

Homelessness MATTERS



May 13th, 2026

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- **Opportunities for Action:** Contact your legislators to advocate for the S.H.I.E.L.D. NJ Campaign to protect the homeless response system
- **Resources for Providers:** Free training for frontline service providers on co-occurring disorders; Discounted National Alliance to End Homelessness Trainings available; Mental Health Basics Training for Homeless Service Providers Next Week; Free "BATHE" training available to improve communications with clients
- **Legislative Updates:** NJ bill would convert vacant offices into affordable housing communities; NJ Senate advances zoning and housing reform bills package
- **NJ Homelessness in the News:** Highly effective NJ hospital program connects homeless to care, at risk from cuts; New Brunswick opens 6-unit supportive housing for homeless residents
- **News From Around the Country:** Experts warn federal shift from Housing First may worsen homelessness crisis; School districts open safe parking lots for homeless families to park in amid rising student homelessness

And much more...

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

A graphic for the S.H.I.E.L.D. NJ campaign. At the top, it says "Protect New Jersey Residents from Homelessness". Below this is a yellow banner with the text "S.H.I.E.L.D. NJ" in large blue letters. To the left of the banner is a shield-shaped logo with "S.H.I.E.L.D." at the top and "NJ" at the bottom, with three stylized human figures in the center. At the bottom left of the graphic, it says "A plan to begin turning the tide on New Jersey's homelessness crisis." At the bottom right is the New Jersey Coalition to End Homelessness logo, which includes a stylized house outline and the text "NEW JERSEY COALITION TO END HOMELESSNESS" and "we can. we must. we will.".

Your Voice Needed: Urge the Governor and NJ Legislature to Add Another \$75 Million to S.H.I.E.L.D. NJ Residents from Homelessness

Homelessness in NJ has surged 57% in just three years, pushing the system to the brink. Without immediate action, the NJ Department of Community Affairs projects that by the end of 2026, **emergency shelter demand could rise 91% and street homelessness 94%.**

NOW is the time to act. [Use this sign-on letter to contact Governor Sherrill and your state legislators](#)—New Jersey must take bold, decisive steps to address this growing crisis and ensure everyone has a safe place to call home. With an additional \$75 million on top of the \$25 million included in the Governor's budget proposal, we can S.H.I.E.L.D. New Jersey residents from homelessness. Funds will be used for::

S — Shelter: emergency shelters and operations

H — Housing: rapid re-housing and supportive housing

I — Intervention Through Outreach: street outreach connecting unsheltered individuals to services and housing

E — Eviction Prevention: sustainable funding to prevent homelessness

L — Landlord Engagement: housing navigation and landlord partnerships

D — Data & Coordination: tools to strengthen NJ homelessness data systems and municipal supports

For more information or to get involved, contact Coalition Policy Associate Raisa at rrubinstankiewicz@njceh.org

RESOURCES FOR PROVIDERS



Opioid
Response
Network



The Intersection of Crisis: Co-Occurring Disorders and Homelessness in New Jersey

The Coalition is excited to partner again with SAMHSA's Opioid Response Network to offer a free training for frontline staff in New Jersey's homeless response system.

This free training designed for frontline service providers will be led by Dr. Dolores Blackwell, LMSW and will explore how co-occurring disorders present and provide practical, evidence-informed tools to support engagement and connection to care.

With over 172,000 NJ residents experiencing homelessness or seeking homelessness prevention services, this is a critical conversation for frontline providers.

Register for a session by clicking on a date below:

- [May 19, 7:00–8:30 PM](#)

[Click here](#) to download the flyer with more information.

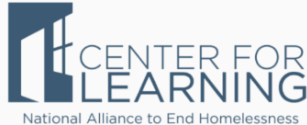
**Discounted Trainings for Service Providers
From the National Alliance to End Homelessness**

Courses include:

- *Key Skills for Shelter Staff: a 7 course series*
- *Understanding How We Got Here: How Historic and Ongoing Structural Racism Creates Racial Disparities*
- *Fueling Connections: Strategies for Homeless Outreach Staff*



NEW JERSEY COALITION TO
END HOMELESSNESS



CENTER FOR
LEARNING
National Alliance to End Homelessness

- Deep discounts for organizations with smaller budgets
 - Contact us at learning@naeh.org
- 15% off all courses for NJCEH member organizations
 - Use NJCEH15 at checkout
- 20% off specific courses for NJCEH member organizations
 - Use NJCEH20 at checkout

Contact Jessica Cantermen with any questions: jcantermen@njceh.org

[Sign Up for a Free Mental Health Training Offered May 20th](#)

Provided by the Mental Health Association of NJ in Partnership with NJCEH for Individuals Working Across NJ's Homeless Response System

This **one-hour virtual workshop** on **Wednesday, May 20th** and will cover how to tell the difference between mental health and mental illness, an overview of common mental health conditions and the impact of stigma, and how mental health challenges may present in shelter settings and within the community.

To make the training as accessible as possible, the same session will be offered at multiple times throughout the day. Please register for the time that works best for you using the link here and on the flyer:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/MSWPpRHZTSGuTP17PcvDTg>

Available sessions:

- 6:00–7:00 AM
 - 8:00–9:00 AM
 - 10:00–11:00 AM
 - 2:00–3:00 PM
 - 4:00–5:00 PM
 - 6:00–7:00 PM
-



GIVE YOUR STAFF ANOTHER TOOL TO CRAFT BETTER CLIENT COMMUNICATION

NJCEH is offering a free, virtual, 45-minute class designed to:

- Increase the positive outcomes of interviews for clients
- Help staff keep control of their time
- Keep initial intake to 15 minutes
- Highlight and define the 5 key markers of a good interview

This class, known as “BATHE” – *the Background, Affect, Trouble, Handling, Empathy Technique* – will be tailored to meet the needs of your specific program and can be held at your convenience.

Email JCantermen@NJCEH.org now to schedule a BATHE Technique training for your staff.

The NJ Coalition to End Homelessness is working for your program to make every day a better day.



LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

[Senate Committee Hears Zoning Reform Package to Increase Housing Supply and Improve Affordability](#)

NEW JERSEY SENATE DEMOCRATS

The New Jersey Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee recently heard a package of zoning reform and housing bills aimed at increasing housing supply and improving affordability across the state. Led by Troy Singleton, the proposals would encourage the redevelopment of underutilized office parks and retail centers into mixed-use housing, which advanced out of committee. The committee also heard bills for discussion only supporting accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and expanding opportunities for faith-based and nonprofit organizations to develop affordable housing. Lawmakers said the measures are part of a broader strategy to modernize zoning policies and address New Jersey’s ongoing housing affordability crisis. **The Coalition was honored to be there and support advancing these bills to address our severe affordable housing shortage.**

NEW JERSEY HOMELESSNESS IN THE NEWS



NJ Hospital Program Credited As 'Game-Changer' For Connecting People To Services

NEW JERSEY MONITOR

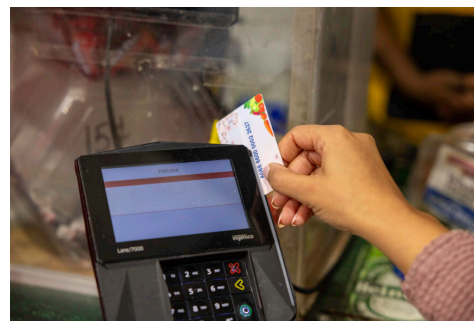
A state-funded initiative led by RWJBarnabas Health and Trinitas Regional Medical Center is being credited as a “game-changer” in helping connect people experiencing homelessness with shelter, healthcare, transportation, and long-term support services. Since launching in late 2023, the broader “Healthy Communities” program has linked more than 175,000 patients across New Jersey to critical resources, while reducing unnecessary emergency room visits and improving health outcomes. However, hospital leaders warn that proposed state funding cuts could jeopardize the continuation and expansion of these services.



Change to Public Housing Policies 'Hurts Everyone' NJ Critics Say

NJ SPOTLIGHT NEWS

Proposed federal housing policy changes—especially shortening eviction notice periods and adding stricter conditions for housing assistance—could increase evictions and homelessness in New Jersey and beyond. Advocates argue the changes would make it harder for tenants to understand and exercise their rights, particularly in a state already facing a severe shortage of affordable housing. **Coalition CEO Connie Mercer highlights how eviction and high rental costs are linked to rising homelessness, notably among seniors.** While HUD officials and landlord groups support the reforms as aligning housing rules more closely with state control and work expectations, critics say they ignore the underlying causes of housing instability and will ultimately worsen homelessness.



Thousands of NJ Residents Face Food Stamp Cuts Under New Federal Rules

NEW JERSEY MONITOR

New federal changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) could reduce food benefits for thousands of New Jersey residents and cause an estimated 47,000 people to lose assistance entirely, according to state officials. Leaders from Community FoodBank of New Jersey and the state Department of Human Services warn that stricter work requirements, increased paperwork, and funding shifts to the state could deepen financial instability for low-income households. Advocates say reductions in food assistance may also increase the risk of housing instability and homelessness, as vulnerable families are forced to stretch already limited incomes to cover both rent and basic necessities.



[Residents Continue to Question Homeless Apartment Building Coming to Woodbridge](#)

Patch.com

A proposed 28-unit supportive housing development in the Hopelawn section of Woodbridge continues to generate significant public discussion as township officials move forward with plans to convert the building into housing for individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability. The project, which will be owned and operated by Raritan Bay Area YMCA, is intended to provide temporary and longer-term housing for people discharged from hospitals, displaced by emergencies, or otherwise in need of stable housing and supportive services. Local officials emphasized that all residents will have leases and that demand for the units is expected to remain high.



[Housing for The Homeless Opens in New Brunswick](#)

MSN

New permanent supportive housing for individuals experiencing homelessness has opened at 293 Townsend Street in New Brunswick, providing six housing units designed to offer safe and stable living arrangements. The project was supported through Middlesex County's Housing First Fund and will be operated by Coming Home of Middlesex County, which will oversee resident selection and supportive services. County officials said the development is part of ongoing efforts to expand housing resources and reduce homelessness across the region.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY



[Trump Order to Criminalize Homelessness Sparks Alarm](#)

Penn LDI

Researchers and policy experts at University of Pennsylvania Leonard Davis Institute of Health Economics are raising concerns about a federal executive order that shifts homelessness policy away from the long-standing "Housing First" model and toward criminalization, enforcement, and involuntary treatment. Experts argue the policy overlooks research showing that the primary driver of homelessness is

the lack of affordable housing — not mental illness or substance use — and warn that reducing investments in permanent supportive housing could worsen homelessness nationwide. The report highlights evidence that stable housing, rental assistance, and supportive services remain among the most effective strategies for reducing chronic homelessness and helping vulnerable individuals maintain long-term stability.



[Championing Health Through Housing: A Policy Imperative for Older Americans](#)

NAEH

A blog post from the National Alliance to End Homelessness highlights the growing crisis of homelessness among older Americans, driven largely by rising housing costs and limited affordable housing options. The article emphasizes the strong connection between stable housing and health, while calling for expanded federal investment in supportive housing programs to help older adults age safely, independently, and with dignity.

[Why Continuums of Care and the Aging Network Must Work Together](#)

NAEH

Older adults are becoming one of the fastest-growing groups experiencing homelessness, driven by rising housing costs, fixed incomes, and worsening health challenges. The article argues that homelessness systems (Continuums of Care) and aging services are too fragmented to respond effectively, even though they often serve the same people. It calls for deeper integration between aging networks and homelessness providers —through shared planning, funding alignment, and coordinated services— to better prevent and address homelessness among older adults.



[Did Newsom's \\$3.8 Billion Hotels-to-Housing Program](#)



[Louisiana Bill Would Criminalize Homelessness](#)

Baptist News Global

A controversial bill advancing in Louisiana would criminalize unauthorized camping on public

Pay Off? We Filed 100 Records

Requests to Find Out

CAL MATTERS

A CalMatters investigation found that California's \$3.8 billion Homekey program, launched by Gov. Gavin Newsom during COVID-19, helped create thousands of housing units for people experiencing homelessness by converting hotels and motels into permanent housing. While some projects faced delays, cost overruns, and oversight challenges, many successfully provided stable housing and demonstrated that California can create homeless housing faster and more creatively than through traditional development methods.

property and impose fines, jail time, mandatory treatment, or forced labor for people experiencing homelessness. Supporters say the legislation is intended to address public safety and connect individuals with treatment and services, while critics — including homelessness advocates and civil rights groups — warn the measure could further criminalize poverty and strain already overburdened court and shelter systems. Opponents argue that punitive approaches without expanded affordable housing and supportive services may worsen homelessness and make it more difficult for vulnerable individuals to achieve long-term stability.



There Are More Shelter Beds Than Ever. It's Not Enough.

The New York Times

A recent report from The New York Times highlights that while the number of emergency shelter beds in the United States has reached a record high, demand continues to far exceed available resources as homelessness rises nationwide. Experts say shelters play an important role during short-term crises but are not a long-term solution to homelessness, emphasizing that stable affordable housing and prevention programs remain critical to reducing housing instability. The article also notes growing concerns about shifts away from "Housing First" policies toward more enforcement-focused and treatment-based approaches, which advocates warn could make it harder for people experiencing homelessness to achieve lasting stability.



A Lifeline or 'Dystopian'? Schools Open Parking Lots for Homeless Students and Families

The Hehinger Report

An article from The Hehinger Report describes how rising family homelessness has led some school districts—most notably San Diego—to open parking lots where students and their families can safely sleep in vehicles or RVs while accessing basic services and case management. While advocates say these "safe parking" sites offer stability and dignity compared with shelters, critics argue they are a stopgap that risks normalizing car-based homelessness instead of addressing housing shortages. The piece highlights these programs as a growing but imperfect

response to record levels of student homelessness.

We love to share news about the accomplishments, events job opportunities and noteworthy activities of NJ's homelessness service agencies. If you have something to share, please send it to us at info@NJCEH.org

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