



Sharp rise in state's homeless

By Katy Jordan | Wednesday, July 30, 2008 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | [Local Coverage](#)

WASHINGTON - The Bay State bucked a national trend of a decline in homelessness with a rise of 10.8 percent between 2005 and 2007, the government reported yesterday.

Nationally, the number of homeless in the United States decreased about 12 percent between 2005 and 2007, with an even larger decline in the number of people who are chronically homeless, according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The grim Bay State finding came as no surprise to homeless advocates.

"We pretty much always have a full house here. There are never vacancies," said Barbera Trevisan, director of communications for the Pine Street Inn shelter in Boston. "There are still thousands of homeless people in Boston." HUD credited the national decline to programs that offer permanent housing and support services for the disabled homeless.

Some homeless advocates said the report does not take into account the effects of the foreclosure crisis and recently slowing economy.

"We've seen double-digit increases in homeless families," in part due to the foreclosure crisis, said Jim Greene, director of Boston's Emergency Shelter Commission. The federal government needs to invest in low-income housing, "or we risk losing a whole generation of young children."

Progress not noted

By Joe Finn | Monday, August 4, 2008 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | [Letters to the Editor](#)

Massachusetts is seeing significant decreases in the numbers of unsheltered chronically homeless individuals and those who are suffering from severe mental illness and substance abuse ("State's homeless populace up 11 percent," July 30). With an extreme level of disability, these individuals are among the highest-end utilizers of our costly emergency systems. Programs focusing on "housing first" models of low-threshold, permanent housing with supportive services have shown tremendous success with these individuals. This strategy demonstrates impressive outcomes when chronically homeless people are supported in a permanent, housed environment, rather than targeted for intensive services in shelters or streets.

Joe Finn
Executive Director
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Learn from Springfield

By Geraldine McCafferty | Friday, August 1, 2008 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | [Letters to the Editor](#)

Springfield is one of many cities nationally which has demonstrated that it is possible to reduce levels of homelessness, even in a slowing economy. By aggregating numbers ("Sharp rise in state's homeless," July 30), we miss the opportunity to point out the strategies which are effective.

Starting in 2007, Springfield devoted city and housing authority resources to housing for chronically homeless individuals - the most vulnerable and disabled of the homeless. In one year, the city experienced a 39 percent drop in the number of street homeless and a 12 percent drop in chronic homelessness. Among all homeless individuals, the drop was 9 percent.

Results like these are hidden when we do a combined count of homeless individuals and families. Why is this? The research is well-developed on what it takes to end individual homelessness, and can - and has been - influenced by policy shifts at the local level.

But we have had an increase in the number of homeless families. In the area of family homelessness, best practices are still emerging, the state is the major policy-setter, and both the state and many localities are in the midst of a shift in their approach to the issue. There is hope that these numbers can be brought down as well.

Geraldine McCafferty,
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