County Residents
Asian	0.5%	5.6%	3.5%
Black	55.8%	36.7%	13.4%
Native American	1.3%	0.5%	0.5%
Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%
White	37.7%	47.4%	77.9%
Multiracial	4.2%	4.0%	2.4%

Table 4: Racial demographics of people experiencing homelessness who reported their race (4083 clients), residents of the city of Buffalo, residents of Erie County¹

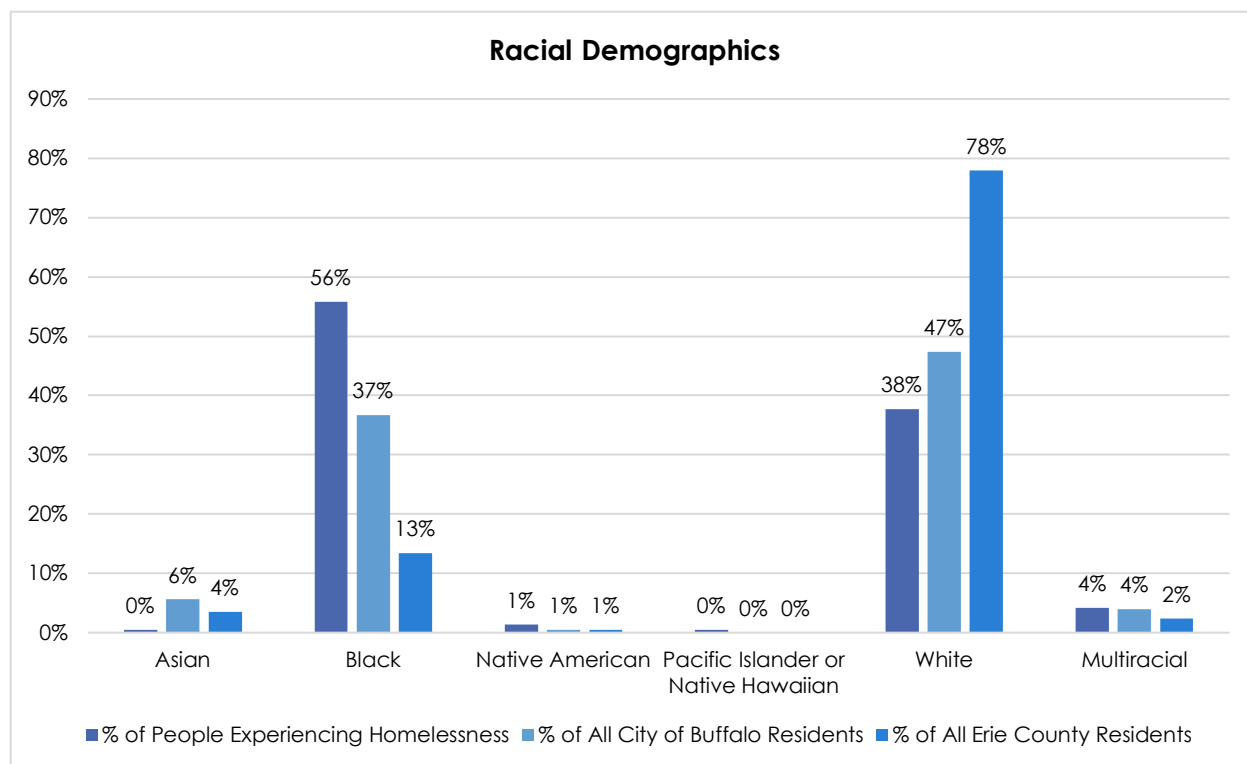


Figure 2: Percent of population in each racial category

Ethnicity	% of People Experiencing Homelessness	% of All City of Buffalo Residents	% of All Erie County Residents
Hispanic or Latino	16.1%	11.6%	5.4%
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	83.9%	88.4%	94.6%

Table 5: Ethnicity demographics of people experiencing homelessness who reported their ethnicity (4063 clients), residents of the city of Buffalo, residents of Erie County²

¹ 2018: ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles (data.census.gov)

² 2018: ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles (data.census.gov)

Age, Gender, and Homelessness

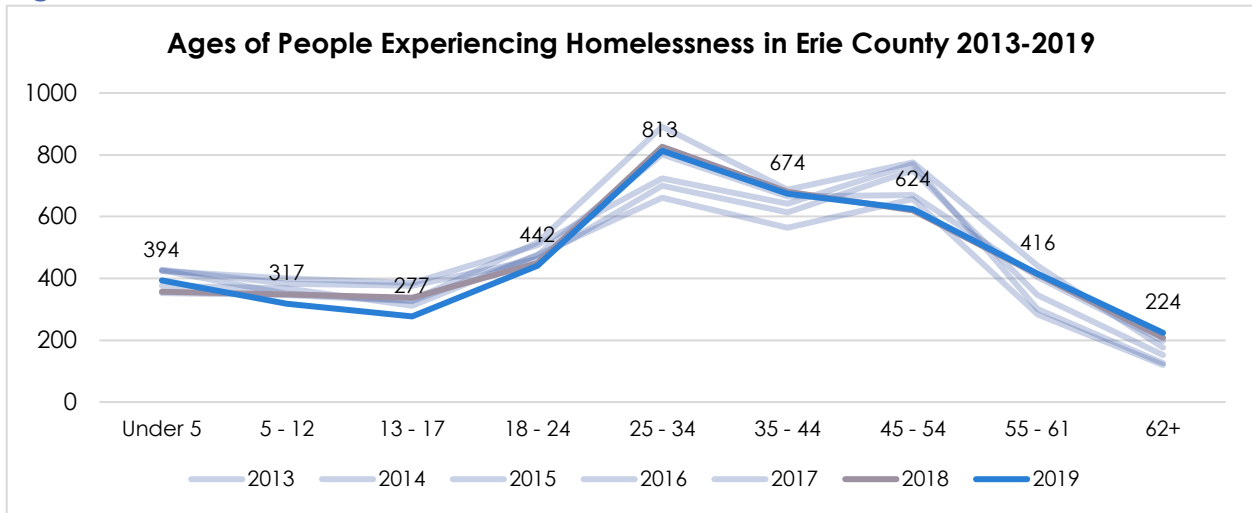


Figure 3: Age distribution of people experiencing homelessness

	Youth	Age 5 & Under	Age 5-12	Age 13-17	Adults	Age 18-24	Age 25-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-54	Age 55-61	Age 62+
Count	988	394	317	277	3193	442	813	674	624	416	224
Percent	23.6%	9.4%	7.6%	6.6%	76.4%	10.6%	19.4%	16.1%	14.9%	9.9%	5.4%

Table 6: Total adults/children experiencing homelessness who provided a date of birth (4181 clients)

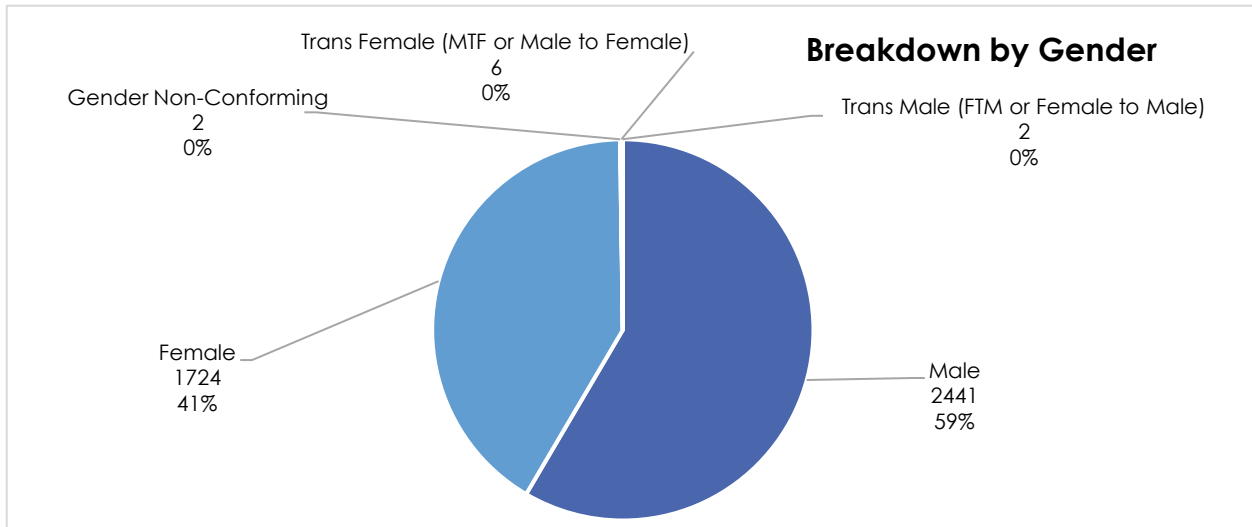


Figure 4: Gender distribution of all people experiencing homelessness who reported their gender (4175 clients)

Gender	Client Count	Percent
Male	2440	58.44%
Female	1725	41.32%
Gender Non-Conforming	2	0.05%
Trans Female (MTF or Male to Female)	6	0.14%
Trans Male (FTM or Female to Male)	2	0.05%
Data not collected	95	2.28%

Table 7: Gender of those experiencing homelessness who reported their gender (4175 clients)

Disability Data

Over half (56.9%) of the 4,088 clients who provided their disability status report having at least one disability. When only adults (ages 18+) are considered, this rate increases to 72%. People with disabilities are over-represented in the homelessness system. This is made clear by the discrepancies in the rates of people with disabilities in the city of Buffalo and general Erie county (16.1%, 13.2% respectively) compared to the rates of people with disability experiencing homelessness in Erie county.³

Disability Type	Count of Clients	% of All Clients w 1+ Disability	% of All Clients
Alcohol Abuse	633	29.1%	14.8%
Chronic Health Condition	457	21.0%	10.7%
Developmental	257	11.8%	6.0%
Drug Abuse	833	38.3%	19.5%
Dual Diagnosis	3	0.1%	0.1%
Hearing Impaired	3	0.1%	0.1%
HIV/AIDS	27	1.2%	0.6%
Mental Health Problem	1704	78.4%	39.9%
Other	5	0.2%	0.1%
Physical	625	28.7%	14.6%
Physical/Medical	96	4.4%	2.2%
Vision Impaired	1	0.0%	0.0%

Table 8: Breakdown of the types of disabilities experienced by both clients with disabilities (2174) and all clients (4270)

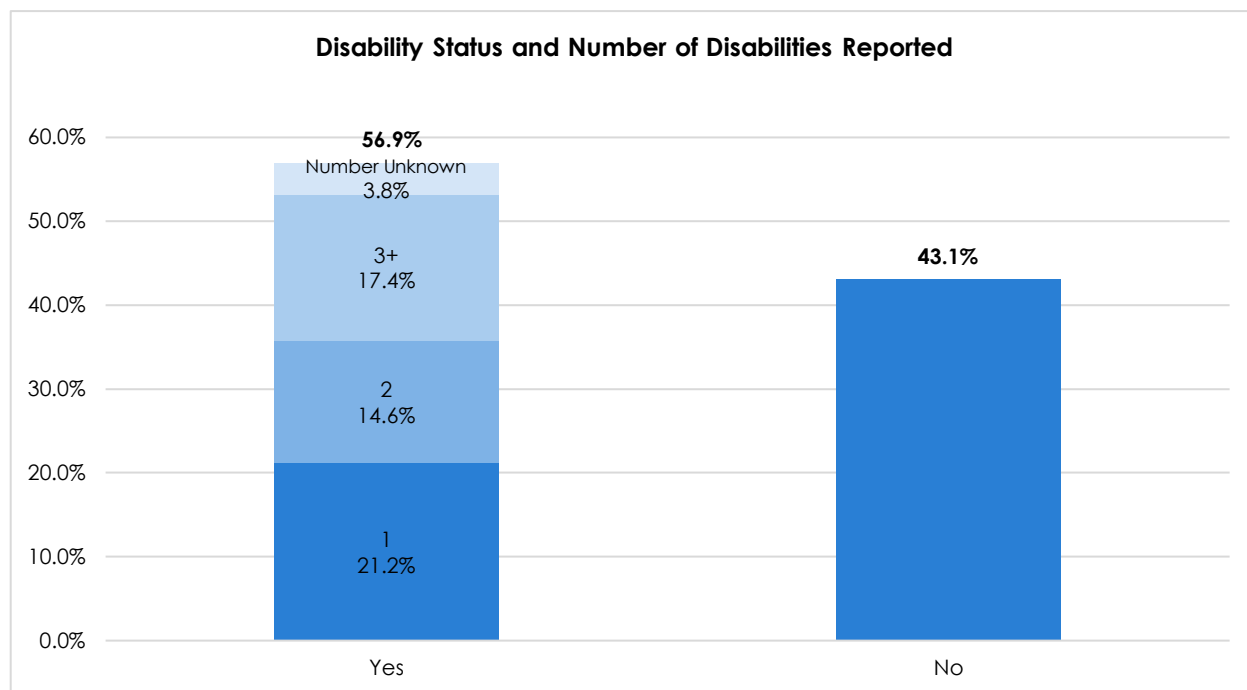


Figure 5: The disability status of those experiencing homelessness who reported their disability status (4088 clients); if reporting yes to having a disability, the number of disabilities is indicated

³ 2018: ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles (data.census.gov)

Before and After Homelessness

The situations that lead to homelessness, where people resided prior to entering a program, and where they go to after exiting

Primary Reason for Homelessness	Client Count	Percent
Household Disputes (not DV)	489	16.2%
Release from Institution	382	12.7%
Eviction by primary tenant	294	9.8%
Loss of Job/Income (includes public benefits)	291	9.7%
Domestic Violence	271	9.0%
Ask to leave by landlord	195	6.5%
Substance Abuse	191	6.3%
Court eviction by landlord	188	6.2%
Mental Health	176	5.8%
Relocation from out of the NY-508 CoC Area	174	5.8%

Table 9: The top ten reasons cited for homelessness by heads of households, not including those who did not provide a response (3015 clients)

Residence Prior to Project Entry	Client Count	Percent
Emergency shelter, including hotel or motel paid for with shelter voucher	778	24.2%
Staying or living in a family member's room, apartment or house	525	16.4%
Place not meant for habitation	509	15.9%
Staying or living in a friend's room, apartment or house	363	11.3%
Jail, prison or juvenile detention facility	279	8.7%
Rental by client, no ongoing housing subsidy	241	7.5%
Hospital or other residential non-psychiatric medical facility	129	4.0%
Psychiatric hospital or other psychiatric facility	80	2.5%
Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center	80	2.5%
Hotel or motel paid for without emergency shelter voucher	75	2.3%

Table 10: The top ten locations clients were residing at before entering the homelessness system according to heads of households, not including those who did not provide a response (3211 clients)

Exit Destination Data

Exit Destinations	Count	%
Permanent	939	29.5%
Owned by client, no ongoing housing subsidy	3	0.1%
Owned by client, with ongoing housing subsidy	3	0.1%
Permanent housing (other than RRH) for formerly homeless persons	69	2.2%
Rental by client in a public housing unit	1	0.0%
Rental by client, no ongoing housing subsidy	224	7.0%
Rental by client, with GPD TIP housing subsidy	2	0.1%
Rental by client, with other ongoing housing subsidy	178	5.6%
Rental by client, with RRH or equivalent subsidy	125	3.9%
Rental by client, with VASH housing subsidy	20	0.6%
Staying or living with family, permanent tenure	238	7.5%
Staying or living with friends, permanent tenure	76	2.4%
Temporary	543	17.1%
Emergency shelter, hotel/motel paid for w/ ES voucher, or Host Home shelter	211	6.6%
Hotel or motel paid for without emergency shelter voucher	10	0.3%
Residential project or halfway house with no homeless criteria	20	0.6%
Safe Haven	2	0.1%
Staying or living with family, temporary tenure	129	4.1%
Staying or living with friends, temporary tenure	116	3.6%
Transitional housing for homeless persons (including homeless youth)	55	1.7%
Institution	185	5.8%
Foster care home or foster care group home	13	0.4%
Hospital or other residential non-psychiatric medical facility	48	1.5%
Jail, prison or juvenile detention facility	65	2.0%
Long-term care facility or nursing home	7	0.2%
Psychiatric hospital or other psychiatric facility	21	0.7%
Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center	31	1.0%
Unstable	697	21.9%
Place not meant for habitation	697	21.9%
No Data Available	818	25.7%
Client doesn't know	4	0.1%
Client refused	20	0.6%
Data not collected	10	0.3%
Deceased	2	0.1%
No exit interview completed	675	21.2%
Other	107	3.4%
Grand Total	3182	

Table 11: Exit destinations provided by the heads of household at their latest exit in fiscal year 2019

Locations of Homelessness and Housing Costs

Zip Code of Last Permanent Address	Percent
14215	20.8%
14211	13.6%
14207	7.0%
14213	6.9%
14212	6.6%
14214	5.7%
14208	5.4%
14206	4.5%
14201	4.4%
14204	3.4%

Table 12: Top ten zip codes of the last permanent address provided by heads of households (2623 clients)

Percent of Income Towards Rent	City of Buffalo	Erie County - All	Erie County Excluding Buffalo
Less than 15.0 percent	15.8%	16.2%	16.6%
15.0 to 19.9 percent	11.5%	12.4%	13.4%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	9.4%	11.6%	13.5%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	9.2%	9.8%	10.4%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	8.4%	8.0%	7.6%
35.0 percent or more	45.7%	42.0%	38.6%

Table 13: Percent of people paying a certain percent of their income on their housing in the city of Buffalo, Erie county, and Erie county excluding the city of Buffalo⁴

The number of people experiencing homelessness in the city of Buffalo is not entirely surprising when you see that over half of renters (54.2%) pay more of their income towards rent than is considered affordable (30%). Efforts to ensure that residents of the city of Buffalo can maintain their rent should explore housing affordability initiatives, which include subsidies paid to renters.

Conclusion: Policy Recommendations

There is a growing affordable housing crisis throughout Western New York. Rents are increasing at alarming rates and those living in poverty are getting priced out of housing altogether.

A report by the National Low Income Housing Coalition states that the Buffalo-Niagara Falls metropolitan area has a shortage of 46,000 affordable housing units.

All Levels of Government should together:

- Fund the production of more housing specifically for single adults, separate and apart from their respective existing supportive housing commitments.
- Fund the production of units for families that include units for large families.
- Fund a Market Study to determine the number of units by bedroom size needed to house people at various income levels, especially at the lowest income levels.
- Once the market study is complete, the State, County and Municipalities should use their available resources to direct funding for those units.

⁴ 2018: ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles (data.census.gov)

New York State Must:

- Implement the [Home Stability Support \(HSS\)](#) program to create a State-funded, long-term rent subsidy for households receiving public assistance who are homeless or at risk of losing their housing due to eviction, domestic violence, or hazardous housing conditions.
- Follow the recommendations of the Bring it Home Campaign and adequately fund existing community based housing programs for individuals with psychiatric disabilities.
- Ensure effective reentry planning for individuals being released from State prisons in order to identify viable housing options prior to each individual's scheduled release date.
- Reform punitive parole practices that allow parole officers to exercise wide discretion and deny placement at potentially viable addresses for individuals leaving State prisons.
- Reconstitute the New York State Interagency Council on Homelessness to continue the coordination of state and federal efforts to end homelessness.

Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance must:

- Permanently eliminate the statewide requirement that shelter residents pay rent for shelter or enroll in a savings program as a condition of receiving shelter.
- Stop sanctioning individuals with higher needs that have difficulties in complying with complex assistance requirements.

The solution to homelessness is a home.