

WISCONSIN COALITION AGAINST HOMELESSNESS

HOMELESSNESS IN WISCONSIN

The Wisconsin Coalition Against Homelessness (WCAH) estimates that on any given day there are 20,000 Wisconsinites that are homeless and stunningly, half are children, ranging in age from infants to those in their teens. In 2016, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), which collects data on the number of homeless children in Wisconsin schools, recorded 18,497 incidents of homeless among students in the education system. (For information by school district go to <https://dpi.wi.gov/homeless/data>)

In addition, the DPI indicates that from 2003-2015 the number of homeless children in Wisconsin rose a whopping 241%. Yet, while homelessness in Wisconsin is a pervasive problem, state government has, for over 25 years, neglected to offer any additional support to programs to address this issue.

Above and beyond the needs of our children, thousands of single adults are homeless, many due to challenges that involve mental health and addiction issues. According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Wisconsin ranks fifth nationally in the increase of homeless individuals from 2007-15; an increase of 24.5%.

The end result is that Wisconsin far behind our Midwest neighbors in terms of state effort with annual spending in Wisconsin at \$3,250,000, Illinois at 543,400,000, Michigan at \$16,650,000 and Minnesota at \$44,000,000.

GOVERNOR WALKER'S HOMELESS INITIATIVE

For the first time in 25 years a Wisconsin Governor has included in his proposed budget, new resources to combat homelessness in Wisconsin. WCAH applauds this effort and is asking you to support the Governor's initiative which includes:

- \$ 1,000,000 (TANF) over the biennium to provide intensive case management services to help move families out of homeless shelters by making them housing and job ready.
- Authorize WHEDA to prioritize persons who are chronically homeless for Section 8 vouchers.
- \$1,300,000 over the biennium to expand the Opening Avenues to Re-entry Success (OARS) which assists persons leaving state prisons to achieve housing and employment stability.
- \$150,000 for a pilot program to assist a local community to provide homeless individuals with work experience. A local match would be required.
- Create a homeless services coordinator in the Dept. of Health who would prepare and implement a federal waiver which would allow cities, counties, and providers to use Medicaid funds to provide for intensive case management to move people from homelessness to housing. Sixteen other states have already been granted this waiver.

MORE RESOURCES ARE NEEDED!

Again, we applaud the Governor for including a homeless initiative in his budget proposal and we strongly urge you to support this effort. We also encourage the legislature, within its budget deliberations, to consider the following additional recommendations/amendments to the Governor's budget:

- The creation of a new Interagency Council on Homelessness, chaired by the Governor or Lt. Governor with membership made up of Secretaries from every State Department that touches the lives of homeless individuals, children and families. To ensure that there is the necessary focus on this issue, we are advocating that a position be created within the Governor's office to staff the task force. The task force would be charged with creating a plan to end homelessness in Wisconsin as well as monitoring progress towards achieving that goal.
- Create funding for a homeless prevention program (possibly utilizing TANIF funds) to assist persons and families who have had a short interruption in income and have fallen behind in rent to avoid homelessness by the provision of funds to cure an eviction proceeding.
- Task WHEDA with developing new resources to develop permanent supportive housing throughout the state, including a position to research the possibility of using Social Impact Bonding to help finance such development.

Thank you for your time, attention and commitment to this important issue!

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOMELESSNESS IN
WISCONSIN PLEASE VISIT OUR WEB SITE AT
WCAHWI.ORG
OR CONTACT Joe Volk at joseph.volk@gmail.com**