

Homelessness MATTERS



January 8th, 2026

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COALITION NEWS



Congratulations, Commissioner Suarez!

The New Jersey Coalition to End Homelessness is proud to join many others in congratulating Commissioner Jacquelyn Suarez on her reappointment as DCA Commissioner under Governor-elect Mikie Sherrill. Over the past two years, her leadership has been defined by courage, determination, and a willingness to try new approaches, helping New Jersey make real progress on one of the most pressing issues facing our state: affordable housing and homelessness. She has also brought together talented, committed people and partners around a shared vision for a better future. NJCEH looks forward to continuing to work with Commissioner Suarez to build on this momentum and keep moving forward.

Homeless Persons' Memorial Day Observed Across the State

Groups across New Jersey came together on and around National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day to honor the lives of people who died while experiencing homelessness in 2025, a day typically observed on the longest night of the year. Candlelight memorials were held across the state — from Paterson to Lakewood

and in communities throughout New Jersey. More details on these services are available in the articles linked below.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION



Code Red Up for a Vote TODAY in the NJ Assembly: Act Now to Ensure It's in Effect by Summer to Save Lives!

We're excited to start the new year with good news: today, the Assembly Appropriations Committee will be hearing the Code Red legislation (A2258/S2346)! This urgently needed bill would establish a Code Red protocol and pilot program to protect people during extreme heat and air quality emergencies.

Extreme heat is the leading cause of weather-related deaths, and people experiencing homelessness are up to 200 times more likely to die from heat-related causes due to lack of shelter, access to cooling and pre-existing health conditions.

That's why the timeline to enact Code Red protections is so urgent. If the bill does not pass the full Assembly by Monday, January 12, and is not signed by Governor Murphy by Tuesday, January 20, it will have to be reintroduced and start the entire process over again in both the Senate and Assembly—putting lives at risk this summer.

We cannot delay when lives are on the line: **[Tell the NJ Assembly and Governor Murphy to pass Code Red now!](#)**



[Keep People Housed: Tell Congress to Direct HUD to Renew All CoC Grants to Avoid Dangerous Funding Gaps!](#)

HUD's sudden withdrawal of the FY2025 Continuum of Care (CoC) funding opportunity underscores the urgent need for a responsible path forward: a 12-month renewal of all expiring CoC grants to prevent catastrophic losses and keep people housed. The Coalition opposed the NOFO's severe cuts, which threatened housing for more than 170,000 people, and this abrupt withdrawal has only deepened uncertainty as winter approaches. With roughly one-third of CoC grants expiring between January and June 2026, communities face dangerous funding gaps that could force providers to close their doors. Reissuing a revised NOFO now is unworkable and destabilizing, leaving people who rebuilt their lives after homelessness fearing they may lose their homes once again.

We urge Congress to act immediately: include language in the upcoming appropriations bill directing HUD to renew all FY25 CoC grants and keep people housed.

RESOURCES FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

Communicating with Tenants During Funding Uncertainty or Possible Service Disruptions

The National Alliance to End Homelessness has released guidance for service providers on trauma-informed methods to communicate with tenants amid funding uncertainties: <https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Guide-To-Talking-With-Tenants-12.4.25.pdf>

Why You Need to Start Contingency Planning - Now

With the Trump Administration's 2025 pause on federal grants and loans, along with major changes to HUD's Continuum of Care funding, communities are being urged to prepare for significant disruptions to homelessness services. The National Alliance to End Homelessness has developed a three-part **Contingency Planning Toolkit** to help local partners assess the impact of funding cuts, prioritize resources, and plan strategically to protect vulnerable households. The toolkit includes a community impact survey, a decision-support tool, and a project-level checklist (coming in early 2026) to guide coordinated, informed planning across the entire safety net.

NEW JERSEY HOMELESSNESS IN THE NEWS



Governor- Elect Mikie Sherrill
Announces Jacquelyn A.
Suarez Will Continue as
Commissioner of the
Department of Community
Affairs

nj.gov



New Jersey Housing
Advocates Hail Court Decision
Protecting Rights of Renters
Facing Eviction

WHYY

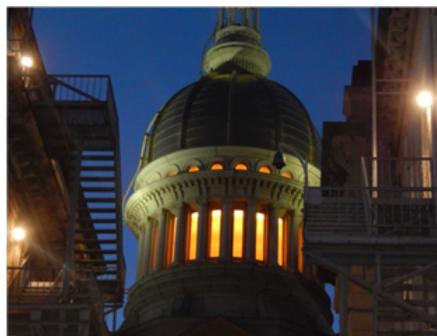
Governor-elect Mikie Sherrill announced she will retain Jacquelyn A. Suárez as commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs, signaling continuity in the state's approach to housing and homelessness. Suárez, who has led DCA for more than two years, will continue efforts to expand affordable housing, reduce red tape, and advance initiatives such as ending veteran homelessness, as the new administration focuses on addressing New Jersey's housing shortage and affordability crisis.



New Jersey Announces Nearly \$50M in Opioid Settlement Funding for Housing, Treatment, and Maternal Care

New Jersey Digest

New Jersey is directing nearly \$50 million in new opioid settlement funds toward treatment, prevention, and housing programs, with a strong emphasis on housing stability as a cornerstone of recovery. The funding includes expanded housing and services for medically complex individuals and families, aiming to prevent homelessness and keep vulnerable residents housed as the state continues to address the intersection of addiction, housing insecurity, and homelessness.



A New Jersey appeals court ruled that tenants seeking to avoid eviction only need to pay the exact amount listed in a judgment of possession, clarifying how much back rent is required. The published decision interprets the Stack Amendment to give tenants a clear statutory right to regain possession by paying that fixed amount, and advocates say it will help prevent unnecessary evictions and provide clarity for renters and assistance providers.



NJ 2025: The Year in Homelessness

NJ Spotlight News

New Jersey is facing its highest level of homelessness in more than a decade, a trend advocates attribute to rising housing costs and growing affordability challenges. This article examines recent state and federal policy decisions affecting homelessness funding — including cuts to a proven housing-first program — and includes links to several NJ Spotlight articles published throughout the year that explore the issue from multiple angles.



Homeless at Toms River Motel Could Wind Up Back out in The Cold

APP

[New Affordable Housing Law Delivers Results: Nearly All NJ Town Resolve Challenges by Dec. 31 Deadline](#)

INSIDER NJ

New Jersey's new affordable housing law has led nearly 380 municipalities to finalize plans to create and preserve affordable homes, marking a major step toward addressing the state's housing crisis. The law streamlines development, encourages mixed-income and supportive housing, and provides tools for towns to meet their obligations without lengthy litigation. These efforts aim to expand housing access for families, seniors, people with disabilities, and others at risk of homelessness.

In Toms River, 16 people who have been living for a year or more in a motel funded through Monarch Housing and CSPNJ faced eviction as funding for their stays ran out, though the motel stay has since been extended to Jan. 31. Many had previously lived in wooded camps and are now confronting the harsh reality of returning to unsheltered conditions in the dead of winter. Residents—including older adults, families, and those with serious medical issues—report long waits for permanent housing, difficulty accessing apartments that allow pets, and barriers like high rents and security deposits. Advocates say the situation highlights the growing homelessness crisis in Ocean County, where more than 577 people were unhoused as of early 2025, driven by rising housing costs and stagnant incomes.



[The Fight to End Homelessness Needs More Attention Than Ever](#)

The Trentonian

In Mercer County, New Jersey, community organizations including the NJ Coalition to End Homelessness and the Mercer Alliance to End Homelessness held a Homeless Persons' Remembrance Day on December 19 to honor those who died while unhoused and raise awareness of the growing homelessness crisis. With over 1,000 people experiencing homelessness nightly in the county and statewide rates rising 57% over the past three years, leaders emphasized the need for urgent action, housing as a human right, and continued community



[Candlelight Vigil Honors Homeless Lives Lost Amid NJ Housing Crisis](#)

nj.com

National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day was marked in New Brunswick with a community vigil honoring people who died while experiencing homelessness, as housing insecurity continues to rise across New Jersey. Personal stories, local data, and reflections from advocates and officials underscore the human toll of homelessness and the urgent need for sustained housing solutions and support services.

and political efforts to ensure safe, stable homes for all.



[Vigil Honors Ocean County Residents Who Died While Homeless](#)

Jersey Shore Online

Community members and service providers gathered in Ocean County for a candlelight vigil honoring neighbors who died while experiencing homelessness, reading names and offering prayers in an act of dignity and remembrance. The service highlighted both the human toll of homelessness and the county's lack of a permanent adult shelter, leaving many people in tents, motels, or unsafe conditions. Speakers with lived experience and outreach workers underscored that connection, compassion, and basic shelter can be the difference between survival and loss.



[Organizers in Paterson Call for More Shelters After Man Dies Sleeping in Freezing Temperatures](#)

News 12 New Jersey

Community members in Paterson marked Homeless Persons' Memorial Day by honoring Allen Higgins, an unhoused man who advocates say died from exposure while sleeping outside, and by calling for stronger protections this winter. Organizers highlighted gaps in local resources, noting that warming centers can be difficult to reach and that outreach like shuttling people to shelter is critical to saving lives. Speakers also underscored the daily dangers unhoused people face beyond the cold, including violence and serious injury.



[NJ Lawmakers Weigh Zoning Reforms During Murphy's Lame Duck Session](#)

Gothamist

New Jersey lawmakers are considering zoning reforms during Gov. Phil Murphy's lame duck session that would require towns to approve conversions of vacant office properties into mixed-use developments with affordable housing. Supporters

say the measure could help ease the state's housing shortage and reduce housing instability and homelessness by speeding the creation of new homes, while opponents argue it undermines local zoning control.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY



More Seniors are Becoming Homeless. Shelters are Trying to Adapt

npr

Specialized shelters for older and medically vulnerable adults are highlighting a growing gap in the homelessness system, as traditional shelters often can't meet their unique needs. These facilities provide medical care, privacy, and support services that help residents stabilize their health, access benefits, and move toward permanent housing. With demand far outstripping supply, the rising population of older and chronically ill people experiencing homelessness underscores the urgent need for more targeted solutions.



Amid Federal Funding Cuts, Housing Non-Profits Seek to Change The Narrative Toward Solutions

Candid

A recent Candid panel of housing nonprofit leaders highlighted the impact of a proposed 44% HUD budget cut and shifts away from "housing first" policies, warning that thousands could lose permanent housing. They emphasized that cuts threaten both shelter and supportive services, and stressed reshaping public perceptions, focusing on practical solutions, and mobilizing local community support.



A Growing American Crisis Is Affecting More Than One Million Students

USA TODAY

After discovering lead paint in her apartment, T'Roya Jackson and her five



Hotel Cancels Reservation of Guest With Local Address, Blames "Homeless"

ONE MILE AT A TIME

A Hampton Inn in Asheville, North Carolina, canceled a guest's reservation because his Hilton Honors account listed a "local" address,

children moved into a homeless shelter, struggling to keep the kids in school and manage daily life in cramped conditions. Her experience highlights the growing number of homeless students nationwide, a crisis addressed under the McKinney-Vento Act, which guarantees educational rights and stability for children experiencing homelessness. In 2025, New York City reported a record 154,000 homeless students, while California saw its sharpest decade-long increase, underscoring the housing crisis's impact on the nation's youth.

citing a hotel policy that bans guests living within 50 miles. The policy, reportedly aimed at preventing issues linked to the homeless population, is more common than many realize and has sparked criticism for blocking locals in legitimate situations, such as home repairs or fleeing unsafe conditions. Many see it as a striking example of how hotel rules can unfairly restrict access to basic lodging for people in need.



[New Report Sheds Light on Babies Experiencing Homelessness](#)

USA TODAY

A new report estimates that nearly 447,000 U.S. children under age 3 are experiencing homelessness, a population that has never been systematically tracked. Experts warn that instability at such a young age can disrupt critical brain development, yet fewer than 10% of these families are enrolled in early childhood support programs. Local organizations like Mary's Place are working to provide safe shelter, parenting resources, and early learning access to mitigate lifelong impacts.

[Homelessness and Housing Program Trends by State](#)

URBAN INSTITUTE

In 2024, over 770,000 people in the U.S. were experiencing homelessness on any given night, up from 653,100 in 2023, with rates varying widely by state. While homelessness among veterans has dropped 31% over the past decade, homelessness among families with children rose 25% last year. A new interactive tool lets users explore state-level homelessness data, track trends, and see how federal resources support housing programs.



[ER Visits Cost Millions- Remote Area Medical Costs \\$14K, Is This How We Fix The Healthcare Problem?](#)

Invisible People

Hospital Emergency Room visits for uninsured people can cost a city millions of dollars. Remote Area Medical costs only \$14,000 for the same six-month period. Healthcare isn't necessarily expensive. It's the WAY we do healthcare that's the problem.



[Housing Costs A Long-Term Dilemma for Trump Administration: Kevin O'Leary](#)

The Hill

As 2025 comes to an end, buying a house in America is feeling out of reach for many prospective buyers, and a new poll shows just 31% of Americans approve of President Donald Trump administration's handling of the economy. "Shark Tank" personality and chairman of O'Leary Ventures Kevin O'Leary joins "The Hill" to discuss what changes could be made for next year.

[Homelessness in Delaware: A Growing Crisis, and Growing Unrest](#)

SPOTLIGHT DELAWARE

Delaware is facing a rising homelessness crisis, with the statewide population increasing 16% from 2024 and concentrated in areas like Wilmington, Dover, and Georgetown. Local officials are considering solutions such as tiny-home villages and sanctioned encampments, but rising housing costs, limited shelter capacity, and changes in federal funding make addressing the issue challenging. Tensions have grown between residents and efforts to provide services, highlighting the complex and urgent nature of the state's homelessness problem.



[Man Builds Tiny House in Woods for His Homeless Father-in-Law](#)

MIDLAND TODAY

With shelters and affordable housing inaccessible for people with complex mental health needs, a man built a tiny home in the woods for his father-in-

law, who has been struggling with homelessness. Facing barriers like long waitlists, high rents, and limited shelter access, his father-in-law had nowhere safe to stay, especially during winter. The effort highlights the urgent gaps in housing, mental health support, and emergency shelter, underscoring the growing homelessness crisis.



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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