

# HEALTH



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## BACKGROUND

The Health and Human Services Department (HHS) provides a range of services to improve the health and wellbeing of residents, with specific focus on children and mothers, seniors, and vulnerable members of the community. In addition to serving as the primary public health agency, HHS also houses environmental health and licensing, which includes food, body art, mobile vendor, and salon licenses. HHS manages the city's relocation program, shelter system and warming center, and has primary responsibility for the city's response to homelessness.

HHS functions differently than most other City departments, with a majority of the departmental budget coming from grant funding. In the FY24 adopted budget, HHS received \$5.7 million from the General Fund, and approximately \$11 million from state and federal grants. The precise amount and purpose of grant funding fluctuates year to year, in line with emerging local needs and state and federal priorities.

This report provides a high level outline of the Department's operations.

## MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

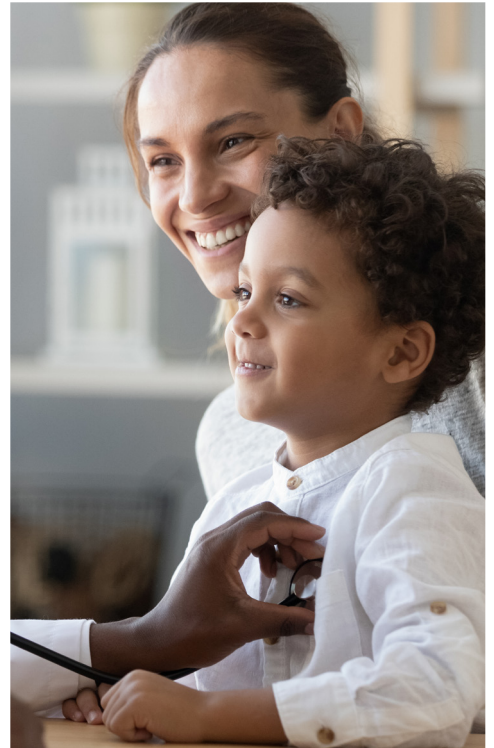
**MATERNAL AND INFANT OUTREACH PROGRAM (MIOP) & FAMILY WELLNESS HEALTHY START PROGRAM (FWHS):** The Department has two programs aimed at providing one-on-one outreach to families during pregnancy and early infancy. Mothers receive pre- and post-natal education, guidance on healthcare for them and their child, one-on-one case management, referrals to services, and more. In recent years, approximately 1,000 participants in Hartford and surrounding towns have received services each year through MIOP and FWHS. Nearly 100% of children whose families receive services are born full-term, and nearly 100% are born over 5 lbs 8 oz, the threshold for low birthweight.

**WOMEN, INFANT, AND CHILDREN (WIC):** WIC provides nutrition assistance to pregnant women, new mothers, and children up to age five. Participants receive food vouchers, education on healthy eating, breastfeeding education, and referrals to social services. Approximately 5,000 participants in Hartford and surrounding towns receive nutrition services through WIC every year.

- **Funding:** The overall Maternal and Child Health Division receives approximately \$430,000 from the General Fund and includes two full-time positions, and the specific programs are federally funded. WIC receives approximately \$1.3 million a year from the federal government.

**RACIAL AND ETHNIC APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY HEALTH (REACH):** REACH is a federally-funded program, administered through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, that aims to reduce racial and ethnic health disparities among populations with the highest burden of chronic disease. Key recent initiatives that advance the REACH program include Hartford's passage of two local ordinances aimed at curbing tobacco use, the creation of the Bicycle Master Plan in 2019, and partnerships with community-based organizations to increase referrals to healthcare providers.

- **Funding:** Hartford receives approximately \$800,000 from the CDC on an annual basis for REACH.





## SENIOR SERVICES

The Department oversees three programs to promote healthy living and self-sufficiency for Hartford seniors. The City spends about \$2.7 million per year on services for seniors, including five full time staff positions.

**SENIOR CENTERS:** There are four senior centers across the City for residents ages 55 and older. They serve as hubs of social connectedness and activities, nutrition, and access points for information and service referrals. The senior centers receive between 30,000 – 40,000 visits per year, and the City spends approximately \$1.1 million in General Fund dollars to support them, including payroll.

**DIAL-A-RIDE:** The City's dial-a-ride program serves 5,000 thousands of seniors every year, and it has averaged about 300 participants per month — though that number has gone down after the pandemic. The City spends approximately \$530,000 from the General Fund on Dial-A-Ride, and it receives about \$270,000 in grants.

**RENTER'S REBATE:** HHS helps to administer the State's reimbursement program for renters who are age 65 and above, or who are age 50 and above and meet certain requirements. For 2023, a single recipient's total income has to be less than \$40,300 and a couple's income has to be less than \$49,100. HHS facilitates between \$2.5-\$3 million in rental rebate payments per year.



## RELOCATION PROGRAM

HHS administers the City's relocation program, which is required under Connecticut's Uniform Relocation Assistance Act. The City is responsible for providing relocation benefits for those who are displaced, typically as a result of fire or code violations that leave a structure uninhabitable.

- **Funding:** In FY23, the City changed the way it funds relocation, creating a revolving fund, with initial funding of about \$600,000 in City dollars. Where appropriate and possible, the city seeks reimbursements from property owners. So far in FY24, approximately \$514,000 has been spent on relocation. While the annual expenditures vary from year to year, it's not unusual for relocation to cost more than a million dollars per year.

## HOMELESSNESS

After a decade of progress in reducing chronic homelessness through the Coordinated Action Network, homelessness in Connecticut rose after the COVID-19 pandemic. Hartford, like Connecticut's other cities, hosts a disproportionately large share of services and supports that homeless individuals use. The City has worked closely with Journey Home and the Coordinated Access Network to improve service delivery, coordinate service delivery between organizations working on interconnected issues like addiction and mental health, expand capacity for service providers, and advocate for a broader approach to ending homelessness.

**SHELTER BEDS:** Hartford is home to 342 of Central Connecticut's 393 year-round shelter beds. In the winter, Hartford hosts 96 seasonal shelter beds. In recent years,

approximately 40% of those seeking shelter in Hartford's warming center have had a last known address outside the city of Hartford.

## FUNDING FOR HOMELESSNESS SERVICE PROVIDERS

**ANNUAL FEDERAL GRANTS:** The City provides significant funding for homelessness service providers like Mercy Housing and Shelter, CRT, South Park Inn, and several others, largely through annual federal grants like the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS Grants (HOPWA). On an annual basis, this funding is approximately \$1.5 million, though it can vary.

### AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN HOME (ARPA-HOME)

**FUNDING:** The City received \$5.2 million as part of the American Rescue Plan's allocation targeted at providing

housing, shelter, and services to vulnerable populations. The City is using \$2.2 million over three years to enhance prevention, diversion, and rapid rehousing support with a priority on working with families with minor children. Journey Home is administering the funding to a variety of service providers.

**ELDERLY HOMELESSNESS OUTREACH GRANT:** In 2022, the City received a \$100,000 grant from the North Central Area Agency on Aging to support Hands on Hartford's outreach to unhoused elderly individuals — a population that was identified as in particular need of additional support.

## FUNDING SHELTERS

**MCKINNEY SHELTER:** The City funds the McKinney Shelter operated by the Community Renewal Team with about \$340,000 in General Fund dollars and about \$500,000 passed through from the State Department of Housing. That funding may increase going forward as the State amends its funding formulas.

**WINTER WARMING CENTER:** The City also operates a warming center on Washington Street seven nights a week during the winter, contracting with South Park Inn for

about \$230,000 per year, funded through the City's General Fund. It is the region's largest winter warming center, with 45 beds, and routinely hosts individuals from across Central Connecticut.

**MARSHALL HOUSE:** The City also allocates \$100,000 from the General Fund to the shelter for families and women run by the Salvation Army. The facility is currently undergoing renovation, which the City is also supporting.



## HOMELESSNESS INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

**MARSHALL HOUSE:** The City allocated \$1 million in ARPA-HOME funding to support the Salvation Army's renovation of the Marshall House Emergency Shelter for families.

**MCKINNEY SHELTER:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, the McKinney Shelter relocated to hotel space in order to minimize the risk of transmission in a congregate setting. After the pandemic, the City partnered with CRT to obtain \$3.4 million in state funding to purchase and renovate an empty hotel as the new, permanent location with more than 100 beds. The City is supplementing that with \$375,000 from the FY2023 surplus. The new location on Brainard Street will provide private and semi-private rooms and have enough space to arrange behavioral healthcare and other services that individuals need. It is expected to open in the first quarter of 2024.

**SOUTH PARK INN:** The City has reserved \$2 million in ARPA-HOME funding to support the South Park Inn's (SPI) relocation process. SPI's current shelter space is inadequate, and SPI has been seeking a new location for years. This funding will support site acquisition and construction of a new, more modern shelter space, possibly facilitating a shift toward more independent or semi-independent living arrangements. To date, SPI has not identified suitable space. However, the city has begun to examine the possibility of utilizing 110 Washington Street, the former adult education building and the site of the current winter warming center, as a new location for SPI as well as for a broader homelessness service center.

### OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUNDING FOR REENTRY-FOCUSED HOMELESSNESS

**SUPPORT:** Like many Connecticut communities, the City of Hartford has received funds through the national Opioid Settlement. The City dedicated \$400,000 from the first tranche of opioid settlement dollars to provide transitional housing to men who are or have been justice-involved, with a history of addiction. The program is administered by Community Partners in Action, which works with residents to develop housing plans to aid their transition to independent living.

## DISEASE PREVENTION AND HEALTH PROMOTION

**HIV CARE PREVENTION – RYAN WHITE:** The Ryan White Grant is part of the largest federal program aimed at bridging gaps in care for people living with HIV and AIDS. The City receives money from the State and federal government every year — totaling about \$3.2 million in FY24, though funding has steadily gone down as Connecticut’s infection rate has gone down. Funding goes towards staff salaries and subcontracted grants aimed at establishing a continuum of care, enhancing sexual health clinic infrastructure and core medical services. Allocations are decided by a Planning Council appointed by the Mayor.

**STI CONTROL:** The City provides screenings for a variety of STIs, as well as vaccinations and tuberculosis testing, with a small staff of clinicians. The Health Departments screens anywhere from 200 to 400 residents per year. As

part of this work, the City recently successfully applied for a five year, \$500,000 grant from the Centers for Disease Control to foster community engagement and build strategic partnerships to expand sexual health services.

**FEDERAL OPIOID GRANT:** In 2023, Hartford was one of 40 local health departments offered federal grant funding as part of the Centers for Disease Control’s Overdose Data to Action (OD2A) program. The City will receive \$1.1 million per year for five years, which will fund the creation of a data tracking system that will work across multiple municipalities, a lab testing component that will test opioids and identify emerging trends, and enhanced harm reduction work through the Connecticut Harm Reduction Alliance.

## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND LICENSING

The largest division in the Health Department in terms of employee count, the Environmental Health division is responsible for several types of inspections that directly affect the health and wellbeing of Hartford residents. The overall budget is about \$1.1 million with 17 General Fund positions, and the division generates approximately \$300,000 in revenue from fees annually.

**FOOD SAFETY:** The Department conducts more than 1,000 inspections of food establishments throughout the city every year. It also generally investigates between 15 – 30 foodborne illness complaints per year.

**OTHER INSPECTIONS:** The Department also conducts about 500 other inspections, ranging from farmer’s markets and regulated barbershops to tattoo parlors and temporary food service establishments.

## LEAD PREVENTION

Over the last 20 years, the City of Hartford has undertaken a substantial lead remediation effort, utilizing grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to remediate approximately 1,500 homes. In 2022, the City received a new, \$4 million grant over four years to provide direct lead remediation and other hazard remediation to an additional 165 low-income homes. The remediation program is implemented in partnership with many community organizations, including the Hispanic Health Council, the Maple Avenue Revitalization Group, and others. Between 2016 and 2020, the City’s lead prevention efforts helped reduce the number of Hartford children reported to have elevated lead levels by 58%, from 170 to 71.

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

- **CONTINUE PURSUING GRANT FUNDING TO RESPOND TO EMERGING NEEDS:** As noted at the top of this report, the Health Department can apply for a wide array of State and federal grants every year. Maintaining a strong pipeline of applications will allow the Department to be both nimble and have the capacity to respond appropriately to emerging needs.
- **SUPPORT SOUTH PARK INN IN THEIR RELOCATION EFFORTS:** The City has already allocated funding to support South Park Inn's relocation, but any successful relocation of a shelter will require the support of City government and the Mayor's office specifically. The site at 110 Washington Street is the most appropriate location identified to date, and the new administration should strongly consider supporting a relocation to that site.
- **CONTINUE ADVOCATING FOR REGIONAL PROVISION OF HOMELESSNESS SERVICES AND PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES:** As the Capital City, Hartford will always serve as the region's center of homelessness and public health-related services. But there continues to be an imbalance, and there is a significant need for services in communities throughout the region.
- **CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE SPREAD OF TUBERCULOSIS AND OTHER COMMUNICABLE DISEASES:** National data shows that tuberculosis cases increased in 2022, and Hartford saw a noticeable spike in 2022 and 2023. The City is equipped to help treat cases of tuberculosis, but if this trend continues, it may need to pursue a broader approach. The City should also monitor STI cases, which are rising around the country.
- **ADVOCATE FOR GREATER STATE SUPPORT FOR THE COORDINATED ACCESS NETWORK:** Before the pandemic, Central Connecticut had made strides reducing homelessness. The Coordinated Access Network (CAN) is an effective model for that work, and the City should continue advocating for greater funding and region-wide support to ensure that the CAN is able to effectively meet the increasing levels of need.
- **ENHANCE PUBLIC COMMUNICATION EFFORTS:** Part of the Department's mission is to educate the public, but it does not have any central, dedicated communications resources.