

# WISCONSIN COALITION AGAINST HOMELESSNESS

## FALL 2017 NEWSLETTER

Ok, so it's been quite a while since our last newsletter but we've been busy! The Wisconsin State budget is finally passed and for the first time in 25 years it contains new resources and policy approaches relating to homelessness.

Legislatively, the creation of the State Interagency Council on Homelessness, chaired by the Lt. Governor is back on track having been passed by the full assembly 98-0 and the Senate Workforce Development Committee 5-0. We expect it to move to the Senate floor in the next few weeks and then on to the Governor's desk for signature into law.

Every member of the Coalition wants to thank advocates throughout the State who took the time to testify at hearings and contacted their elected representatives at key legislative phases! We are all truly grateful for your time and your support. We hope our alerts have kept you informed and allowed you to target your advocacy work when and where it was most needed.

In this newsletter we will try to recap for you what was passed in the budget, how you might access those funds and give you some sense of the coalition agenda going forward.

### NEW IN THE BUDGET

- \$ 1 Million in funding to family emergency shelters to provide intensive case management to help make homeless families housing and job ready with the goal of reducing the time of shelter stays. There will be 10 grants of \$50,000 over two years. Watch for an RFP from the Division of Housing - hopefully this fall.
- \$1.3 Million in additional funding for the OARS program which provides case management for persons leaving state prisons who also have mental health challenges, to secure and maintain housing. It is expected that 7 counties will be added to the program with this funding. You might want to urge your County officials to approach the State Department of Corrections to be included in the expansion counties.
- The creation of a Homeless Services Coordinator in the Department of Health Services to pursue and implement a federal Medicaid waiver to allow the use of Medicaid funding for a wide variety of homeless services that include case management, legal services, mental health outreach, job services, supportive services attached to permanent

housing, etc. This effort has the potential to bring millions of new federal dollars into the state for homeless services.

- \$150,000 for a pilot program to assist a local community to provide homeless individuals with work experience. We urge you to have a conversation with your mayor as this should be RFP'd this fall.

## LEGISLATIVE

- As mentioned before, we expect the legislation creating the Inter Agency Council to become law in the near future. The Council will be chaired by the Lt. Governor, with eight department secretaries as members along with representatives from all Wisconsin CoC's. There is an allocation to hire a full-time staff person dedicated to the council which is critical to sustain momentum and insure follow-through on important Council issues.
- Authorization for WHEDA to prioritize who are chronically homeless for Section 8 vouchers.

## LOOKING FORWARD

- The Coalition will be advocating for the Interagency Council to become operational asap and urge Council members to create a plan to end homelessness in Wisconsin with clear goals and metrics to insure accountability
- We will work with Department of Health Services staff to ensure that the language in the federal waiver request is as expansive as possible to as to include the widest variety of services.
- We are in the beginning stages of creating the Wisconsin Hope Act for inclusion in the next budget cycle. This act, aimed at family homelessness, would include support for prevention activities as well as funding to create permanent supportive housing, services, and job opportunities for homeless families. *Stay tuned for the roll out of this major initiative in the near future!*

AS ALWAYS PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT THE COALITION AT  
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