

**Points North Housing Coalition  
Strategic Plan**

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Purpose of the Strategic Plan.....	4
Description of the Points North Housing Coalition .....	4
PNHC Strategic Planning Process .....	5
PNHC Vision.....	6
Overview: Homelessness in the Points North Community .....	7
Emergency Housing.....	8
Re-Entry from Jails/Prisons.....	9
Affordable Housing .....	9
Implementation of the Plan.....	10
Workplan .....	11
Emergency Housing.....	11
ReEntry from Jails/Prisons.....	14
Affordable Housing .....	18
Appendix I: Definition of Important Terms.....	22
Appendix II: PNHC Strategic Planning Committee Members.....	27
Appendix III: Community Forum Summaries.....	28
Appendix IV: PNHC Strategic Plan – Focused and Local Implementation of the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness,.....	31
<i>Home Together</i> .....	31

## Executive Summary

The Points North Housing Coalition (PNHC) is a group of providers and community stakeholders dedicated to preventing, reducing and combatting homelessness by ensuring an effective system of care and services is in place for Lewis, Jefferson, and St. Lawrence Counties in New York State. PNHC is the Continuum of Care (CoC) for the tri-county area, a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) designated local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals. In order to collectively address homelessness in the most efficient and effective ways, PNHC embarked on a strategic planning process between 2017 and 2018. The resulting Strategic Plan will guide the work of the PNHC over the next three years (2019 – 2021).

In order to create the Strategic Plan, PNHC created a Strategic Planning Committee that worked to implement a community-based and data-informed process. The Strategic Planning Committee hosted forums with a variety of local service providers and community stakeholders to determine the most pressing local homelessness needs, and how PNHC can best move forward to address those needs. The Strategic Planning Committee analyzed data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), which captures information on those who are homeless and access programs throughout the PNHC catchment area.

As a result of this process, PNHC decided to focus on the following key areas to address homelessness in the local community:

1. Increase the amount of quality and accessible emergency housing with support services.
2. Decrease discharges to homelessness for those exiting the criminal justice system.
3. Increase access to permanent and affordable housing.

The PNHC Strategic Plan will largely be carried out by PNHC committees and members, with an effort to inclusively engage community partners and stakeholders. By implementing specific action items related to each of these goals, PNHC feels it will make significant strides towards realizing its vision of a community that has ended homelessness by providing immediate access to emergency, transitional, or permanent housing, along with a system of support, to meet all individuals' housing needs in the tri-county area.

## Purpose of the Strategic Plan

The purpose of the PNHC Strategic Plan is to guide the work of Points North Housing Coalition (PNHC) to address homelessness in the most efficient and effective ways over the next three years (2019 – 2021). The plan is specific, yet flexible, and will be a living and breathing action plan, adjusted as needs in the community change.

In addition, PNHC pursued strategic planning for the following reasons:

- To ensure the diverse group of independent organizations who make up the Continuum of Care (CoC) are on the same page about what CoC goals they are working towards.
- The plan will hold Membership, Committees and agencies accountable. It will have in writing who agreed to do what.
- HUD recommends that CoCs have a local planning document to guide their work.
- The Strategic Plan can be used to write grant applications and promote the work of the CoC to funders and outside stakeholders.
- The process of developing the Strategic Plan can engage new stakeholders to participate in the CoC, and existing stakeholders to participate in new ways.

## Description of the Points North Housing Coalition

The Points North Housing Coalition (PNHC) is the Continuum of Care (CoC) for Lewis, Jefferson, and St. Lawrence Counties in New York State, a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) designated local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals. PNHC is dedicated to preventing, reducing and combatting homelessness by ensuring an effective system of care and services is in place in the tri-county region. PNHC has an open membership policy and actively welcomes and recruits stakeholders who seek to collaboratively address homelessness. PNHC members include emergency shelters and housing providers, municipal representatives, systems of care stakeholders, community members, and persons who are or who have been homeless. PNHC hosts four full membership meetings a year.

PNHC operates with a Board of Directors and is supported by a lead planning agency (CARES of NY, Inc.). In order to carry out the PNHC purpose to prevent, reduce and combat homelessness, six committees currently operate:

1. **Point-In-Time Committee:** This committee is responsible for managing and submitting to HUD the Point-In-Time (PIT) Count. The PIT Count occurs annually in January and consists of assessing the number of persons who are homeless in shelter, in Transitional Housing, and in places not meant for human habitation. This data is submitted to HUD and informs PNHC's planning priorities.
2. **Discharge Planning Committee:** This committee focuses on creating a plan to facilitate communication between systems of care to streamline discharge protocol and avoid discharging clients into homelessness. Specific systems the Discharge Planning Committee works with include: corrections, Foster Care, and mental health/healthcare.

3. **Coordinated Entry Committee:** This committee is responsible for implementing and monitoring the coordinated entry system. This system prioritizes the most vulnerable persons in need of housing, and connects them with the most appropriate housing to meet their needs.
4. **Operations Committee:** This committee monitors and evaluates program performance of CoC-funded agencies, encourages participation among members in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and monitors to ensure quality data, and manages the annual local CoC application process.
5. **Governance Committee:** This committee conducts an annual review of and recommends, as needed, edits to the PNHC bylaws and policies to ensure compliance with HUD requirements.
6. **Strategic Planning Committee:** This committee is responsible for reviewing, preparing, and formulating the PNHC Strategic Plan. In order to create a meaningful and up-to-date Plan, the Committee regularly conducts outreach to community stakeholders and analyzes data related to community needs and assets. The Committee reports to the Board on this progress.

As part of this plan, PNHC is planning to create one new committee and appoint representatives to carry out some of the work noted in the plan:

1. **Systems Committee:** This committee will subsume the Discharge Planning Committee as well as address housing needs in the community. Specifically, this committee will focus on creating a plan to facilitate communication between systems of care to streamline discharge protocol and avoid discharging clients into homelessness. Specific systems the committee works with include: corrections, Foster Care, and mental health/healthcare. In addition, the committee will identify emergency and permanent homeless housing needs in the community, assess best practices in addressing these needs, and push forward action items to increase the amount of and access to appropriate emergency and permanent housing for persons who are homeless.
2. **Transportation Representatives:** One representative from each county will work with transit partners through the transportation coalitions to identify ways to address transportation needs among persons who are homeless or previously homeless to ensure access to housing, support services, and education and employment opportunities.

## PNHC Strategic Planning Process

PNHC started its strategic planning process in March 2017, when the Strategic Planning Committee was formed out of PNHC members. The Committee began by assessing strategic plans developed by other CoCs and creating a plan format. Based on Committee members' experiences addressing homelessness in the community, the Committee discussed and selected three overarching topics to focus on in the plan:

1. Increasing the amount of quality and accessible emergency housing with support services.

2. Decreasing discharges to homelessness for those exiting the criminal justice system.
3. Increasing access to permanent and affordable housing.

From May to June 2017, Strategic Planning Committee members met with the Community Services Boards for each county. Community Services Boards are county-based committees that work to plan services for those with mental illness, substance use disorders, and developmental disabilities. The Boards consist of service providers, interested community members, family of those with disabling conditions, and consumers. During these meetings, members from the Strategic Planning Committee presented the three overarching topic areas the CoC will focus on to address homelessness, and asked for feedback regarding needs, systems currently working to address those needs, and what we as a community can do to better address needs in the future.

The Strategic Planning Committee hosted a forum during the June 2017 CoC Membership Meeting to gather additional information and ideas from PNHC members. During this forum, the Strategic Planning Committee presented the three overarching topics, and confirmed these as the three most pressing areas of need in addressing homelessness. CoC Members then moved through three stations, discussing one of the overarching topics at each. Strategic Planning Committee members at each station led the group in a discussion about needs, systems currently working to address those needs, and what we as a community and a CoC can do to better address needs in the future.

Following the meetings with the Community Services Boards and CoC Membership, the Strategic Planning Committee broke-up into workgroups. Each workgroup focused on one of the three overarching topics. The workgroups used the information provided by the Community Services Boards and CoC Membership, as well as their own experience, to develop goals, strategies, and action items to best address the overarching need. The workgroups reported back to the Strategic Planning Committee with their recommendations. The Strategic Planning Committee finished the Workplan by making edits to the goals, strategies, and action items, and adding responsible parties and proposed timeframes for completing each action item. The Strategic Planning Committee finished the draft Strategic Plan in October 2018. The Strategic Plan was presented to the CoC Board and Membership in November and December of 2018, consecutively, and adopted by Membership on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

## PNHC Vision

The mission of Points North Housing Coalition states the CoC is dedicated to preventing, reducing and combating homelessness by ensuring that an effective system of care and services is in place for Lewis, Jefferson, and St. Lawrence Counties. The vision of the CoC is a community that has ended homelessness in the tri-county area by providing immediate access to emergency housing, quick transitions to transitional or permanent housing, and connection to a system of necessary support to maintain stable housing.

PNHC will know the community has ended homelessness once the community reaches “functional zero.” PNHC defines functional zero in accordance with the national strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness, *Home Together*. As such, PNHC will know it has ended homelessness when the community has a comprehensive response in place that ensures homelessness is prevented whenever possible, or if it can’t be prevented, it is a rare, brief, and non-recurring experience. Specifically, the community will have the capacity to:

- Quickly identify and engage people at risk of and experiencing homelessness.
- Intervene to prevent the loss of housing and divert people from entering the homelessness services system.
- When homelessness does occur, provide immediate access to shelter and crisis services, without barriers to entry, while permanent stable housing and appropriate supports are being secured, and quickly connect people to housing assistance and services—tailored to their unique needs and strengths—to help them achieve and maintain stable housing.

## Overview: Homelessness in the Points North Community

### Overarching Picture of Homelessness

In 2017 507 persons were in emergency housing in Lewis, Jefferson, and St. Lawrence Counties,<sup>1</sup>. The average length of time homeless in emergency housing was 16 days<sup>2</sup>. Demonstrating the greatest need, over 90 percent of homeless households captured in HMIS comprised households of single adults and childless couples<sup>3</sup>. Of the 650 total sheltered persons in emergency and transitional housing in 2017, 589 were homeless for the first time. The community had a 72% rate of successful exits from emergency housing, transitional housing, and rapid rehousing to permanent housing destinations<sup>4</sup>. Additionally, after one year of placement in permanent housing in 2015, 11% of people returned to homelessness<sup>5</sup>.

According to the 2018 Housing Inventory Chart (HIC), the community currently has 62 transitional housing beds, 184 rapid rehousing beds, and 234 permanent supportive housing beds<sup>6</sup>. 96 percent of the permanent supportive housing beds are occupied<sup>7</sup>. Of those who accessed permanent housing in 2017, 95 percent retained housing or successfully moved to another permanent housing destination upon discharge<sup>8</sup>. Agencies that currently provide permanent housing dedicated to homeless persons include:

- Central NY Veteran’s Outreach
- Jefferson County Department of Social Services

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<sup>1</sup> Calendar Year 2017 Lewis, Jefferson, and St. Lawrence Systems Performance Measures report, Measure #3: Number of Homeless Persons, Universe: Unduplicated Total sheltered homeless persons

<sup>2</sup> Calendar Year 2017 Lewis, Jefferson, and St. Lawrence Systems Performance Measures report, Measure #1: Length of Time Persons Remain Homeless, Persons in ES and SH

<sup>3</sup> Points North HMIS Interactive Dashboard, Quarters in Calendar year 2017, Households

<sup>4</sup> Calendar Year 2017 Lewis, Jefferson, and St. Lawrence Systems Performance Measures report, Measure #7: Successful Placement from Street Outreach and Successful Placement in or Retention of Permanent Housing, Metric 7b.1: change in exits to permanent housing destinations

<sup>5</sup> Calendar Year 2017 Lewis, Jefferson, and St. Lawrence Systems Performance Measures report, Measure #2: The Extent to which Persons who Exit Homelessness to Permanent Housing Destinations Return to Homelessness, Exit was from ES, Percentage of Returns in 1 Year

<sup>6</sup> 2018 Points North Housing Inventory Chart

<sup>7</sup> 2018 Points North Housing Inventory Chart

<sup>8</sup> Calendar Year 2017 Lewis, Jefferson, and St. Lawrence Systems Performance Measures report, Measure #7: Successful Placement from Street Outreach and Successful Placement in or Retention of Permanent Housing, Metric 7b.2: change in exit to or retention of permanent housing

- Lewis County Department of Social Services
- Maximizing Independent Living Choices (MILC)
- Neighbors of Watertown
- North Country Transitional Living Services
- St. Lawrence County Department of Social Services
- Snow Belt Housing
- Soldier On
- Watertown Urban Mission

In reviewing the picture of homelessness in the community and discussing Strategic Planning Committee members' experiences addressing homelessness, the Committee identified the three most pressing needs the CoC will focus on addressing over the next three years:

1. Increase quality and accessible emergency housing with support services.
2. Decrease discharges to homelessness for those exiting the criminal justice system.
3. Increase access to permanent and affordable housing.

These three needs were confirmed as the most pressing by the County Community Services Boards as well as CoC Membership.

### Emergency Housing

According to the 2018 Housing Inventory Chart, Lewis, Jefferson, and St. Lawrence Counties have 36 facility-based emergency shelter beds (8 through St. Lawrence County Renewal House, 20 at Victims Assistance Center of Jefferson county, and 8 at Safe Dwelling through Lewis County Opportunities), 30 of which are dedicated to victims of domestic violence<sup>9</sup>. The community provides an additional 24 emergency housing beds through funding from the Departments of Social Services<sup>10</sup>; persons housed through the support of Departments of Social Services are often housed in hotels/motels and/or housed in coordination with housing providers (i.e. Lewis County Opportunities operates Housing Apartment, a program where DSS pays for a client's rent and Lewis County Opportunities offers onsite support services). Please note, the number of persons housed through DSS funding fluctuates based on need. According to the 2018 Point-In-Time Count, in addition to those who were homeless in these 60 sheltered beds, there were also 6 persons who were homeless and unsheltered<sup>11</sup>.

The CoC believes that the current state of Emergency Housing is problematic for clients. As noted above, the only facility-based emergency shelter beds are dedicated to victims of domestic violence. Anyone else who is experiencing homelessness is housed in a hotel/motel through DSS funding until permanent housing can be secured. While the emergency housing beds funded through the Departments of Social Services are a vital resource for the community, the hotels/motels that accept emergency housing funding are sometimes remote and dilapidated, and do not offer onsite support services. This makes it challenging

<sup>9</sup> 2018 Points North Housing Inventory Chart, Emergency Shelter

<sup>10</sup> 2018 Points North Housing Inventory Chart, Emergency Shelter

<sup>11</sup> 2018 Points North Point-In-Time Count

for clients to access resources, services, and opportunities in order to successfully transition to permanent housing. In addition, these hotels/motels often house those who are homeless and are reentering the community from the criminal justice system, thus congregating those with significant needs, such as substance use disorders and mental illnesses, at times creating a revolving door between the incarceration and hotel/motel stays.

### Re-Entry from Jails/Prisons

According to HMIS, in 2017, 29%<sup>12</sup> of those who were homeless in Lewis, Jefferson, and St. Lawrence Counties came from jails/prisons, in response to the question, “where did you stay last night?” CoC members and system partners have confirmed the significant number of homeless clients who have been involved in the criminal justice system. The community also recognizes many clients have been involved in the criminal justice system due to a substance use disorder or mental illness. In fact, in 2017, 40 percent of those persons who were discharged to homelessness from jail/prison had a substance use disorder and 28 percent had a mental illness<sup>13</sup>. Currently, there is limited support services or housing dedicated to those exiting the criminal justice system.

The CoC believes that there is a need to partner with the criminal justice system to improve discharge planning and reduce discharges to homelessness. There is also a need for more housing that will accommodate those with a criminal justice background. The CoC must work around the fact that the homeless system of care cannot connect a person with HUD-funded homeless housing (transitional housing, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing) unless that person is verifiably homeless. For those reentering the community from the criminal justice system, HUD defines homeless as those who were homeless when entering the criminal justice system and who stayed in an institution less than 90 days. As such, many of those reentering the community from prison do not qualify for HUD-funded homeless housing unless they first reside in shelter. The CoC has identified this as a significant barrier in preventing homelessness from incarceration, and seeks to work with the criminal justice system to develop solutions.

### Affordable Housing

Community stakeholders reported during the strategic planning process that there is a dearth of affordable housing in the community. Quality affordable housing units, such as those managed by Public Housing Authorities, have extensive waitlists. For example, it has been reported the Section 8 waitlist is anywhere from two to eight years long across the three counties. Public Housing sites range with waitlists between three months and three years. Housing stock in the community, even if it is affordable, is sometimes dilapidated, infested with pests and bed bugs, and ridden with code violations. This presents a need for housing that is both affordable and quality.

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<sup>12</sup> According to HMIS in calendar year 2017 540 unduplicated persons were homeless, 157 of whom came from jails/prisons in response to the question “Where did you stay last night?” Please note: this number likely underreports the number of persons who are homeless and coming out of the criminal justice system, as persons may have stayed on the street, with a friend, or elsewhere for a number of night(s).

<sup>13</sup> According to HMIS in calendar year 2017 157 persons were homeless and came from jails/prisons in response to the question “Where did you stay last night?”. Of those 157 persons, 63 reported a substance use disorder and 44 reported a mental illness.

In terms of permanent housing dedicated to the homeless, Lewis, Jefferson, and St. Lawrence Counties currently have 520 permanent housing beds<sup>14</sup>. These units support those who have been homeless with subsidized housing and support services. According to the 2018 Housing Inventory Chart, 98 percent of these beds are utilized, while 40 people are in shelter and in need of housing. This shows a need for additional affordable and/or permanent housing units dedicated to the homeless.

Another issue identified by the community is the need to partner with landlords to encourage acceptance of subsidies. Currently, even if someone who is homeless or at-risk of homelessness has access to a subsidy (i.e. DSS Shelter Allowance, Section 8, Shelter Plus Care, Rapid Rehousing rental assistance), some landlords will not accept the subsidy as rental income. This further limits the housing available to those in need.

## Implementation of the Plan

The PNHC Strategic Plan will largely be carried out by PNHC committees and members, with an effort to inclusively engage community partners and stakeholders. In order to carry out such work, PNHC is aware that committees will need to grow in membership and attendance, and the first action item for every committee in implementing the addendum will be to engage new staff members and agencies throughout the community to get involved with PNHC in a strategic way. The PNHC Board will monitor the work associated with each goal every six months, ensuring that PNHC is working towards its goal to end homelessness. The Strategic Plan will be a living and breathing document, and will be edited by the Board as changes in the community or realizations through implementation occur.

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<sup>14</sup> 2018 Points North Housing Inventory Chart, Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Rehousing

## Workplan 2019 - 2021

### Emergency Housing

**Goal #1: Increase the amount of quality and accessible emergency housing with support services from 36 beds to 62 beds for homeless individuals in Lewis, Jefferson, and St. Lawrence Counties.**

Measure of Progress: The amount of quality and accessible emergency housing with support services increases from 36 beds to 62 beds.

Context: According to the 2018 Housing Inventory Chart, Lewis, Jefferson, and St. Lawrence Counties have 36 facility-based emergency shelter beds (8 through St. Lawrence County Renewal House, 20 at Victims Assistance Center of Jefferson county, and 8 at Safe Dwelling through Lewis County Opportunities), 30 of which are dedicated to victims of domestic violence<sup>15</sup>. The community provides an additional 24 emergency housing beds through funding from the Departments of Social Services<sup>16</sup>; persons housed through the support of Departments of Social Services are often housed in hotels/motels and/or housed in coordination with housing providers (i.e. Lewis County Opportunities operates Housing Apartment, a program where DSS pays for a client's rent and Lewis County Opportunities offers onsite support services). Please note, the number of persons housed through DSS funding fluctuates based on need. According to the 2018 Point-In-Time Count, in addition to those who were homeless in these 60 sheltered beds, there were also 6 persons who were homeless and unsheltered<sup>17</sup>.

The CoC has identified a need for ensuring quality and accessible emergency housing for those who are homeless. While the beds funded through the Departments of Social Services are a vital resource for the community, the hotels/motels that accept clients with DSS funding are sometimes remote and dilapidated, and do not offer onsite support services. As such, the CoC would like to:

1. Develop additional quality, accessible emergency housing beds with support services available. Based on the number of unsheltered homeless households during the 2018 PIT Count, the CoC will aim to create at least 6 additional emergency housing beds. While this is a small number of additional emergency housing beds, the CoC selected this

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<sup>15</sup> 2018 Points North Housing Inventory Chart, Emergency Shelter

<sup>16</sup> 2018 Points North Housing Inventory Chart, Emergency Shelter

<sup>17</sup> 2018 Points North Point-In-Time Count

goal with the understanding that there is limited funding available for emergency housing; emergency housing is expensive to operate; and ultimately, the CoC would like to invest resources in more rapidly rehousing persons in emergency housing as opposed to creating additional emergency housing. By more rapidly rehousing persons in emergency housing, additional emergency housing beds will become available.

2. Develop and coordinate outreach services to homeless households in hotels/motels. Given there are frequently 20 – 25 homeless households housed in hotels/motels on a given night, the CoC will aim to provide support services to at least 20 homeless households in hotels/motels.
3. Increase transportation access for those in emergency housing.

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Action Item</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
1. Develop creative emergency housing alternatives (with at least 6 beds) based on community need.	a. Build off the piloted Homeless Apartment by Lewis County Opportunities and Lewis County Dept. of Social Services.	Systems Committee (New)	Q4 2020
	b. Develop a ReEntry TH-RRH program for those exiting jails/prisons as an alternative to emergency housing.	Operations Committee	Q4 2019
	c. Develop emergency housing options for those who are sanctioned by DSS; research best practices (i.e. Rescue Mission in Syracuse).	Systems Committee (New)	Q4 2019 – Research best practices  Q2 2021 – emergency housing options developed
2. Develop and coordinate outreach services to at least 20 homeless households in hotels/motels to support households in navigating system resources.	a. Determine outreach methods and success of existing outreach services.	CE Committee	Q2 2019
	b. Support CoC members in reallocating or acquiring new resources to increase outreach services to homeless households in hotels/motels.	CE Committee	Q4 2019, ongoing
3. Increase access for those in emergency housing to transportation options.	a. Host the transportation authority(ies) at a CoC meeting to describe and provide maps on all available transit opportunities.	Transportation Representatives (New)	Q2 2019
	b. Work with local transportation authorities and transportation providers to extend bus	Transportation Representatives (New)	Q2 2021

	<p>routes or transportation options to existing emergency housing sites. In St. Lawrence County, appoint CoC representatives to NYSARC's monthly transportation meeting to inform extension of transportation. In Jefferson County, appoint a CoC representative to the Volunteer Transportation meeting. Identify a transportation workgroup in Lewis County.</p>	<p>Board designated representative of the CoC – report out at the Board meetings.</p>	
	<p>c. Research funding for and licensing restrictions around an agency(ies) starting a van transportation program.</p>	<p>Transportation Representatives (New) Board &amp; Membership standing agenda item.</p>	<p>Q2 2019</p>
	<p>d. Whenever possible, encourage emergency, transitional, rapid rehousing and permanent housing development/placement along bus routes to ensure ongoing sustainability (i.e. ability to travel to services, job opportunities).</p>	<p>Operations Committee Transportation Representatives (New)</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

## ReEntry from Jails/Prisons

**Goal #2: Provide dedicated quality housing and support services for those persons who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness and exiting the criminal justice system to reduce homelessness among this population.**

Measure of Progress: The percentage of those who are homeless and reentering from jail/prison decreases from 29% to 20%. The number of beds dedicated to those reentering from jail/prison increases from 0 to 15.

Context: According to the Homeless Management Information System, 29%<sup>18</sup> of those who are homeless in Lewis, Jefferson, and St. Lawrence Counties come from jails/prisons. CoC members and system partners have confirmed the significant number of homeless clients who have been involved in the criminal justice system. The community also recognizes many clients have been involved in the criminal justice system due to a substance use disorder or mental illness. In fact, in 2017, 40% of those persons who were discharged to homelessness from jail/prison had a substance use disorder and 28% had a mental illness<sup>19</sup>. Currently, there is limited support service programs or housing dedicated to those exiting the criminal justice system. Therefore, the CoC will focus efforts on better serving this population prior to discharge from jails/prisons, upon discharge from jails/prisons, and thereafter. To do so, the CoC will:

1. Increase discharge planning in jails/prisons to ensure support services are in place upon discharge.
2. Work with the Department of Corrections (DOCS), parole, and probation to support those reentering the community from prisons in accessing appropriate housing.
3. Work with the Departments of Social Services to process applications for services immediately upon discharge.
4. Increase the number of permanent and affordable housing units set aside for those reentering the community from 0 to 15.
5. Connect those reentering the community with education and employment opportunities.
6. Connect those reentering the community with mental health and substance abuse supports.

Strategy	Action Item	Responsible Party	Timeframe
1. Increase discharge planning in prisons to connect persons 6 months prior to exiting the	a. Research best practices on discharge planning from jails/prisons and mental health and health facilities.	Systems Committee (New)	Q2 2019

<sup>18</sup> According to HMIS in calendar year 2017 540 unduplicated persons were homeless, 157 of whom came from jails/prisons in response to the question "Where did you stay last night?"

<sup>19</sup> According to HMIS in calendar year 2017 157 persons were homeless and came from jails/prisons in response to the question "Where did you stay last night?." Of those 157 persons, 63 reported a substance use disorder and 44 reported a mental illness.

<p>facility, and in jails to connect persons as soon as possible, to all available income, mental health and substance abuse treatment, and housing resources.</p>	<p>b. Identify local best practices and most prominent local needs related to reentry based on Credo, NRCI, and local jail/prison discharge planning experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Coordinate with discharge planners who work for jails to identify current scope of work, and barriers to connecting those persons reentering the community with income, mental health and substance abuse treatment, and housing resources.</li> <li>ii. Coordinate with Credo and NRCIL to assess success of discharge planning led by these agencies.</li> </ul>	<p>Systems Committee (New)</p>	<p>Q4 2019</p>
	<p>c. Utilize assessment of local best practices and needs to access funding to hire additional discharge planners through agencies and/or jails/prisons, identifying funding resources at the federal, state, local and private agency levels.</p>	<p>Systems Committee (New)</p>	<p>Q2 2021</p>
	<p>2. Work with DOCCS, probation and parole to build upon a coordinated system, ensuring those exiting prisons are connected with appropriate housing.</p>	<p>a. Build upon a coordinated system to ensure DOCS, probation, and parole have all the tools necessary to communicate with local DSS's, ensuring those returning to the community from prisons have access to all available benefits, including housing if necessary.</p> <p>b. Build connections between probation and parole, and local service providers to ensure probation and parole is aware of resources available to clients.</p>	<p>Systems Committee (New)</p> <p>Systems Committee (New)</p>
<p>3. Work with the Departments of Social Services to ensure applications for resources are</p>	<p>a. Facilitate coordination between DSS's and discharge planners (through agencies and/or jails/prisons) to compile</p>	<p>Systems Committee (New)</p>	<p>Q4 2020</p>

processed upon a person reentering the community from jail/prison or mental health or health facilities.	information necessary for applying for DSS benefits prior to release.		
	b. Provide education on DSS benefits to Parole and mental health and health facilities.	Systems Committee (New)	Q2 2020
	c. Advocate to NYS to change policies, allowing DSS's to process applications of inmates so benefits may be issued immediately upon reentering the community.	Board	Q2 2019 Q2 2020 Q2 2021
4. Increase the number of permanent and affordable housing units set aside for those reentering the community from 0 to 15.	a. Develop a ReEntry TH-RRH program for those exiting jails/prisons as an alternative to emergency housing.	Operations Committee	Q2 2019 Q2 2020 Q2 2021
	b. Identify and engage affordable housing providers in developing housing that has a set-aside for persons with a criminal offense history and/or substance abuse disorder.	Systems Committee (New)	Q2 2021
	c. Develop an education program for landlords, including reviewing the different housing subsidies and benefits of these subsidies to the landlord, benefits of working with tenants who work with case managers, introduction to agencies with various services, and direct resources for mitigating landlord-tenant issues.	Systems Committee (New)	Q4 2019
5. Increase support services to assist in accessing education and/or employment for those reentering the community from jails/prisons.	a. Advocate to NYS as a CoC to increase the living wage.	Board	Q2 2019 Q2 2020 Q2 2021
	b. Work with discharge planners and parole officers on promoting One Stop resources.	Systems Committee (New)	Q2 2020
6. Connect those reentering the community from jails/prisons with ongoing mental health	a. Work with mental health and health facilities to identify resources clients are eligible for upon discharge. Assess location of resources across counties.	Systems Committee (New)	Q4 2019

and substance abuse treatment.	b. Partner with discharge planners and parole officers to identify available mental health and substance abuse treatment options.	Systems Committee (New)	Q2 2020
	c. Work with discharge planners to identify process for referring medical information and ensuring access to medications upon reentry into community.	Systems Committee (New)	Q4 2020

## Affordable Housing

**Goal #3: Increase access to permanent and affordable housing by developing additional units and coordinating better with landlords to accept subsidies.**

Measure of Progress: Length of time on the Coordinated Entry waitlist decreases. Increase the current number of permanent housing beds by 5% (from 520 to 546 beds). Add at least 15 additional affordable housing beds.

Context: Lewis, Jefferson, and St. Lawrence Counties currently have 520 permanent housing beds dedicated to the homeless<sup>20</sup>. These units support those who have been homeless with subsidized housing and support services. According to the 2018 Housing Inventory Chart, 98% of these beds are utilized, while 40 people are in shelter and in need of housing. The CoC has set a realistic goal of increasing the current number of permanent housing beds by 5% over three years (an increase of 26 beds, from 520 to 546 beds). The community will continue to prioritize the most vulnerable for housing in these units through the Coordinated Entry system. The CoC will also support development of at least 15 additional affordable housing beds. The CoC will work with Public Housing Authorities (PHA's) and affordable housing developers to better connect those who have been homeless with affordable housing, when appropriate. In addition, the CoC will build relationships with landlords who have quality housing to encourage these landlords to accept housing subsidies. Finally, the CoC will work towards creating a Housing Specialist position, who will support clients in accessing appropriate housing both through CoC-funded beds, other affordable housing, and privately funded housing.

Strategy	Action Item	Responsible Party	Timeframe
1. Utilize creative funding and collaborations to develop additional permanent housing for persons who are homeless from 520 beds to 546 beds (an increase of 5% over 3 years).	a. Notify agencies of and support applications for CoC Bonus, ESSHI, HHAP and HCR funding.	Operations Committee; Board	Q2 2019 Q2 2020 Q2 2021
	b. Collaborate with existing affordable housing providers to provide coordinated support services to tenants through collaborations with Health Home staff, additional staffing by funding through NYSSHP, etc.	Systems Committee (New)	Q4 2020

<sup>20</sup> 2018 Points North Housing Inventory Chart, Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Rehousing

2. Increase the number of Single Room Occupancy (SRO's) in Points North dedicated to the homeless from 49 to 75 by to increase the amount of transitional housing opportunities in the community, resulting in decreased length of stay for households in emergency housing.	a. Support applications for HHAP funding to increase the number of SRO's dedicated to the homeless in Points North.	Board	Q2 2019 Q2 2020 Q2 2021
3. Prioritize and support Housing First Settings	a. Connect agencies with Housing First Training opportunities.	Operations Committee	Q1 2019
	b. Monitor agencies to ensure effective implementation of Housing First practices, such as by using the HUD Housing First self-monitoring tool.	Operations Committee	Q1 2020
4. Support development of more quality housing that is affordable, increasing by at least 15 beds.	a. Build relationships with affordable housing developers to create more quality affordable housing stock that meets community needs.	Board & Systems Committee (New)	Q4 2019
	b. Support availability of quality housing stock by supporting stronger Code Enforcement efforts, especially in rural areas.	Board & Systems Committee (New)	Q4 2020
5. Work with Public Housing Authorities to create a housing preference for those who are homeless.	a. Identify PHA's who currently do not have a homeless preference.	Board & Systems Committee (New)	Q3 2020
	b. Conduct dialogue with PHA's to encourage establishing a homeless preference.	Board & Systems Committee (New)	Q2 2020
6. Work with Public Housing Authorities and affordable housing developers to continue to develop and implement a Move On Strategy.	a. Introduce the concept of the Move On Strategy to PHA's and affordable housing developers (i.e. Preservation Management, North Country Affordable Housing, Neighbors of Watertown, Omni Housing Development and local Public Housing	Systems Committee (New)	Q2 2019

	Authorities (i.e. Watertown, Ogdensburg, Massena, Canton)).		
	b. Create agreements with PHA's and affordable housing developers to establish a preference for moving on tenants from PSH programs.	Systems Committee (New)	Q2 2020
7. Communicate with landlords to promote the benefits of working with tenants who are part of PNHC programs.	a. Create a pamphlet that describes the benefits to landlords of working with PNHC programs and accepting housing subsidies and provides contact information for agencies.	Systems Committee (New)	Q4 2019
	b. Promote the opportunity to landlords to rent rooms (instead of apartments as a whole).	Systems Committee (New)	Q2 2020
	c. Identify landlord associations and present the benefits of working with CoC programs at their meetings.	Systems Committee (New)	Q2 2020
	d. Identify landlords who are willing to accept subsidies and tenants with mental health and/or substance abuse issues, and/or a criminal record.	Systems Committee (New)	Q4 2020
	e. Research Fair Housing Laws to identify ways to protect those with mental health and substance abuse issues from discrimination.	Systems Committee (New)	Q4 2021
8. Develop a Housing Specialist position that is accessible community-wide, and geared towards supporting those who have been homeless or who are reentering the community from jails/prisons with housing placement.	a. Look into best practices/models.	Systems Committee (New)	Q2 2019
	b. Identify a funding source for creating a community-wide Housing Specialist position.	Systems Committee (New)	Q4 2019
	c. Identify opportunities to connect/incorporate the Housing Specialist's work with Coordinated Entry.	Systems Committee (New)	Q2 2019



## Appendix I: Definition of Important Terms

**Affordable Housing:** The definition of affordable housing can vary greatly based on who you are talking to. In this plan, the Strategic Planning Committee has decided to define affordable housing as housing that is affordable to those who are at or below 30% of the median income for the area in which they live. Affordable housing is sometimes available within the community naturally due to market levels. Often, however, it is developed by non-profit or for-profit developers who utilize government incentives or subsidies, such as Low-Income Housing Tax Credits to make the development feasible. Another form of affordable housing is Section 8 vouchers, which allow tenants to pay 30% of their income towards rent, with the rest being subsidized by the local housing authority.

**At Immediate Risk of Eviction:** Those at immediate risk of eviction, or at-risk, refers to families or individuals who are likely to become homeless within 14 days due to an eviction notice or other circumstances

**Chronic Homelessness:** The definition of chronically homeless that will be used in this plan is also utilized by HUD, and is specified Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act 2016 final rule. A person who is chronically homeless per this definition must have a disability and must have been homeless for longer than 12 months or on several occasions. Specifically:

- (1) A “homeless individual with a disability,” as defined in the Act, who:
  - a. Lives in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter; and
  - b. Has been homeless continuously for at least 12 months or on at least 4 separate occasions in the last 3 years where the combined occasions must total at least 12 months
    - i. Occasions separated by a break of at least seven nights
    - ii. Stays in institution of fewer than 90 days do not constitute a break
- (2) An individual who has been residing in an institutional care facility for fewer than 90 days and met all of the criteria in paragraph (1) of this definition, before entering that facility; or
- (3) A family with an adult head of household (or if there is no adult in the family, a minor head of household) who meets all of the criteria in paragraphs (1) or (2) of this definition, including a family whose composition has fluctuated while the head of household has been homeless.

**Continuum of Care:** The Continuum of Care (CoC) program out of HUD is designed to promote communitywide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness; provide funding for efforts by nonprofit providers, and State and local governments to quickly rehouse homeless individuals and families while minimizing the trauma and dislocation caused to homeless individuals, families, and communities by homelessness; promote access to and effect utilization of mainstream programs by homeless individuals and families; and optimize self-sufficiency among individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

**Emergency Housing:** Short-term housing provided in response to a housing crisis, offered either in emergency shelters (congregate facilities used for this purpose) or motel rooms funded as emergency housing by either a public or not-for-profit agency.

**Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG):** the ESG program provides funding to engage homeless individuals and families living on the street; improve the number and quality of emergency shelters for homeless individuals and families; help operate these shelters; provide essential services to shelter residents, rapidly re-house homeless individuals and families, and prevent families/individuals from becoming homeless. ESG funding is awarded from HUD to states, metropolitan cities, urban counties and U.S. territories. The funding is then often sub-granted to organizations to implement the work, such as shelter agencies.

**Homelessness:** In this document, the definition of homelessness provided by HUD and specified in the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act of 2012 has been used, which is as follows:

- (1) People who are living in a place not meant for human habitation, in emergency shelter, in transitional housing, or are exiting an institution where they temporarily resided. People are considered homeless if they are exiting an institution where they resided for up to 90 days, and were in shelter or a place not meant for human habitation immediately prior to entering that institution; or
- (2) People who are losing their primary nighttime residence, which may include a motel or hotel or a doubled up situation, within 14 days and lack resources or support networks to remain in housing; or
- (3) Families with children or unaccompanied youth who are unstably housed and likely to continue in that state. This applies to families with children or unaccompanied youth who have not had a lease or ownership interest in a housing unit in the last 60 or more days, have had two or more moves in the last 60 days, and who are likely to continue to be unstably housed because of disability or multiple barriers to employment; or
- (4) People who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, have no other residence, and lack the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing.

It should be noted that this definition does not include persons who are precariously housed due to paying too high a percentage of their incomes for rent, nor those doubled up with family or friends because no other housing is available. However, the plan does include homelessness prevention strategies targeted to these at-risk populations.

**Homeless Management Information System (HMIS):** A Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is a local information technology system used to collect client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to homeless individuals and families and persons at risk of homelessness. CoC members and community organizations submit data to HMIS in Albany.

**Housing Choice Voucher:** The current name for the Section 8 Housing Program, which tends to be referred to as the Section 8 Program. (Please see “Section 8 Program” below).

**“Housing First” Model:** A model that prioritizes providing people experiencing homelessness with permanent housing as quickly as possible, with no preconditions or service requirements – and then providing voluntary supportive services as needed. In contrast, the more traditional housing model requires homeless persons to successfully complete different “stages” of housing (such as emergency housing and transitional housing) in order to demonstrate housing “readiness,” or to complete mandated service treatment, such as reaching sobriety, before being permanently housed. In the traditional housing model, completion of each housing stage requires physical movement to new housing, causing disruption with each move.

**“Low-Demand” Housing:** Housing that allows program participants who are in need of supportive and treatment services to determine the type and intensity of services that they receive, rather than having to comply with pre-existing service and treatment requirements.

**Permanent Housing:** Housing that can be occupied for an indefinite period, as long as the tenant complies with lease requirements.

**Permanent Supportive Housing:** Permanent housing accompanied by ongoing supportive and treatment services. Many persons with disabilities require permanent supportive housing in order to remain stably housed. HUD Continuum of Care grants provide funding for permanent supportive housing, which provide housing for formerly homeless individuals and families with disabilities.

**Point-In-Time Count:** The Point-in-Time (PIT) count is a count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons on a single night in January. HUD requires that Continuums of Care conduct an annual count of homeless persons who are sheltered in emergency shelter, transitional housing, and Safe Havens on a single night. Continuums of Care also must conduct a count of unsheltered homeless persons every other year (odd numbered years). Each count is planned, coordinated, and carried out locally. In Albany, both the sheltered and unsheltered count are conducted annually utilizing HMIS and survey outreach.

**Points North Housing Coalition:** The Points North Housing Coalition (PNHC) is the Continuum of Care for Lewis, Jefferson, and St. Lawrence Counties in New York State, a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) designated local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals. PNHC is dedicated to preventing, reducing and combatting homelessness by ensuring an effective system of care and services is in place for Lewis, Jefferson, and St. Lawrence Counties. PNHC has an open membership policy and actively welcomes and recruits stakeholders who seek to collaboratively address homelessness. PNHC members include emergency shelters and housing providers, municipal representatives, systems of care stakeholders, community members, and persons who are or who have been homeless. The PNHC operates through a Board, Membership and many committees who work to address homelessness in the community.

**Poverty Level:** The set minimum amount of income that a family needs for food, clothing transportation, shelter and other necessities. In the U.S., this level is determined by the Department of Health and Human Services. Federal Poverty Level varies according to family size. The number is adjusted for inflation and reported annually in the form of poverty guidelines.

**President's Interagency Council on Homelessness:** Congress established the Interagency Council on Homelessness in 1987 with the passage of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. The Council is responsible for providing Federal leadership for activities to assist homeless families and individuals.

**Rapid Rehousing:** Rapid Rehousing rapidly connects individuals and families experiencing homelessness to permanent housing through a tailored package of assistance that may include the use of time-limited financial assistance and targeted supportive services. A fundamental goal of rapid rehousing, informed by a Housing First approach, is to reduce the amount of time a person is homeless. Although the duration of financial assistance may vary, many programs find that, on average, four to six months of financial assistance is sufficient to stably re-house a household to the point of self-sufficiency. While originally aimed primarily at people experiencing homelessness due to short-term financial crises, programs across the country have begun to assist individuals and families who are traditionally perceived as more difficult to serve.

**Section 8 Housing Program (now called the Housing Choice Voucher Program):** Housing assistance secured from a local housing authority or other authorized provider in the form of direct payments to landlords that low-income people can use to rent apartments and homes on the private market.

**Single Room Occupancy (SRO):** Permanent housing providing an individual a single room in which to live. These units may contain food preparation or sanitary facilities, or these may be shared with others.

**Social Security Disability Insurance:** A federally-funded wage-replacement program, administered by the Social Security Administration, for those who have a disability meeting Social Security rules and who have paid FICA taxes. SSDI is financed with Social Security taxes paid by workers, employers and self-employed persons. SSDI benefits are payable to disabled workers, widows, widowers, and children or adults disabled since childhood who are otherwise eligible.

**Supplemental Security Income:** A Federal income supplement program funded by general tax revenues and designed to help aged, blind and disabled people, who have little or no income. The program provides cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing and shelter.

**Transitional Housing:** Housing coupled with supportive and treatment services that is provided on a time-limited basis (in most cases, not exceeding 24 months). The primary distinction between transitional housing and permanent housing is that in transitional housing, the program, not the participant, determines the length of stay. HUD Continuum of

Care grants provide funding for transitional housing, although HUD has prioritized funding Rapid Rehousing over transitional housing except in the cases of housing youth and victims of domestic violence.

**Trauma-Informed Approach:** According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration's (SAMHSA's) concept of a trauma-informed approach, A program, organization, or system that is trauma-informed:

1. *Realizes* the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery;
2. *Recognizes* the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system;
3. *Responds* by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and
4. Seeks to actively resist *re-traumatization*."

A trauma-informed approach can be implemented in any type of service setting or organization and is distinct from trauma-specific interventions or treatments that are designed specifically to address the consequences of trauma and to facilitate healing. A trauma-informed approach reflects adherence to six key principles: safety; trustworthiness and transparency; peer support; collaboration and mutuality; empowerment; voice and choice; and cultural, historical and gender issues.

**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD):** a cabinet-level agency of the federal government whose mission is to increase homeownership, support community development and increase access to affordable housing free from discrimination. HUD is the primary federal funder of low-income housing for homeless persons through the Continuum of Care grants program and Emergency Solutions grants program.

**United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH):** a group of 19 federal member agencies that fosters partnerships at every level of government and with the private sector to lead the national effort to prevent and end homelessness in America.

## Appendix II: PNHC Strategic Planning Committee Members

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Administrative support and consultation was provided by CARES of NY, Inc.

## Appendix III: Community Forum Summaries

Below is a description of the four community forums/conversations the Strategic Planning Committee led throughout the planning process to collect feedback on the most important needs to address in order to reduce homelessness, and how to best address these needs. These forums also ensured the strategic planning process was community-based and engaged a broad range of stakeholders and perspectives.

### **St. Lawrence County Community Services Board** – May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Facilitators: Pat Hand, Courtnie Toms, Carolyn White

Pat, Courtnie and Carolyn announced to the Community Services Board (CSB) that PNHC is drafting a strategic plan, and presented the three draft overarching goals (improving discharge planning from corrections facilities; creating safe emergency housing for the homeless; and increasing the amount of and access to quality affordable housing). They then facilitated a conversation around actions the community can take to reach the three overarching goals in the community. Most of the discussion was regarding the emergency/transitional shelter that recently opened in Saranac Lake. There was a recommendation from the Community Services Board to duplicate that process in St. Lawrence County. Currently those who are homeless are sheltered in hotels/motels, which is viewed as a waste of money. There was also discussion of the poor housing stock. The CSB has created their own local service plan and supportive housing ranked second in terms of priorities. The facilitators noted this feedback would be discussed during the next Strategic Planning Committee meeting for incorporation into the plan.

### **Jefferson County Community Services Board** – May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Facilitator: Jim Scordo

Jim announced to the Community Services Board (CSB) that PNHC is drafting a strategic plan, and presented the three draft overarching goals (improving discharge planning from corrections facilities; creating safe emergency housing for the homeless; and increasing the amount of and access to quality affordable housing). He then facilitated a conversation around actions the community can take to reach the three overarching goals in the community. The CSB discussed how the Northern Regional Center for Independent Living (NRCIL) will soon have discharge planners in local jails to help inmates obtain support services prior to discharge. It was recommended the CoC connect with NRCIL to discuss pros/cons of the program, and potentially how to expand it. The CSB did not see developing shelters as a viable option in the community. It was noted there seems to be enough housing but the rents are high due to the military base.

### **Lewis County Community Services Board** – June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Facilitator: Scott Mathys

Scott announced to the Community Services Board (CSB) that PNHC is drafting a strategic plan, and presented the three draft overarching goals (improving discharge planning from corrections facilities; creating safe emergency housing for the homeless; and increasing the amount of and access to quality affordable housing). He then facilitated a conversation around actions the community can take to reach the three overarching goals in the community. Regarding discharge planning from correctional facilities, it was noted currently Children's Home has a contract with Jefferson County to provide discharge planning services. Northern Regional Center for Independent Living Center (NRCIL) will soon have discharge planners in local jails to help inmates obtain support services prior to discharge. The goal is to get individuals signed up for DSS resources while they are still in jail so that upon discharge they will be eligible for Medicaid, Temporary Assistance, etc. Overall the CSB feels when discharges are planned they go smoothly. However, on the occasions when a person is

released unexpectedly by the judge from court due to a plea or their case changing it does not allow for appropriate discharge planning and can lead to homelessness. It was recommended the CoC educate the judges to avoid these types of discharges. In terms of emergency housing, the overall consensus was that it makes to invest resources to ensure the use hotels/motels is effective at reducing returns to homelessness. In terms of affordable housing, the CSB discussed how those with mental health conditions, substance abuse issues, and sex offenders are discriminated against and screened out of programs. With the development of several new apartment complexes, there does seem to be more apartments available in the community. However, they are still unaffordable for individuals on a fixed income. Some apartments have come down in rent but with the incidents of bed bugs in the community it can be a challenge for those individuals who are seeking these lower rent apartments to find an affordable apartment who has not been affected by bed bugs. It was recommended the CoC work to make credit screening illegal, as this is often used to discriminate against someone with mental health or substance abuse challenges. NRCIL noted those have done some advocacy around an effort to make discrimination by landlords based on a tenant's source of income illegal under the state's human rights law. It was also recommended the CoC create a Landlord Coalition to determine which landlords are open to partnering. NRCIL is currently working towards this end.

#### **Continuum of Care Membership Meeting** – June 8th, 2017

During the June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017 Continuum of Care (CoC) Membership meeting, the Strategic Planning Committee hosted a forum to collect feedback on the three overarching goals that would be included in the Strategic Plan: improving discharge planning from corrections facilities; creating safe emergency housing for the homeless; and increasing the amount of and access to quality affordable housing. Members broke-up into three groups and rotated visiting three stations – one on each overarching goal. At each station, a member of the Strategic Planning Committee described why the overarching goal was selected to be focused on in the plan, and then asked Members the following questions:

- 1) What are the top issues?
- 2) What are the top solutions?
- 3) Are we missing any issues or solutions?

Below is a summary of Membership's feedback at each station.

#### **Improving Discharge Planning from Corrections Facilities:**

Membership reinforced that lack of discharge planning from corrections facilities leads to homelessness. In addition, it was noted those who are incarcerated are unable to apply for DSS benefits until discharge. Processing a DSS application is necessary in order to access food stamps, housing benefits, etc. Upon discharge, it is challenging to find housing – many landlords do not allow ex-offenders (especially sex offenders) and the public housing authorities have limitations on who they can serve. What's currently working to address this issue is programs that support discharge planning and accessing benefits in advance (i.e. SSVS) and Single Room Occupancy (SRO) programs that serve ex-offenders. It was recommended to decrease discharges to homelessness the CoC focus on increasing preplanning to help avoid reoffending; advocate to allow those in corrections facilities to apply for DSS benefits and SSI/SSDI prior to release; engage DSS to be onsite at corrections facilities; and create a landlord database of those who will accept ex-offenders.

#### **Creating Safe Emergency Housing:**

Membership reiterated that the community currently does not have a homeless shelter, and that there are no support services at hotels/motels where DSS places those who are homeless. It was also noted those who are in emergency housing have difficulty navigating services, and may be located far away from supports and services. The safety and condition of the motels/hotels was also brought up as a concern. Members recommended the CoC evaluate the need to build shelter that has onsite support services; increase monitoring in current settings; provide mediators during evictions to prevent homelessness. It was also recommended the CoC work with landlords to create temporary housing.

**Increasing the Amount of and Access to Quality Affordable Housing:**

Membership reinforced the need for affordable and quality housing in the community. It was noted there are currently long waitlists for affordable housing, and much housing that is affordable has bed bugs, pests, wouldn't pass code enforcement, etc. It was specified one-bedroom apartments are specifically needed. It was also noted there is a need for Permanent Supportive Housing, particularly in St. Lawrence County. Members discussed there is currently a new housing program in Jefferson County that offers short-term leases and seems to be working well. In order to increase the amount of and access to quality affordable housing it was recommended the CoC build relationships with landlords and provide landlord and tenant education. It was also recommended the CoC pursue the reuse/rehabilitation of zombie buildings, which there is currently funding for through the state. The CoC should also support stronger code enforcement to ensure landlords are maintaining quality housing. To increase the amount of permanent supportive housing, the CoC can work with Health Homes to provide support services and apply for NYSSHIP funding.

## Appendix IV: PNHC Strategic Plan – Focused and Local Implementation of the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, *Home Together*

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) released the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, *Home Together*, in 2018 for fiscal years 2018 - 2022. This plan sets four specific goals for the federal government and local communities. PNHC has strived to incorporate these goals into PNHC's local strategic plan in the following ways.

### **1) Ensure Homelessness is a Rare Experience**

In order to ensure homelessness is a rare experience, USICH recommends communities set their own bold and ambitious goals for ending homelessness; reduce fragmentation by partnering across systems; and strengthen practices to prevent and divert homelessness.

PNHC seeks to ensure homelessness is a rare experience by establishing bold local goals through the strategic planning process – goals to reduce discharges to homelessness from corrections facilities by 9%, increase the number of Permanent Supportive Housing beds by 26, increase the number of affordable housing beds by 15. PNHC has also incorporated the federal plan's recommendations to reduce fragmentation across systems by partnering with corrections facilities and local counties to reduce discharges to homelessness from corrections facilities, and with hotels/motels to incorporate support services when their sites are used as emergency housing.

### **2) Ensure Homelessness is a Brief Experience**

In order to ensure homelessness is a brief experience, USICH recommends communities ensure all people experiencing homelessness are engaged as quickly as possible; strengthen capacity in rural areas to maximize outreach efforts; provide access to low-barrier emergency housing that promotes dignity and respect for everyone; and implement a Coordinated Entry system to swiftly move those who are homeless into permanent housing with appropriate person-centered services.

PNHC is implementing the federal plan's recommendations by increasing outreach and engagement at hotels/motels – the community's only emergency housing resource – to quickly and effectively connect those who are homeless to the Coordinated Entry system, and in turn to permanent and affordable housing. The Coordinated Entry system will become more effective as flow into permanent supportive housing and affordable housing increases. The community will increase flow by increasing the number of permanent supportive housing and affordable housing beds in the community, and by building partnerships with local landlords to improve the quality of housing stock and amount of housing available to those who were previously homeless.

### **3) Ensure Homelessness is a One-Time Experience**

In order to ensure homelessness is a one-time experience, USICH recommends communities prevent returns to homelessness through connections to adequate services and opportunities.

PNHC is implementing the federal plan's recommendations by ensuring those who are homeless are immediately connected to all available services. The plan also specifies PNHC will connect those reentering the community from jails/prisons with education and employment opportunities, as well as ongoing mental health and substance abuse treatment. PNHC will also create a new Transportation Committee that will focus on ensuring those who are and who have been homeless have transportation options to services, education, and employment.