



Homelessness is one of the most difficult experiences people have in our community. In the five counties belonging to our continuum of care, 6,963 people are experiencing the traumatic instability that results from losing their home. About a quarter, 1,649 people, were in Niagara County. Compared to last year's counts, the number of people experiencing homelessness increased slightly in Niagara County this year (3.1%), an indication that it's a problem that requires continued attention. 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 Homeless Alliance of WNY operates the local Homeless Management Information System, also known as BAS-Net (Buffalo Area Services- NETWORK) which collects information on all HUD-funded and voluntarily participating non-HUD-funded homelessness alleviation providers, including outreach, emergency shelters, permanent supportive housing (including all housing first programs), rapid re-housing, and transitional housing providers. That information, other aggregate data shared by non-participating providers, and community demographic data from the American Community Survey are used to inform this report, which covers federal fiscal year 2019 (October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019).

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%
Niagara County	1069	1600	1127	1649	+3.08%

Table 1: Overall Homelessness in Niagara County

- 1,649 people experienced homelessness in Niagara County, an increase of 3.1% compared to the previous year
- Despite only being 7.2% of Niagara County's population, black people made up over a third (38.5%) of all clients experiencing homelessness
- Just under a quarter of this year's homeless population in Niagara County were children (ages 17 and under)
- 90.3% of clients served were single adults; 79.1% of single adults identified as male
- 36.2% of clients reported their release from an institution as their reason for homelessness; 15.8% reported coming directly from jail, prison or a juvenile detention facility
- 25.3% of clients went to a permanent housing destination after exiting from a program

Demographics of Homelessness

Household Type and Homelessness

Household Type	Female	Male	Trans Female (MTF, Male to Female)	Trans Male (FTM, Female to Male)
Single Adult	20.6%	79.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Families	76.4%	23.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Couple With No Children	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Female Single Parent	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Male Single Parent	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Grandparent(s) and Child	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Relative	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Two Parent Family	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Table 2: Gender breakdown of household types based on all heads of households and their spouses/partners experiencing homelessness (948 clients)

Household Type	Count of Households	% of Households	Count of Clients	% of Clients
Single Adult	838	90.30%	838	74.36%
Families	90	9.70%	289	25.64%
Couple with No Children	6	0.65%	12	1.06%
Female Single Parent	60	6.47%	186	16.50%
Male Single Parent	2	0.22%	6	0.53%
Grandparent(s) and Child	5	0.54%	11	0.98%
Other	3	0.32%	5	0.44%
Two Parent Family	14	1.51%	69	6.12%
Grand Total	928		1127	

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

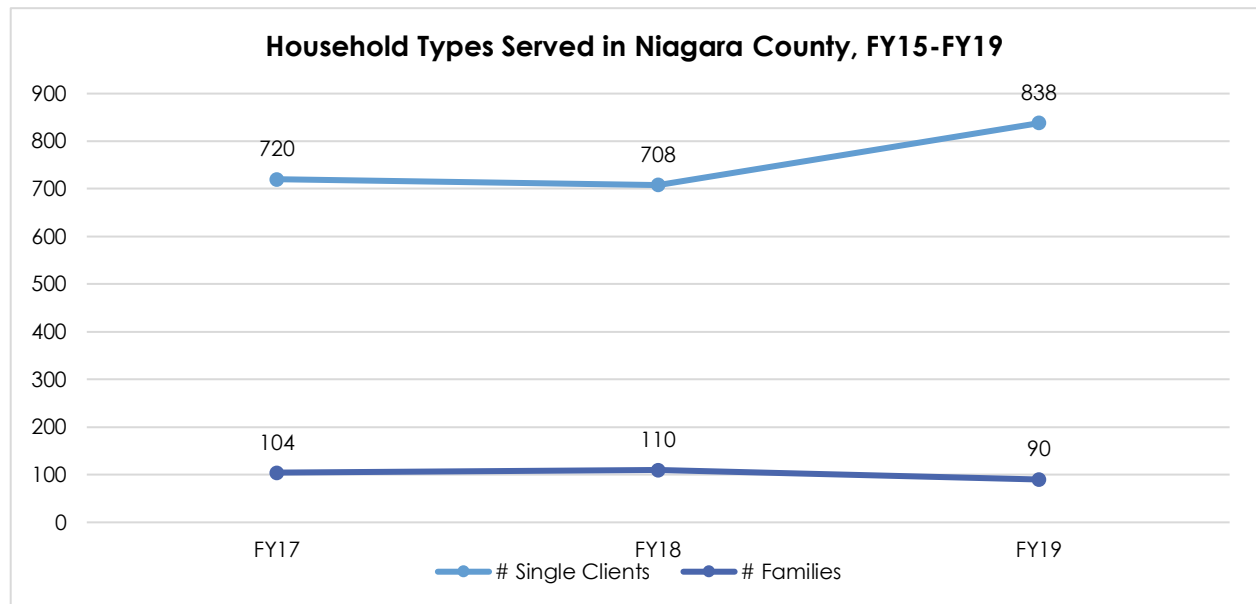


Figure 1: A look at the changes in the number of single clients and total families entering the homeless system over time.

Race, Ethnicity, and Homelessness

Race	% of People Experiencing Homelessness	% of All City of Niagara Falls Residents	% of All Niagara County Residents
Asian	0.5%	1.0%	1.0%
Black	38.5%	22.6%	7.2%
Native American	2.3%	1.5%	1.1%
Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%
White	46.2%	69.5%	87.8%
Multiracial	7.8%	4.6%	2.3%

Table 4: Racial demographics of people experiencing homelessness who reported their race, residents of the city of Niagara Falls, and residents of Niagara County¹

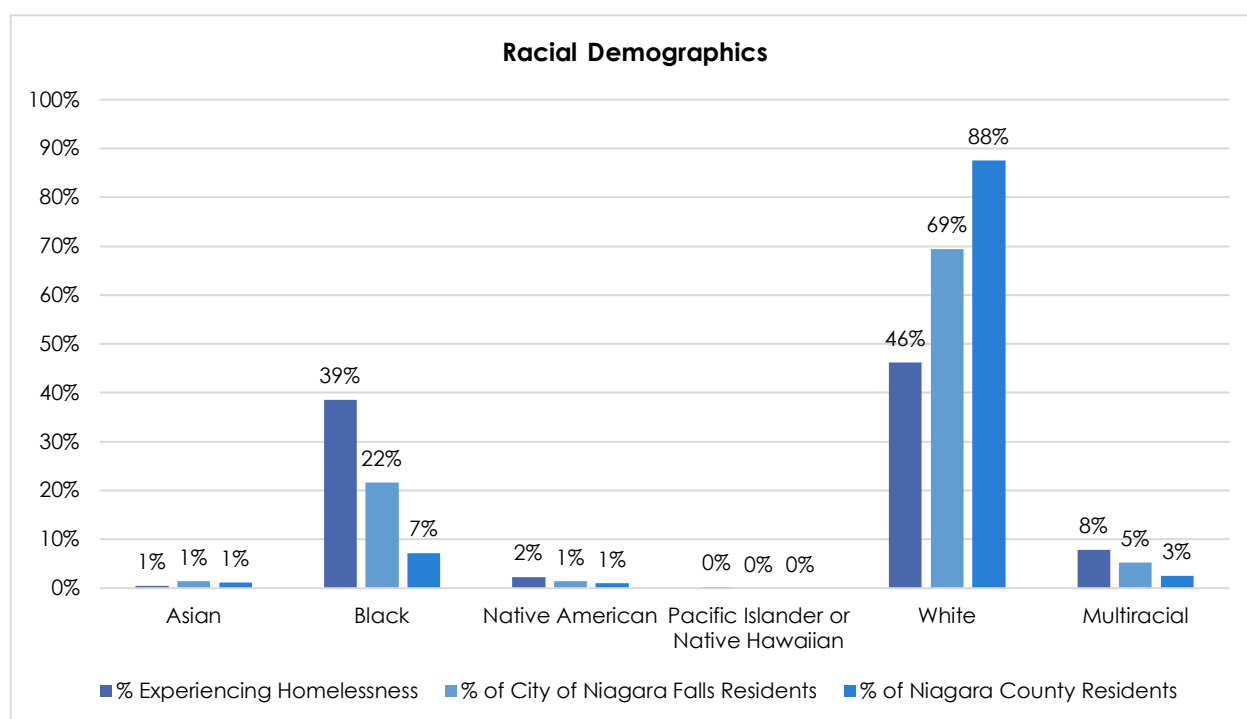


Figure 2: Percent of population in each racial category

Ethnicity	% of People Experiencing Homelessness	% of All City of Niagara Falls Residents	% of All Niagara County Residents
Hispanic or Latino	9.5%	4.7%	2.9%
Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino	90.5%	95.3%	97.1%

Table 5: Ethnicity demographics of people experiencing homelessness who reported their ethnicity, residents of the city of Niagara Falls, and residents of Niagara 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, Household Type, and Homelessness

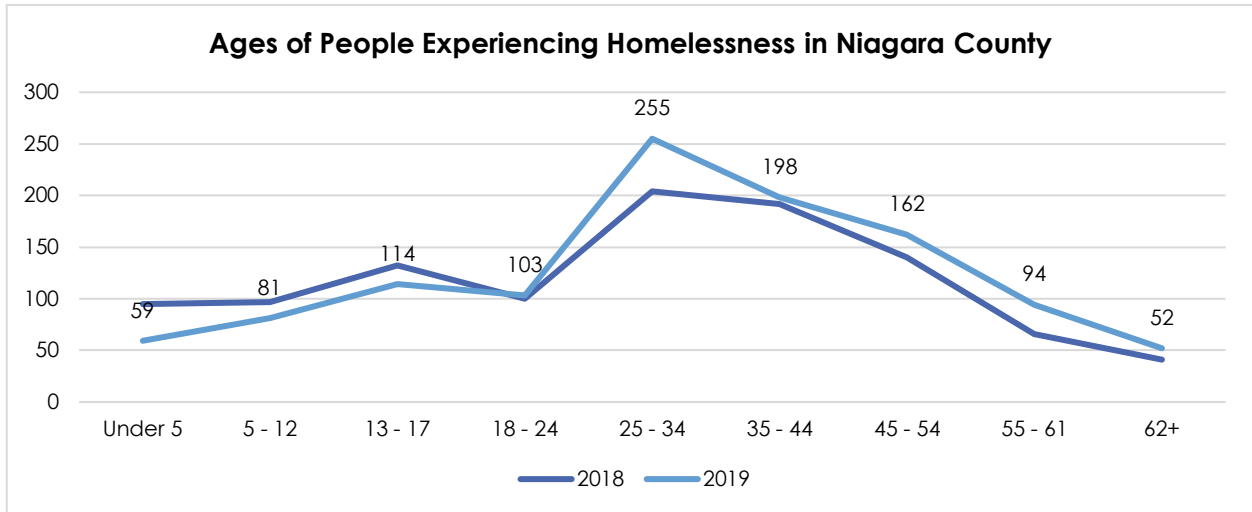


Figure 3: Age distribution of people experiencing homelessness 2018-2019

	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	254	59	81	114	864	103	255	198	162	94	52
Percent	22.7%	5.3%	7.2%	10.2%	77.3%	9.2%	22.8%	17.7%	14.5%	8.4%	4.7%

Table 6: Total adults/children experiencing homelessness who provided a date of birth (1118 clients)

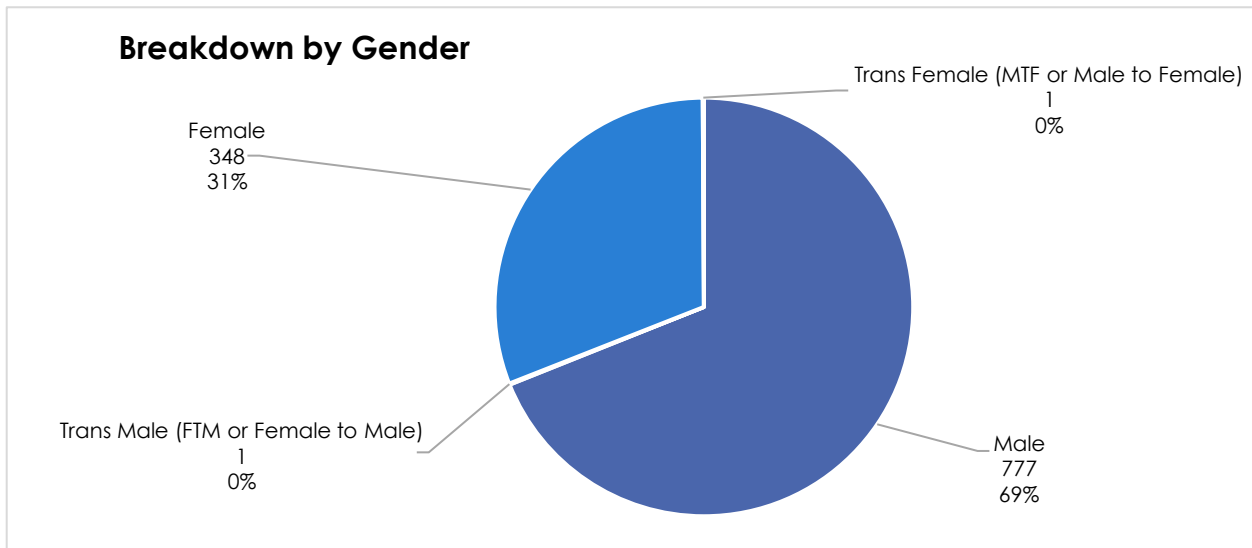


Figure 4: Gender distribution of all people experiencing homelessness who reported their gender (1127 clients)

Gender	Client Count	Percent
Male	777	68.94%
Female	348	30.88%
Trans Male (FTM or Female to Male)	1	0.09%
Trans Female (MTF or Male to Female)	1	0.09%

Table 7: Gender of those experiencing homelessness who reported their gender (1127 clients)

Disability Data

Just over a third (38.5%) of the 1,015 clients who provided their disability status report having at least one disability. When only adults (ages 18+) are considered, this rate increases to 49.3%. 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 Niagara Falls and general Niagara county (16.1%, 13.9% respectively) compared to the rates of people with disability experiencing homelessness in Niagara county seen here.³

Disability Type	Count of Clients	% of All Clients w 1+ Disability	% of All Clients
Alcohol Abuse	65	16.62%	5.77%
Chronic Health Condition	87	22.25%	7.72%
Developmental	40	10.23%	3.55%
Drug Abuse	91	23.27%	8.07%
Dual Diagnosis	1	0.26%	0.09%
HIV/AIDS	4	1.02%	0.35%
Mental Health Problem	216	55.24%	19.17%
Physical	72	18.41%	6.39%
Physical/Medical	43	11.00%	3.82%
Vision Impaired	1	0.26%	0.09%

Table 8: Breakdown of the types of disabilities experienced by both clients with disabilities (391) and all clients (1127)

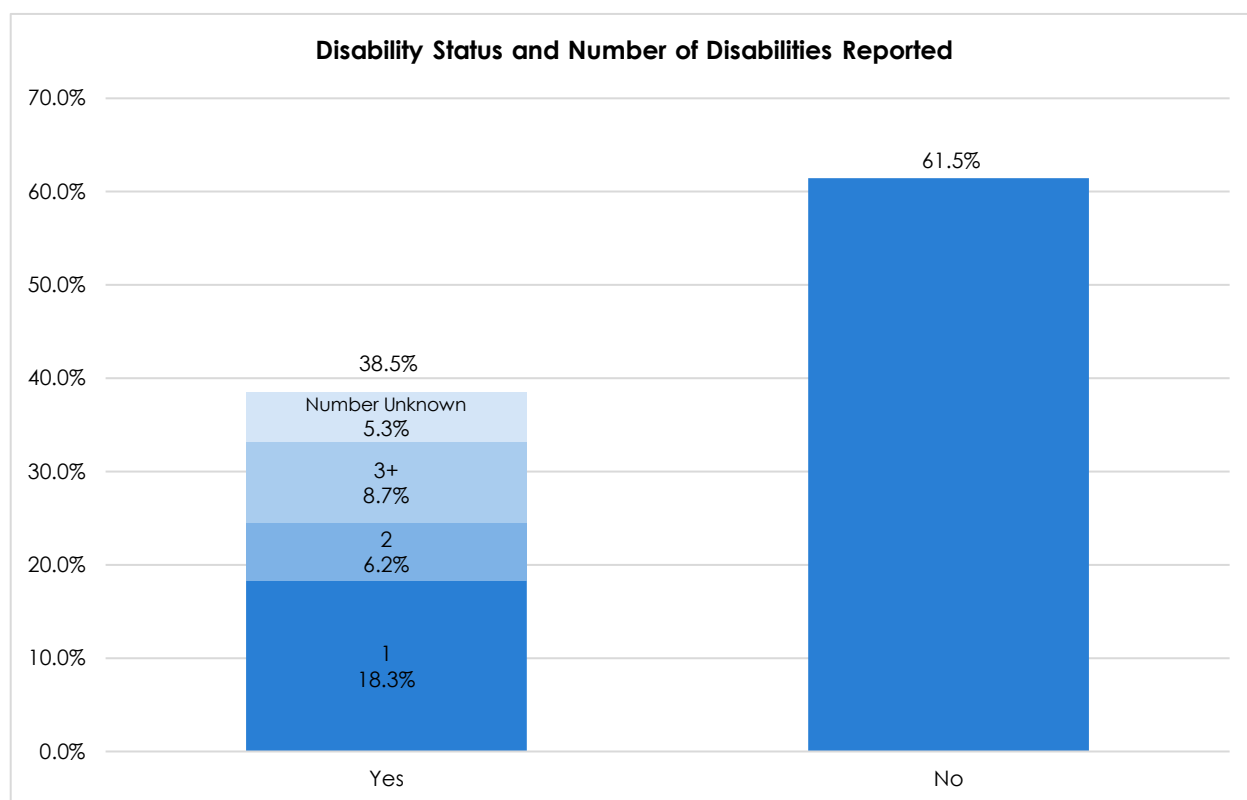


Figure 5: The disability status of those experiencing homelessness who reported their disability status (1015 clients); if reporting yes to having a disability, the number of disabilities is indicated

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
Release from Institution	191	36.2%
Household Disputes (not DV)	49	9.3%
Eviction by primary tenant	42	8.0%
Loss of Job/Income (includes public benefits)	39	7.4%
Relocation from out of the NY-508 CoC Area	35	6.6%
Court eviction by landlord	31	5.9%
Mental Health	26	4.9%
Substance Abuse	26	4.9%
Problems with building	19	3.6%
Ask to leave by landlord	17	3.2%

Table 9: The top ten reasons cited for homelessness by heads of households, not including those who did not provide a response (528 clients)

Residence Prior to Project Entry	Client Count	Percent
Staying or living in a family member's room, apartment or house	147	19.4%
Jail, prison or juvenile detention facility	120	15.8%
Staying or living in a friend's room, apartment or house	89	11.7%
Rental by client, no ongoing housing subsidy	87	11.5%
Emergency shelter, hotel/motel paid w/ ES voucher, or RHY Host Home shelter	79	10.4%
Place not meant for habitation	72	9.5%
Hospital or other residential non-psychiatric medical facility	36	4.7%
Hotel or motel paid for without emergency shelter voucher	22	2.9%
Transitional housing for homeless persons (including homeless youth)	22	2.9%
Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center	21	2.8%

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 (759 clients)

Exit Destinations	Count	%
Permanent	222	25.3%
Owned by client, no ongoing housing subsidy	1	0.1%
Owned by client, with ongoing housing subsidy	1	0.1%
Permanent housing (other than RRH) for formerly homeless persons	1	0.1%
Rental by client, no ongoing housing subsidy	128	14.6%
Rental by client, with other ongoing housing subsidy	8	0.9%
Rental by client, with RRH or equivalent subsidy	4	0.5%
Staying or living with family, permanent tenure	64	7.3%
Staying or living with friends, permanent tenure	15	1.7%
Temporary	129	14.7%
Emergency shelter, hotel/motel paid for w/ ES voucher, or RHY Host Home shelter	6	0.7%
Hotel or motel paid for without emergency shelter voucher	1	0.1%
Residential project or halfway house with no homeless criteria	3	0.3%
Safe Haven	1	0.1%
Staying or living with family, temporary tenure (e.g., room, apartment or house)	32	3.6%
Staying or living with friends, temporary tenure (e.g., room apartment or house)	44	5.0%
Transitional housing for homeless persons (including homeless youth)	42	4.8%
Institution	61	6.9%
Foster care home or foster care group home	8	0.9%
Hospital or other residential non-psychiatric medical facility	9	1.0%
Jail, prison or juvenile detention facility	21	2.4%
Long-term care facility or nursing home	1	0.1%
Psychiatric hospital or other psychiatric facility	16	1.8%
Substance abuse treatment facility or detox center	5	0.6%
Unstable	1	0.1%
Place not meant for habitation	1	0.1%
No Data Available	466	53.0%
Client doesn't know	1	0.1%
Client refused	9	1.0%
Data not collected	197	22.4%
No exit interview completed	161	18.3%
Other	98	11.1%
Grand Total	879	

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
14301	36.2%
14305	17.2%
14304	10.4%
14303	9.7%
14094	9.0%

Table 12: Top five zip codes of the last permanent address provided by heads of households (279 clients)

Percent of Income Towards Rent	City of Niagara Falls	Niagara County - All	Niagara County Excluding Niagara Falls
Less than 15.0 percent	14.6%	16.3%	17.2%
15.0 to 19.9 percent	10.1%	14.1%	16.3%
20.0 to 24.9 percent	9.1%	10.3%	10.9%
25.0 to 29.9 percent	10.6%	12.7%	13.8%
30.0 to 34.9 percent	7.3%	7.6%	7.8%
35.0 percent or more	48.2%	39.1%	33.9%

Table 13: Percent of people paying a certain percent of their income on their housing in the city of Niagara Falls, Niagara county, and Niagara county excluding the city of Niagara Falls⁴

The concentration of people experiencing homelessness in the city of Niagara Falls is not entirely surprising when you see that over half of renters (55.5%) pay more of their income towards rent than is considered affordable (30%). Efforts to ensure that residents of the city of Niagara Falls 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.

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

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

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.