

January 13, 2017

## **Connecticut Receives \$6.5 Million Federal Grant to End Youth Homelessness by 2020** Department of Housing and Urban Development Awards Largest Grant to State of Connecticut

Hartford, CT –Connecticut has received significant federal funding to end youth homelessness in the state by the end of 2020 through Opening Doors CT, the statewide effort to end homelessness.

Announced Friday, January 13, 2017, the grant to Connecticut is the largest in the country. Connecticut is one of only ten grantees, chosen from 130 nationwide applicants.

Opening Doors CT is implemented through a statewide campaign called Reaching Home, which involves over 200 local, state, and federal partners focused on ending homelessness.

Attorney Stacey Violante Cote chairs the statewide workgroup that is focused on ending youth homelessness. "The acknowledgement of our hard work to date is incredibly rewarding. The critical work remaining is crucial for youth throughout the state who still need our help to find safety, security and hope for the future. This is an extraordinary opportunity to use the knowledge we've gained to help these young people." Stacey Violante-Cote, Director, Center for Children's Advocacy Teen Legal Advocacy Project.

The funding emphasized the need for comprehensive systems of care to address youth homelessness. Connecticut has been a national leader on this front, the approach to end youth homelessness following the Campaign's successful work on veteran and chronic homelessness.

The group's achievements include:

- research and 2013 publication of [Invisible No More](#), the first comprehensive state level report on youth homelessness released at an open forum held at the state capitol
- 2014 [Opening Doors for Youth plan](#), based on multi-stakeholder process and conclusions from 2013 report
- 2015 first-ever statewide [count](#) of homeless youth
- 2016 implementation of first-phase strategies, including implementing youth-led research
- upcoming 2017 statewide count of homeless youth

"This grant, the HUD Youth Homelessness Demonstration, will greatly accelerate our ability to meet our goal of preventing and ending homelessness among youth in Connecticut by the end of 2020. Our statewide approach, strong team of partners, and years of coordination and collaboration have laid the groundwork for creating a coordinated community response system for runaway and unaccompanied youth." Alicia Woodsby, Executive Director, Partnership for Strong Communities.

Homelessness exists on a continuum, ranging from intermittent housing instability to absolute homelessness. Youth who are homeless face high barriers in access to services they need to stay safe, stay in school and look forward to future success and independence.

Connecticut's efforts align with the federal Opening Doors plan to end homelessness, guided by core values:

- Homelessness is unacceptable. It is solvable and preventable.
- There are no homeless people. There are people who have lost their homes who deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.
- Homelessness is expensive. Invest in solutions.

Connecticut's work will serve as guidance to improve policy and practice in other communities throughout the country.

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## **Partnership for Strong Communities**

PSC is a statewide nonprofit policy and advocacy organization dedicated to ending homelessness, expanding affordable housing, and building strong communities in Connecticut. We staff and manage two statewide campaigns to fulfill our mission: the campaign to prevent and end homelessness in (Reaching Home), and the campaign to expand affordable housing throughout the state (HOMEConnecticut). PSC provides the meeting place for sharing ideas and shaping solutions: The Lyceum Resource and Conference Center in Hartford.

## **Center for Children's Advocacy**

Since 1997, the Center for Children's Advocacy has been a powerful voice for the state's most vulnerable children and youth. Center attorneys provide unparalleled individual legal representation for abused and neglected children and for those who suffer from inadequate educational support, homelessness, lack of access to medical or mental health care, immigration issues, involvement with the juvenile justice system. The Center effects systemic change that improves the lives of thousands of children each year.

More information at [kidscounsel.org](http://kidscounsel.org) and [speakupteens.org](http://speakupteens.org).

## **Opening Doors CT/ Reaching Home Workgroup**

### **Chair**

Stacey Violante-Cote, Center for Children's Advocacy

### **Members**

Kathy Allen, Thames River Community Service  
Lisa Bahadosingh, Supportive Housing Works  
Preston Brittner, University of Connecticut  
Carline Charmelus, Partnership for Strong Communities  
Carissa Conway, Women and Family Center  
Rachel Cunningham, Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport  
Katie Durand, CT Dept. of Housing  
Michaela Fissel, Join-Rise-Be  
Bob Francis, Regional Youth Adult Social Action Partnership  
Nichole Guerra, Corporation for Supportive Housing  
Mimi Haley, CT Coalition to End Homelessness  
Aimee Hendrigan, The Melville Trust  
Susan Kelley, National Alliance on Mental Illness-CT  
Abigail Kelly, Chrysalis Center  
Paul Kosowsky, Youth Continuum  
John Lawlor, The Connection  
Deborah Mayano, CT Judicial Branch, Court Support Services Division  
Robin McHaelen, True Colors  
Heather Mosher, Institute for Community Research  
Suzanne Piacentini, U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development  
Felix Rodriguez, CT Judicial Branch, Court Support Services Division  
Mike Rulnick, The Bridge Family Center  
Lauren K. Ruth, CT Voices for Children  
Jill Schoenfuss, Staywell Health Center  
Shari Shapiro, Kids in Crisis  
Kim Somaroo-Rodriguez, CT Dept. of Children and Families  
Louis Tallarita, CT Dept. of Education  
Joe Vaverchak, Consolidated School District of New Britain  
Florence Villano, CT Housing Coalition  
Stacey Violante-Cote, Center for Children's Advocacy  
Alicia Woodsby, Partnership for Strong Communities  
Stephanie Zanker-Rivera, CT Dept. of Mental Health and Addiction Services