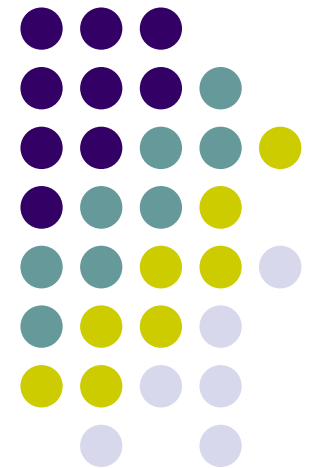


How targeting longest term stayers helps empty shelters

Maine Affordable Housing Conference 10/13/15

Presented by: Cullen Ryan
Executive Director
Community Housing of Maine



Targeting people who are homeless for the longest periods of time:



- It was difficult to identify people who met the HUD Definition of Chronic Homelessness in rural Maine, and by not identifying them, we effectively ignored them.
- Bouncing through small shelters several months at a time, people remained homeless for years while not appearing “chronic” to any one shelter.
- The result: Our shelter system was effectively clogged with people homeless for very long periods of time, using beds night after night.
- Since shelter staff could name the people staying the longest, we invented a simple definition to easily identify and target them.

Targeting people who are homeless for the longest periods of time:



- Maine’s Statewide Homeless Council resolved that “Long Term Stayers” (LTS) are defined as people staying over 180 cumulative days in shelters (or outdoors) within a 365 day period.
- This group was very easy to find.
- It immediately took the guesswork out of how many people were chronically homeless in Maine, and we began focusing rental subsidies and services on LTS as a top priority population in 2013.

Targeting people who are homeless for the longest periods of time:



- From 7/1/12 to 6/30/13, Maine's Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) data showed 262 LTS across the state. All 262 were single adults.
- Just 262 people? That sounded somehow very reasonable – we could house that many people if we all did our part across the state; indeed, many communities only had one or two LTS. Surely they could house one or two people. And with each community doing their part, we could end long term homelessness.

Oxford Street Shelter, Portland, Maine:

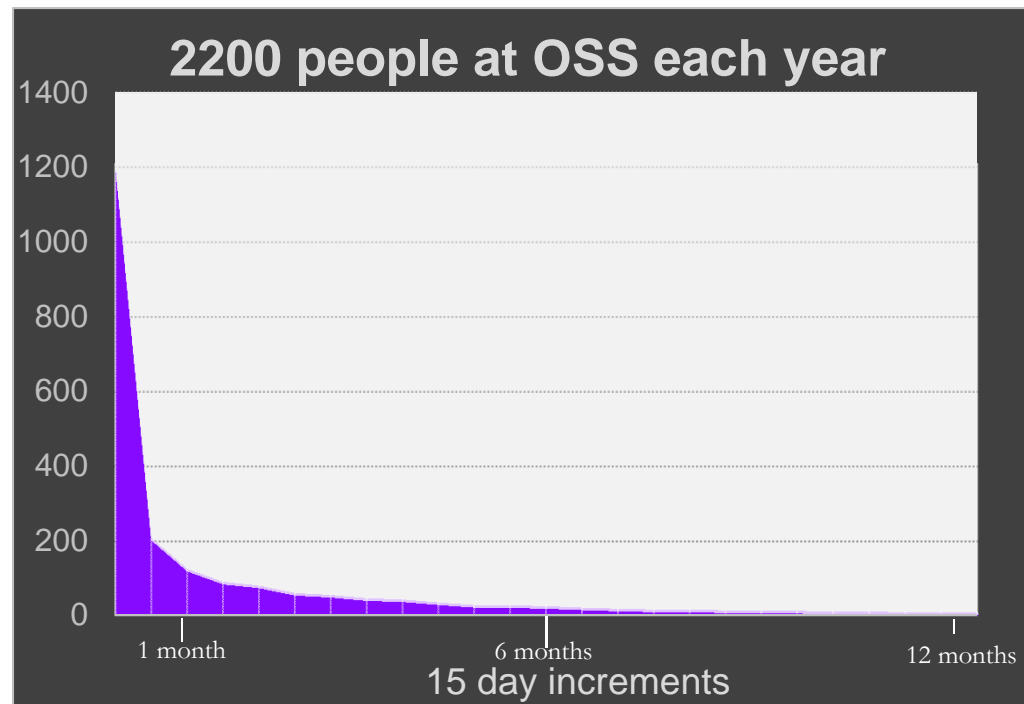


- Serves Adult Singles, male and female.
- Mostly dry, has some wet shelter capacity.
- Largest homeless shelter in Maine – up to 154 (functional capacity is 130).
- Recently had three overflows, each with a 75 bed capacity. This created chaos and significant expense.
- Some 2200 people stay at OSS each year. **Most pass through the shelter without much help, and end their homelessness very quickly.**



Lengths of stay for adult singles:

- 33% pass through in 1-3 days, 54% pass through in 2 weeks or less, and 80% pass through in 2 months or less.
- But 5% or less were staying night after night, using the shelter beds and causing the need for overflow. Housing that 5% would open up capacity at OSS, end the overflowing, and begin to reduce numbers.





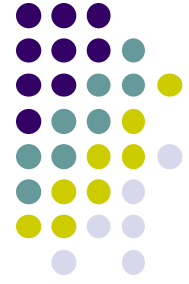
Lengths of stay for adult singles:

Oxford Street Shelter Statistics:

FY 2014			
<u>Length of Stay</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Cumulative %</u>
1 – 3 Days	724	33%	33%
4 – 14 Days	476	21%	54%
15 – 60 Days	570	26%	80%
61 – 179 Days	351	16%	96%
180 – 273 Days	74	3%	99%
274 – 365 Days	26	1%	100%
Total	2,221		

FY 2013			
<u>Length of Stay</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Cumulative %</u>
1 – 3 Days	679	32%	32%
4 – 14 Days	506	23%	55%
15 – 60 Days	537	25%	80%
61 – 179 Days	328	15%	95%
180 – 273 Days	70	3%	98%
274 – 365 Days	46	2%	100%
Total	2,166		

54% of the guests: Leave these people alone. Doing anything will probably slow them down. Note this is more than half of the people in the shelter.



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42%: Shelters are particularly well suited to help this group. But it can be easy to blow the resources on the shortest stayers - those passing through who probably don't need help, yet look like good targets to house quickly. Instead, leave these people alone until the longest term stayers are housed.

Targeting people who are homeless for the longest periods of time:



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4-5%: Get these people housed. People working in shelters around the country have often chosen to work with people who are easier to engage and house rather than people within this group, leaving them languishing for long periods of time. This is what we hope to change, and when we do, the rest will be easier.

A look at what has worked to reduce numbers at OSS:



- In 2005, one 30 unit SRO housing first property opened. In the year prior to its opening, OSS overflowed 75% of the nights. Beginning the day after it leased up, the OSS did not overflow for the following year and a half.
- Why? 30 Long Term Stayers were abruptly housed. Even though close to 1700 people were passing through the shelter that year, housing these 30 key people dramatically changed the shelter's capacity, and the effects were long lasting.



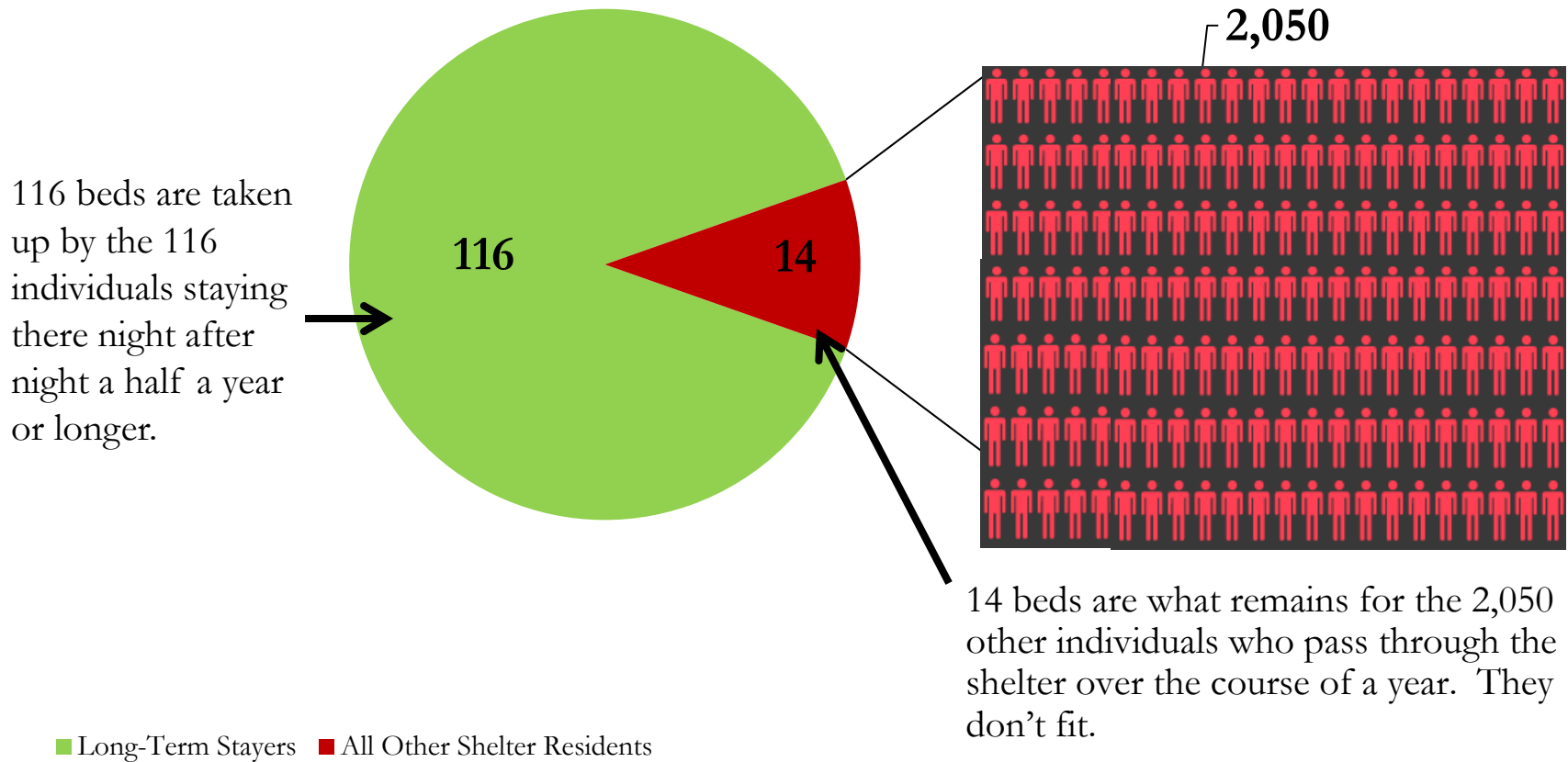
2013 Efforts:

- There were 116 Long Term Stayers (the 5% staying night after night) at Oxford Street Shelter.
- In 2013, the shelter housed a record 700 people, but targeted people with short stays.
- This fast-paced effort made no difference in the numbers (numbers actually increased). Three overflow shelters remained.

Targeting people who are homeless for the longest periods of time:



130 Oxford Street Shelter Beds





2014 Efforts:

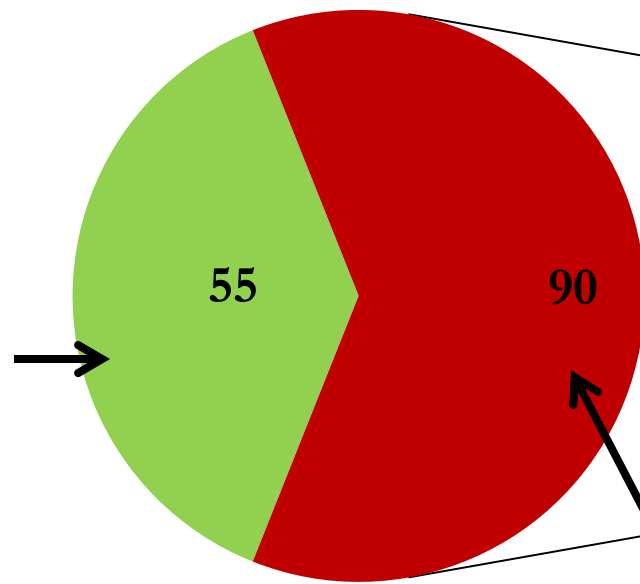
- In 2014 the shelter almost exclusively targeted the 116 LTS. By June, they had housed 22 and closed one of the three (75 bed) overflows. *It has never reopened.* By November, they had housed 66 LTS and intermittently closed the second overflow shelter. Numbers declined every month for 11 months in a row.
- Those remaining now represented less than 2.5% of the population at OSS. 6 months later, still less than 2.5% LTS.
- Confounds: By November, Portland's vacancy rate had edged closer to 1%, and pressure emerged within the City (due to GA reimbursement withholdings from the State Administration) to examine new approaches. A new shelter was proposed, and some key City Staff left.
- Result: Temporary slowdown in progress on LTS.



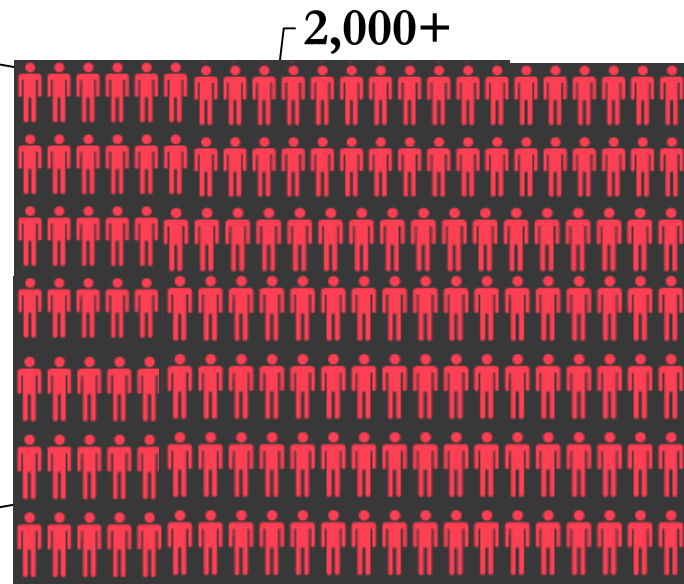
2014 Results (continued):

145 Oxford Street Shelter Beds

55 beds are taken up by the 55 individuals staying there night after night, for half a year or longer.



■ Long-Term Stayers ■ All Other Shelter Residents



90 beds are what remains for the 2,000 other individuals who pass through the shelter over the course of a year. They don't fit yet causing continued need for overflow.



2015:

- Pressure continued on the City due to the Governor withholding GA reimbursement.
- City Administrators announced an abrupt June 30th closure of the remaining 75 bed shelter overflow.
- Emergency Shelter Assessment Committee (ESAC) called an emergency meeting 4/30/15 on the topic of overflow closure.
- Shelter staff rejuvenated their efforts at housing LTS. After a 6 month break in progress, the week of 4/20, OSS Shelter staff housed 5 of their longest remaining LTS.



Proposed Strategic Solutions:

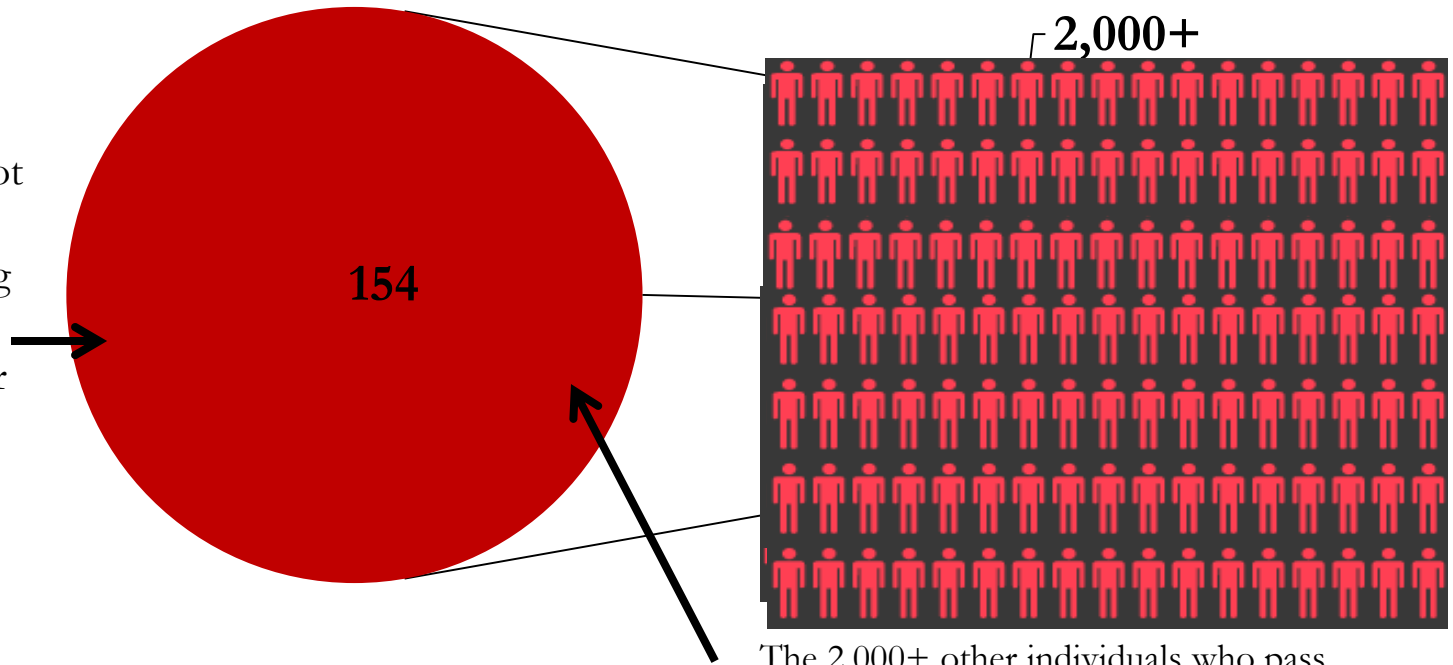
- ESAC voted unanimously in their 4/30/15 emergency meeting to focus a community wide effort to house the remaining Long Term Stayers. The shelter had been doing this with two staff. The community effort set a goal of nine staff targeting this population, housing them, and supporting them in the community so they would stay housed.
- Within three weeks, nine organizations had committed staffing resources, with multiple funding sources for service delivery. These people would soon be triaged by OSS Staff to work in concert and move as efficiently as possible. This effort was unprecedented.



End goal:

154 Oxford Street Shelter Beds

When beds are not taken up by individuals staying there night after night a half a year or longer, the shelter has much greater capacity.



■ Long-Term Stayers ■ All Other Shelter Residents

The 2,000+ other individuals who pass through the shelter over the course of a year now fit – and the shelter can shift resources to house them, longest to shortest, while keeping the original long term stayers stably housed.



Progress so far:

- 9 agencies and 9.5 FTEs joined the effort.
- Weekly meetings began working with one list of people beginning with 70.
- Within 17 weeks, 35 LTS were housed – right on track with the goal. The community is engaged and the pace is picking up, and commitment to keep at this is growing.
- The group is halfway there, and exactly on track to house every LTS by the end of the year. They are also poised to continue from there working from longest to shortest stayers until functional zero is achieved.
 - Functional zero means anyone who is sheltered is on track to be housed within 30 days.



Statewide progress on LTS:

As of July 1, 2013, there were 262 LTS in Maine.

As of June 30, 2015, there were:

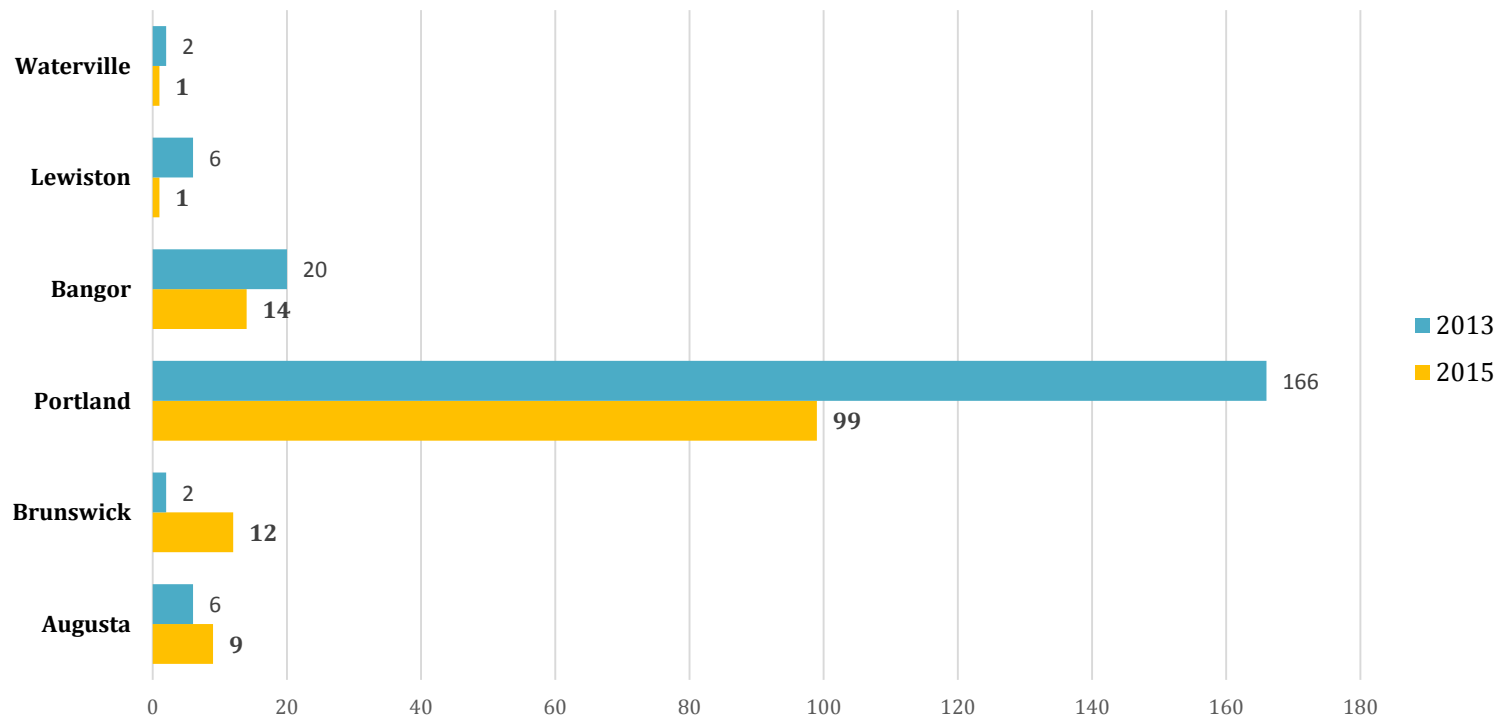
- 181 LTS (down from 262 in 7/13 – 31% decrease)
- 122 single adult LTS (down from 262 in 7/13 – 53% decrease)
- 59 family member LTS (up from 0 in 7/13; LTS were almost exclusively single adults prior to sequestration)
 - There is a 20 year pattern of family shelters filling up within 6 months of a Section 8 freeze, and emptying out within 6 months of an availability of Section 8. Freezes have generally been resolved in a year.
 - Let's end sequestration.

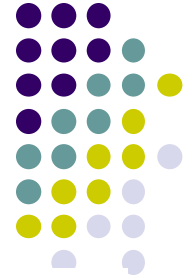


Statewide progress on LTS:

Data shows that as of June 30th, 2015, 136 (75%) of the State's LTS clients reside in urban shelters, and for 4 of 6 communities, their numbers are decreasing significantly:

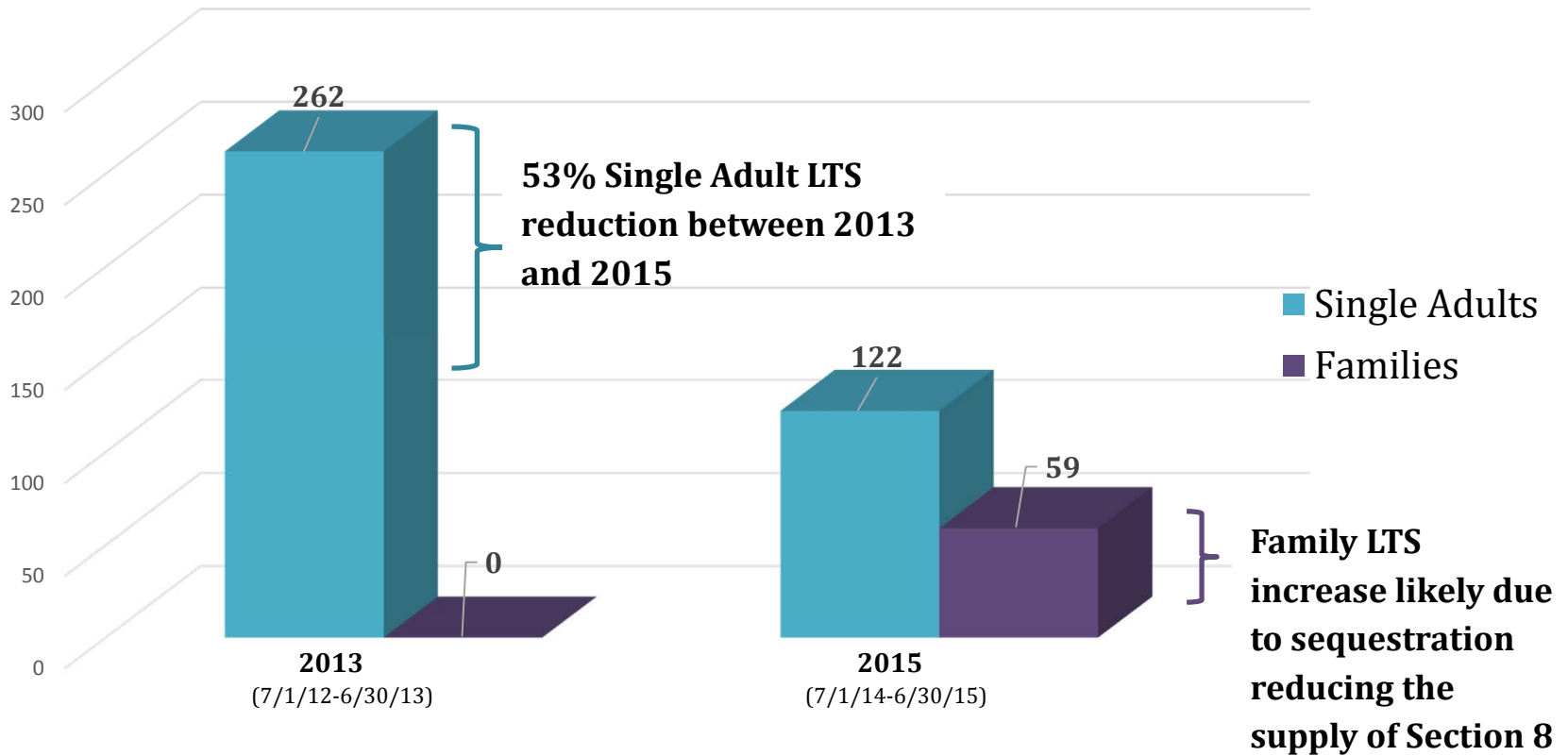
Urban LTS Statistics





Statewide progress on LTS:

Maine LTS Statistics





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