

Emergency Shelter Crisis and the way forward

Doug Kenshol
Executive Director of South Suburban PADS and
Co-founder of Illinois Shelter Alliance
dkenshol@sspads.org



Facing a Cliff

- Up to 4,500 people are currently unsheltered every night.
- This crisis will get worse unless we act. As ARPA funding tapers off, Illinois will lose up to 1,600 emergency shelter beds between June - October 2023.
- We can expect unnecessary death and illness, growing encampments, and increasing costs for emergency services.
- The crisis impacts every city and every part of the state. Faced with a growing encampment, Downers Grove approved zoning for a hotel to provide emergency shelter. Yorkville. Tinley Park. Glenwood. Homewood.



Emergency and Transitional Housing

- South Suburban PADS is working to prevent and end homelessness in south suburban Cook County.
- Over the past 31 years, the organization has provided shelter and 1.7 million meals to enable 19,000 people to overcome homelessness.
- Like many agencies throughout the state, prior to the pandemic, South Suburban PADS provided shelter on a rotating basis at places of worship.

Photo credit: South Suburban PADS



An Inadequate Emergency Housing System

The rotating church model is inadequate:

- Lack of privacy
- Not dignified
- Racial inequality: African Americans are 7x as likely to experience homelessness. At SSPADS, 85% of our clients are African American.
- Stress caused by moving nightly
- No safe and productive daytime space
- Inadequate play and study spaces for children
- Dramatically increased risk for contracting an infectious disease such as Covid-19
- No longer possible: 76% of former church sites are unwilling to reopen

Photo Credit: Respond Now





Pandemic Response

- Temporary COVID recovery funding is being utilized to pay for approximately 1,600 hotel beds.
- Hotel-based shelter has improved client outcomes and provided an efficient platform for rehousing.
- 1,600 hotel shelter beds are at risk and will be lost in 2024 as ARPA funding winds down.
- This crisis is further exacerbated by a severe shortage. Shelters are full everywhere and over 10,000 people are turned away annually. IHDA estimates the unmet need is 4,640 additional emergency shelter beds statewide.

Photo credit: Econolodge Hotels

The Shortage of Beds Will Result in Needless Death

Homelessness is lethal: US deaths have risen dramatically

theguardian.com/us-news/2022/feb/07/homelessness-is-lethal-deaths-have-risen-dramatically

supplies.

Deaths of people who are homeless are up 77% since 2016

Analysis of annual counts from 2016 to 2020 across 20 US jurisdictions

Year	Deaths
2016	~2,600
2017	~3,100
2018	~3,400
2019	~3,700
2020	~4,700

Guardian graphic. Source: Guardian collaborated with the organization Homeless Deaths Count to gather data from local governments and regional homeless service providers. Because the methods for tracking mortality among people who are homeless can vary from locality to locality, deaths should not be compared across the local jurisdictions.

From 65-year-old Randy Ferris, killed when a car veered into a California sidewalk encampment, Justine Belovoskey, 60, who died alone in a tent during a Texas cold snap, and Anthony Denico Williams, stabbed to death at age 20 in Washington DC, to scores of young people succumbing to overdoses on the streets, their stories reflect the harrowing tragedy of an epidemic of homelessness.

“People who die while experiencing homelessness are some of the most neglected in society,” said Matt Fowle, University of Washington researcher and co-creator of the organization [Homeless Deaths Count](#). “These are folks who most need our help and are least likely to receive it.”

Coronavirus was just one more hazard people struggling on the streets and in shelters faced in the last two years.

While the federal government makes no effort to count deaths nationally of people deemed homeless, the Guardian worked with Fowle to collect local data from large urban areas, where consistent year-to-year counts were available. The stark results stretch from Los

Marjorie Taylor Greene appears to kick teenage gun control activist

January 6 panel could release report on Trump and Capitol attack before midterms - as it happened

Iranian woman dies 'after being beaten by morality police' over hijab law

Special master in Trump documents case described as fair and no-nonsense

Columbia whistleblower on exposing college rankings: 'They are worthless'

82°F Sunny 4:43 PM 9/16/2022

The Shortage of Beds Contributes to Other Costs

- Unnecessary illness
- Unnecessary medical costs (often paid by taxpayers because of a lack of private insurance). It costs \$20,000 per patient to treat flu and pneumonia in a hospital. It costs \$236,000 to amputate fingers or toes as a result of frostbite.
- Increased emergency services picking up at-risk individuals and transporting them to warming centers.
- Increased congestion in police station and emergency room waiting rooms used in place of shelter.
- Growing outdoor encampments creating garbage, hygiene, and public health risks.
- Poor academic performance by school children and low college graduation rates due to instability.



FY24 Emergency and Transitional Housing Budget Increase

- \$51 million increase for Illinois Department of Human Services' Emergency and Transitional Housing (ETH) Program (increase from \$10.38 million to \$61.38 million)
- The ETH Program has long been underfunded - taking inflation into account, state funding for the ETH Program is only half what it was 20 years ago. The program currently contributes only 5-7% of the funding needed to sustain the statewide crisis housing system.
- There is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build a more humane and effective crisis housing system using federal resources available from the American Rescue Plan Act and CARES Act to help acquire and develop non-congregate shelters in former hotels and other sites. Increased ETH funding from the state is crucial to provide the operating and service funding necessary to make use of the federal funds.
- Illinois Shelter Alliance estimates that the requested increased ETH funding in the FY24 state budget would save 1,600 at-risk beds and create up to 3,000 new shelter beds in a variety of settings, such as hotels, congregate shelters and non-congregate shelters

Statewide Response to Ending Homelessness



Prevent homelessness whenever possible, provide crisis housing whenever needed, and prioritize permanent housing

FY24 State Budget Increases to End and Prevent Homelessness

- Emergency and Transitional Housing Program: \$61M
- Supportive Housing Program: \$60M
- Homeless Prevention Program: \$16M
- Homeless Youth Program: \$13.4M

Requesting support MMC and individual Cities

- Over 250 organizations from around the state have signed a letter encouraging Governor Pritzker to include \$61M (a \$51M increase) in Emergency and Transitional Housing Program in his FY24 Budget Proposal
- Sign online : <https://housingactionil.salsalabs.org/ethletter/index.html>
- Contact Doug Kenshol, dkenshol@sspads.org with questions
- Supporters include the Illinois Association of Medicaid Health Plans, Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Catholic Conference of Illinois, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Cook County, Housing Authority of Cook County, Cook County Health, All Chicago, Suburban Alliance to End Homelessness, Housing Action Illinois, Supportive Housing Providers Association, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, Illinois Shelter Alliance, and many others.