



Welcome to our community newsletter!

We are very excited to showcase some of the incredible work and resources within and beyond our Continuum of Care.

Please note that by featuring an organization or individual in our newsletter, the Homeless Alliance does not endorse any religious or political beliefs/stances of these individuals or organizations.

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HOMELESS ALLIANCE OF WNY IMPORTANT UPDATES



The July HAWNY Meeting is cancelled



HAWNY is hosting an "Industry Night" Happy Hour on Thursday, July 10th (Details on Page 9)



HAWNY is honoring those who have worked in homelessness and housing for 20+ years at our annual luncheon! Click here to nominate a colleague!

NEW BLOGPOST

[Check out our latest blog posts for brand new content!](#)

[Why Permanent Supportive Housing Matters - More Now Than Ever](#)

[Orleans County Housing Summit](#)

[Coming Together to Build a Better Future: Reflections by Ashley Matrassi, CoC Director](#)

Nancy Mongiovi: “Been There, Done That, Got The T-Shirt” ✓



Nancy Mongiovi has decided to retire after a storied career in the business of helping others. Over the course of her career, Nancy worked in the areas of retail, mental health, and homeless services. She spent the greater part of the last two decades working for Restoration Society, Inc. From running an overnight shelter, completing assessments with clients, managing data, and handling client mail, Nancy has done it all.

Nancy has spent much of her time advocating for initiatives that are near and dear to her heart. Nancy was heavily involved in the advocacy that fueled the passage of Timothy's Law in New York State (2006). The law requires health plans to provide coverage for mental illness at least equal to that provided for other health conditions.

Nancy's life experiences have made her uniquely qualified to connect with people who are experiencing homelessness. She utilizes her lived experience to engage with clients in an authentic and straight forward manner. Nancy tells clients about her experiences with homelessness, domestic violence (Survivor), mental illness, and her addiction to cigarettes. Nancy is famous for telling clients, “been there, done that, got the T-shirt.”

Nancy states, “The biggest thing I learned is that you can't be judgmental. You have to accept people where they are at. You can't make a person do something. But you can be the support that person needs to take the next step...and that's the biggest thing I've tried to be.”

Most recently, Nancy has worked as a Resource Navigator at the Restoration Society. Nancy says, “I won't do an intake unless I can give a person an hour or longer to have a conversation.” Her goal is to not let anyone leave without giving them a referral, phone number, or something valuable they can gain from the conversation.

Over the years, clients have revisited Nancy to share success stories and life updates. Many clients have given artwork to Nancy as a gift for the time she spent with them. Nancy maintains a file of client artwork. She enjoys looking at the artwork. She marvels at the skill and creativity of the artists.

We want to congratulate Nancy on her retirement and wish her luck in her next chapter! Nancy has shared plans to spend her retirement caring for family members and working with her son to turn her property into a food forest.

BESTSELF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH: SAFE SPACE DROP-IN CENTER REOPENS

Best Self Safe Space has relocated and reopened. The new site is at 430 Niagara Street in Buffalo.

Safe Space offers a place for transitional-aged youth (18-24 years) to stay between the hours of 11pm and 7am. Safe Space is now open Monday-Friday. However, Best Self Program Director, Marek Parker, says, “The goal is for Safe Space to return to a 7 day offering in the future.”

Safe Space is equipped with two lounge areas, one for male guests and one for female guests. Guests also have access to a more private “sensory room.”

Safe Space is operated by David Elliott, the TAY (Transitional Aged Youth) Team Lead at Best Self. David is very passionate about serving youth clients in this capacity. David oversees safe space operations, including cooking meals, and maintaining a safe and inclusive environment.

David ensures that clients have access to a hot meal in the evening, breakfast in the morning, and a to-go bag of food for the day. Safe Space also provides clients with a bus pass for the following day. David offers to link clients to counseling and peer services on a voluntary basis.



Lounge areas offer guests a chance to relax and socialize with peers. Guests have access to TV, video games, comfortable chairs, and blankets.



Guests have access to a shower and staff who can provide laundry services.



The kitchen and dining area offers guests a space to enjoy a meal or snack



HOUSING & CARE RESOURCES FOR OLDER ADULTS



Aging in Place



Living safely in one's own home and community with support from community-based services such as **home health care, meal delivery, and transportation.**

Independent Living Communities



Provide a maintenance-free lifestyle for older adults who can manage daily tasks independently.

Because independent living is a housing choice, not a medical necessity, insurance does not cover it and most residents pay privately. Rent typically includes a private apartment, meals, housing, and activities.

Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs)



Offer a continuum of care as residents' needs evolve, ranging from independent living to skilled nursing care.

- Entrance costs typically match the area's average home price
- Monthly fees starting around \$2,000

Assisted Living Facilities (ALFs) & Memory Care



A residential setting for individuals who need assistance with some activities of daily living (ADLs), such as bathing or dressing, but do not require the level of care providing in skilled nursing homes.

- Residents live in private apartments or rooms with access to meals, housekeeping and medication management
- National average cost is \$4,500 / month
- Most residents pay privately (limited Medicaid spots)

Memory care provides specialized care and a safe environment for people with dementia.

Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNF) & Nursing Homes



Highest level of care in a residential setting for older adults needing short or long-term care, including medical attention or assistance with most or all ADLs.

- Nursing homes provide skilled nursing care, in addition to rehabilitation and personal care
- Medicare and private insurance may cover up to 100 days of care in a SNF if specific eligibility requirements are met
- **Medicaid is the primary payer of nursing home care for older adults**

Erie County NY Connects

(716) 858-8526

nyconnects@erie.gov

[Erie County NY Connects](https://www.erieconnects.org/)



Local No Wrong Door (NWD) system that provides one-stop access to free information and help navigating the Long-term Care system.

NY Connects helps anyone seeking information on long-term support services, including caregivers, professionals, and service providers.

Improving Access to SSI/SSDI: WHAT IS SOAR?

SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR)

is a model designed to increase access to Social Security Administration (SSA) benefits for individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

SSA Disability Benefits:

- **Supplemental Security Income (SSI):** Needs-based benefit program for adults or children who are blind, disabled, or 65 and older with limited income and resources. Eligibility is not based on work history.
- **Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI):** Benefit program for adults who are disabled or blind and have qualifying work history.



- In New York State, all **SSI** recipients are eligible to receive **Medicaid**.
- **SSDI** recipients are eligible for **Medicare** after a two-year waiting period, starting the month they become eligible for benefits.

Why SOAR?

Research shows that access to income supports like SSI and SSDI improves housing stability, but individuals experiencing homelessness often face unique barriers to accessing these benefits, including a **lack of permanent address, complex application process and requirements**, and **obtaining medical records**.

National SOAR Outcomes:



Average decision time: **177 days** (compared to 6-8 months for standard applications)



Approval rate: **65% on initial applications** (compared to 31% nationally)

SOAR-Training:

SOAR-trained caseworkers complete a free, online course to learn how to gather documentation and submit a complete and thorough SSI/SSDI application to SSA.

- **Approx. 20 hours**
- **Self-paced** (recommended to complete within 30 days)
- **20 CEUs** from the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) upon completion

SOAR Caseworker Responsibilities:

After completing the training, SOAR caseworkers are expected to:

- Assist individuals with qualifying disabilities who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- **Submit complete SSI/SSDI applications using the SOAR model**
- Track applications and outcomes using the SOAR Online Application (OAT) system.

Time Commitment:

- **Each application typically takes 20-40 hours to complete**, from initial engagement with an individual to receiving a decision
- **Applications are generally completed over the course of 60-90 days**, depending on the level of engagement needed

Before starting the online course, contact the SOAR TA Center Liaison to discuss the process.

SOAR NY TA Center Liaison

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SOAR Local Leads

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WNY IS AWARDED \$23.7 MILLION IN COC FUNDING - BUT WE'RE AT !! RISK! !!

The Homeless Alliance is beyond proud to announce that our CoC, NY-508, was awarded \$23.7 million for homelessness and housing services. This is more than a \$4 million increase from last year!

This award highlights the exponential increase in need across our community. HUD has allocated more funds to reflect market-rate costs for housing, increased funding for homeless workforce salaries for the first time in years, and awarded six new projects to help end homelessness. When announced, we were elated at the hard work and dedication of our community paying off to bring more critical resources to our community.

But now, all of this progress is at risk.

President Trump released his FY26 federal budget proposal. Not only does this include over \$500 million in cuts to HUD funded housing resources for low-income people, people with disabilities, and the elderly, it also proposes to consolidate Continuum of Care programs into Emergency Solutions Grants, **effectively eliminating the Continuum of Care program and all Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) programs.**

PSH is **absolutely critical** to assisting people and families with disabilities to maintain housing. For example, someone that receives \$967 (the maximum) a month in Supplemental Security Income benefits because they can't work due to a medically verified disability is expected to use that \$967 for their housing, food, cleaning products, clothes, etc. The average 1-bedroom rental in Buffalo cost \$992 in 2024. As you can see, **people with disabilities cannot afford market rate housing based on their benefits alone.**

How can you help? Subscribe to our email list to get advocacy updates and actions to tell Congress how vital these programs are! **Click here** to navigate to our homepage, scroll to the very bottom, and input your email to subscribe.



Homeless Management Information System Knowledge Base

Looking for help with HMIS?



The HMIS “Knowledge Base” has everything that you need to know in one place!



The Knowledge Base was created for your convenience and ease! It is available 24/7 on our website.



The knowledge base is broken into six easy to navigate sections including, **Getting Started, Project Workflows, Accessing HMIS and Client Information, Completing Client Intake, Updating Client Records, and Data Quality and Reporting.**



HMIS Learning Management System

GET HMIS CERTIFIED

Use our self-paced courses to master the HMIS workflow for your HMIS project types and get a sharable certificate of completion. Each course contains targeted resources, by project type, to help you manage your organization's HMIS data quality.



HMIS WNY Certification Pathways

Each of these programs has been specially designed to support homeless services professionals working in the Western New York's (NY-508) HMIS.



Emergency Shelter (ES)



Rapid Re-housing (RRH)



Street Outreach (SO)



Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)

Spotlight Resources

WORKFORCE BUFFALO

Workforce Buffalo is now open at 77 Broadway in the City of Buffalo.

The state-of-the-art facility offers modern career services, job training, and upskilling resources.

The center hopes to meet the needs of job seekers, employers, and employees in the area.

Individuals can apply for support over the phone, online, or in person.

LEARN MORE
OR REGISTER **CONTACT US**
**WORKFORCE BUFFALO
DOWNTOWN CAREER CENTER**
77 BROADWAY ST. BUFFALO, NY 14203
716.856.5627

Buffalo Workforce Downtown Career Center has the Aim Higher Program for youth ages 16-24.

The program provides support in college/trade school transition, entrepreneurial skill building, leadership development, financial management, employment, mentoring, training, tutoring, and obtaining a GED.



SCAN
HERE!



Harvest House Eviction Prevention

This program aims to assist individuals who have experienced brief circumstances that caused them to fall behind on rent.

Applicants must have an eviction notice and meet other eligibility criteria to qualify

To see if you qualify call 716-855-0654 ext. 210 or 214 to complete a screening questionnaire



"UB Heals" is a street outreach initiative of the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences at the University at Buffalo

The student run organization is an active player in serving homeless and underserved individuals.

Every Tuesday and Thursday at 7pm UB Heals members provide basic medical services at the NFTA Bus Station. In addition, members hand out clothing and personal care items.

UB Heals has also provided medical care and information at local shelters, including the Code Blue shelter.

The organization also engages in street outreach and community events.



YOUTH DROP-IN DAYS



Independent Living of the Genesee Region is offering anyone between the ages of 18-24 a calm space to "drop in."

The space will be open on Thursdays between 3-6pm and will feature a living room area to relax, play games, or create art with a Youth Specialist.

The space is located at 319 W. Main St in Batavia, NY. Enter through the side door with the green awning.

For more information call 585-815-8501 ext. 400.



Independent Living
of the **Genesee Region**

Updates

Upcoming CoC Events



Intentional Crisis Response
July 16th 10am-1pm | Zoom
[Register here](#)



**Motivational Interviewing:
The Essentials Workshop**
August 7th & 8th, 2025
9am-4pm | In Person
[Details and Registration Here](#)



HAWNY MEETING
August 20th | 3 PM | Zoom
[Meeting Link](#)



Put a face to the name of that colleague you're always emailing and meet others working to serve the most vulnerable in our community

While prizes are exclusive to industry staff, the event is open to the public! For every drink sold, \$1 is raised for the Homeless Alliance

THANKS FOR READING

CONTACT

Homeless Alliance of WNY
625 Delaware Ave, Suite #410
Buffalo, NY 14202
716-853-1101
wnyhomeless.org



**SUBMIT FEEDBACK
HERE**



FACEBOOK



X (TWITTER)



LINKEDIN



THE ANNUAL HARVEST FESTIVAL



**Hosted by Highmark and
Harvest House of Buffalo**



August 9th @ 12-3pm



175 Jefferson Ave.



The event will feature free food, live music, and health and wellness tips.