



2023 Legislative Priorities

The Florida Coalition to End Homelessness (FCEH) is a dynamic organization whose membership includes the state's Local Lead Agency Continuums of Care (CoCs), homeless advocates, local service providers, members of the faith-based community, formerly homeless persons, educators, attorneys, mental health professionals and policy makers statewide. Florida's Continuums of Care, operating under contracts with the Department of Children and Families (DCF), have made great strides in preventing homelessness despite the severe operational challenges of the past two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For over a decade, the Florida Legislature has supported the Homeless Continuums of Care providing funding to support day-to-day operations, however, current funding has remained flat for several years. The twenty-eight CoCs are seeking increased funding for FY 2023-2024 to meet three specific, critical needs which include:

Priority #1: Support DCF's Legislative Budget Request to Increase the Homeless Continuum of Care Staffing Grant to \$5,205,056

Ask: Increase CoC Staffing Grant from \$3 M to \$5.2 M.

FCEH supports the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Legislative Budget Request (LBR) to support the Continuum of Care (CoC) lead agencies. CoCs continue to incur additional costs to complete the required tasks as outlined in the s. 420.644. The State's support of the Homeless Staffing Grant is critical to Florida's CoC system, which draws down and administers over \$90 million annually to the State. The Staffing Grant was last increased in 2016 and provides \$107,143 to each of the State's 28 Continuum of Care Lead Agencies to pay for operational expenses. Operating expenses have increased in categories, including salaries, health insurance benefits, office rent, equipment, electricity, internet, telephone, and supplies. On average, each CoC supports three full-time staff positions with this funding. Many CoC employees have advanced degrees and very specialized technical skills and expertise, however current compensation is limited by budget constraints, leading to high staff turnover, negatively effecting CoC operations. The CoCs have done exemplary work in reducing homelessness over the past five years and without adequate funding to recruit and retain skilled staffing and support operational costs, this momentum will be lost.

Priority #2: Support DCF's LBR to Increase Recurring Homeless Challenge Grant Funding to \$15,000,657

Ask: Increase the Homeless Challenge Grant recurring base budget from \$3.1 M to \$15 M

FCEH supports DCF's LBR request to increase the recurring base budget for homeless Challenge Grants for Fiscal Year 2023-24. Homeless Challenge Grants have been funded by the legislature each year since 2014. Pursuant to s. 420.644(4), Florida Statutes, funding provided for Challenge Grants can be used to support any program, activity, or service outlined in the CoC plan to reduce homelessness. The Challenge Grants provide a flexible source of funding for CoCs, and provide an opportunity to serve persons, including families at risk of homelessness that may not meet the strict eligibility requirements for grants received from Federal sources. Allowable activities include emergency shelter, street outreach, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing, or homelessness prevention. Challenge Grants are competitively procured through DCF.

Priority #3: Support DCF's LBR to reinstate funding for the recurring base budget Homeless Housing Assistance Grants used for rapid rehousing assistance

Ask: Support DCF's LBR requesting additional funding to reinstate the recurring base budget Homeless Housing Assistance Grants used for rapid rehousing (\$1,834,665M)

FCEH Supports DCF's LBR request for recurring General Revenue funding for the rapid rehousing program, which provides rental assistance/housing services to persons who are homeless to move them into permanent housing. This funding will serve 505 households at an average cost of \$3,633 per placement. Rapid rehousing includes housing relocation and stabilization services and short and/or medium-term rental assistance as necessary to help a homeless individual or family move as quickly as possible into permanent housing and achieve stability in that housing. Services that may be provided for individuals receiving rapid rehousing assistance include rental assistance, moving costs, utilities, and housing case management. options to assist persons facing homelessness.