

Advocacy and Policy: Making Your Voice Heard on Capitol Hill Day and Every Day

Effective Collective Advocacy & Coalition Building

NAEH Conference 7/23/18

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Community Housing of Maine**



Community Housing of Maine

Community Housing of Maine (CHOM) develops, owns, and maintains high-quality affordable housing for working families and older Mainers. CHOM believes that housing, together with support services, provides stability, fosters dignity and respect, and transforms lives. CHOM is the largest housing provider for homeless populations in Maine.

Laying the Foundation - Develop a foundation of year-round collective advocacy and coalition-building.



Advocate for Shared Goals & Collective Interests

- › Take off your agency hats – advocate for the general needs of the populations you serve, rather than for the interests of one organization.
 - People need housing, a network of support services, access to mainstream resources, etc. to become stable and included in their communities.
 - Each organization is just one piece of the puzzle.
 - This builds trust among organizations and presents a unified front to your Delegation.
- › Inclusivity makes your advocacy stronger and helps you build a reputation as a neutral and trusted advocate.



Base Advocacy in Research

- › Ground your advocacy and the “asks” for your Delegation in solid, neutral research, whether conducted by your organization or published elsewhere.
- › Be able to point to reliable research behind year-round initiatives and requests to your Delegation on Capitol Hill Day. This will strengthen your position and better your reputation as a trusted source of information.



Collaborate

- › Build coalitions in order to advocate with one unified voice.
 - People often work in silos and have different myopic agendas.
 - Solution: Establish unifying agenda items, and ensure everyone is working on the same item(s) collectively. Build on commonalities.
 - Progress is made when there is engagement, focus, collective strategic implementation, and you are able to cheer on your fellow advocates.
- › It takes time and resources to foster strong relationships and build inclusive coalitions, but it is worth it. No one can go it alone.
- › Collective action increases your scope and effectiveness.
- › **Collaboration is most efficient and it works!**



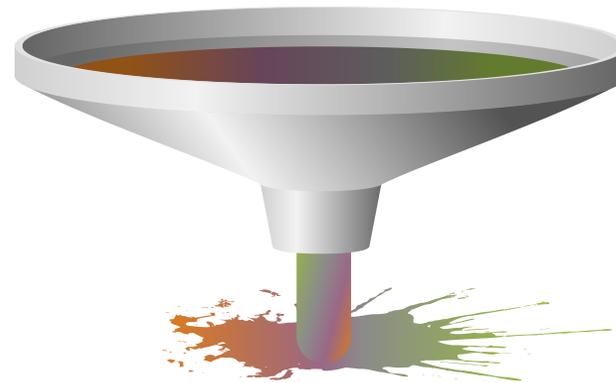
Use Data

- › Telling stories through data can significantly influence policy on the local, state, and federal levels. It can also bring more allies into your collaborations.
- › Illustrate the problem you're trying to solve with data, and the proposed solution, including evidenced-based models and best practices.
- › Show the baseline data, and compare annual data thereafter.
 - Annual data is key! Point-In-Time (PIT) data only reflects one night, and can vary greatly from year to year for numerous reasons, weather included. HMIS data looks at the entire year, and paints the most accurate picture.
- › Appealing visuals and clear formats help to grab people's attention and maintain their focus.
- › Highlight progress with regular updates, whether for your Delegation or potential advocacy partners. When you regularly demonstrate results, you increase opportunities for people get on board.



Effective Advocacy & Coalition Building Takeaways

- › Ask everyone to take off their agency hats – advocate for shared goals and collective interests, rather than for the interests of any one organization.
- › Draw on solid research.
- › Collaborate! People and relationships are essential.
- › Use data to highlight problems and solutions.



About herding cats...



A case study:

**The Long Term
Stayers Initiative (LTS):**

**Collaboration &
Advocacy in Action**

- › Since 2013, Maine has collaborated on a statewide initiative to more efficiently and effectively identify and house people with the longest histories of homelessness, our “Long Term Stayers” (LTS).
- › Since 2015, a collective group of 15 organizations has collaborated on a regional LTS effort in Portland, home of the state’s largest emergency shelter.



The Long Term Stayers Initiative (LTS):

Finding a statewide unifying agenda

- › Because it was difficult to identify people who met the HUD Definition of Chronic Homelessness in rural Maine, we effectively ignored them.
- › People homeless for very long periods of time were a small minority, but they clogged our shelter systems, using beds night after night in various small shelters while not appearing “chronic” to any one shelter.
- › Since shelter staff could name the people staying the longest, we invented a simple definition to easily identify and target them.
- › Maine’s Statewide Homeless Council resolved that “Long Term Stayers” (LTS) were defined as people staying over 180 cumulative days in shelters or outdoors within a 365 day period.

The Long Term Stayers Initiative (LTS):

Using research to find
an effective solution



- › For years, we had estimated the number of chronically homeless to be around 900 people. Applying the new LTS definition to Maine's Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) data, we found that in the 12 months ending 7/1/13, there were 262 LTS across the state.
- › Data showed we could break it down to very feasible individual community efforts over the next 4 years. We could end long-term homelessness if everyone did their part.
- › By working collectively, and doing the needed research, we found that we had an emerging best practice model, and significant collaborative work to be done.



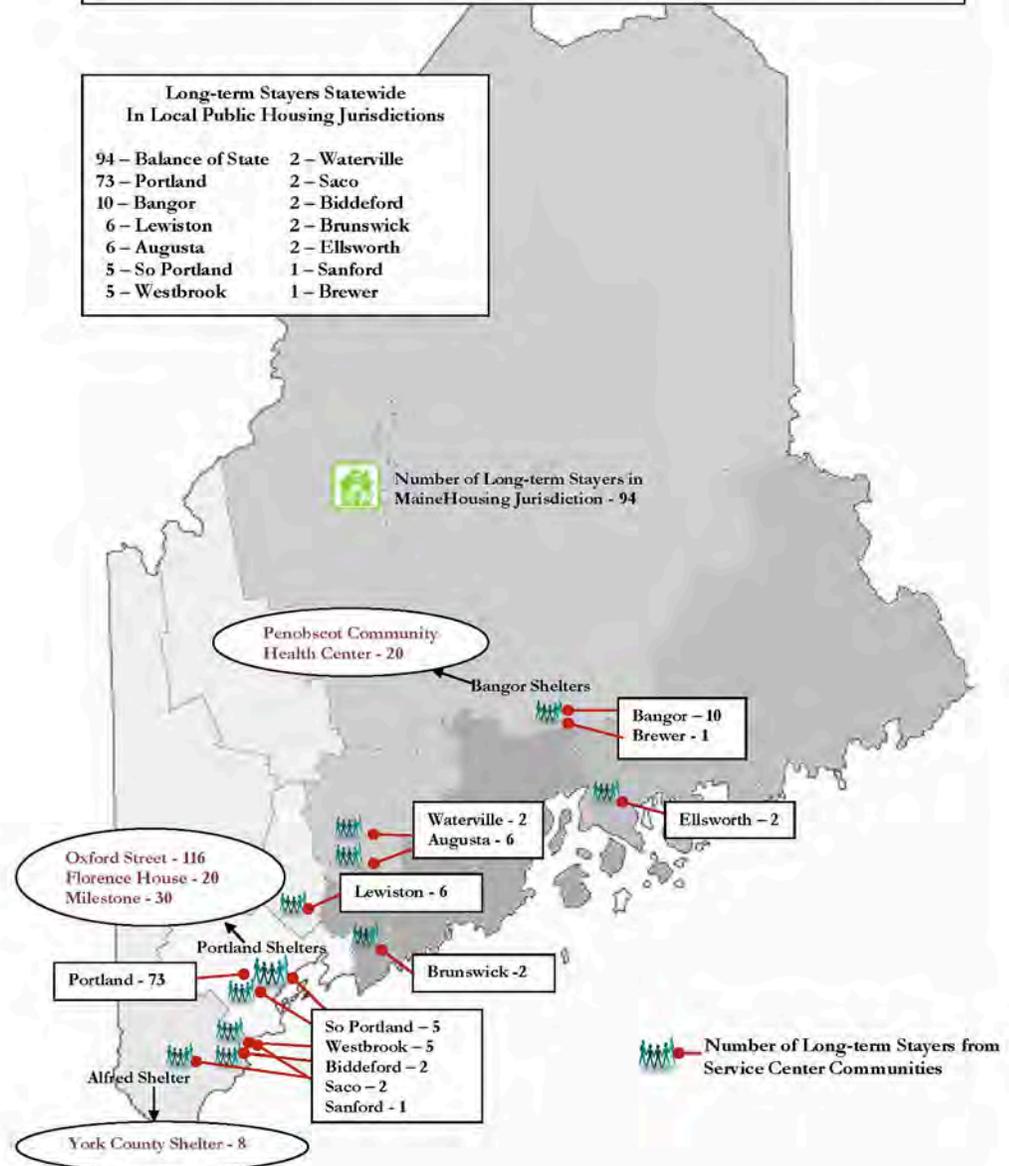
The Long Term Stayers Initiative (LTS):

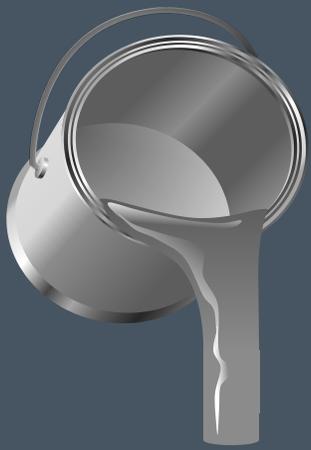
Using data to illustrate feasible community efforts

Long-term Stayers Report ~ Shelter Clients > 180 days within 365 Days

Long-term Stayers Statewide In Local Public Housing Jurisdictions

94 - Balance of State	2 - Waterville
73 - Portland	2 - Saco
10 - Bangor	2 - Biddeford
6 - Lewiston	2 - Brunswick
6 - Augusta	2 - Ellsworth
5 - So Portland	1 - Sanford
5 - Westbrook	1 - Brewer





The Long Term Stayers Initiative (LTS):

Using data to
get everyone on board
for a regional effort

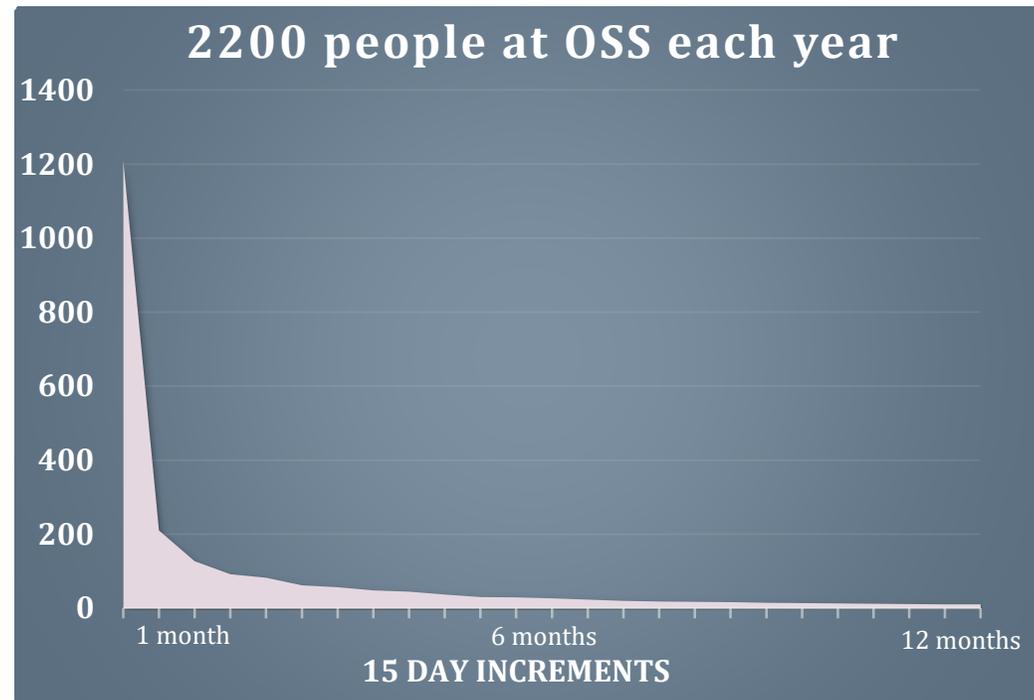
- › We discovered through HMIS data that 44% of the state's LTS were located at the Oxford Street Shelter (OSS) in Portland, the largest shelter in Maine.
- › Anecdotally we knew that majority of people passed through OSS fairly quickly.
- › We looked at annual HMIS length of time homeless data to determine exactly how long people stayed at the OSS.

The Long Term Stayers Initiative (LTS):

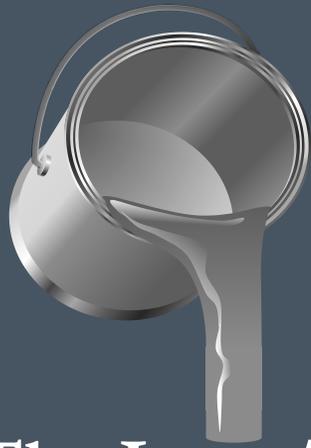
Using data to demonstrate effects on one shelter



- › Data revealed that out of approximately 2200 people staying at OSS each year, 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.



- › In late April 2015, a specialized regional effort zeroed in on OSS and the ESAC Long Term Stayer (LTS) Committee formed.



The Long Term Stayers Initiative (LTS):

Collaborating &
working towards the
same goal

- › The ESAC Long Term Stayer (LTS) Committee grew from 9 agencies to 15 agencies, including shelters, service providers, housing providers, public housing authorities, community providers, and local, state, and federal government officials, and grew in scope to include people sheltered and staying outside.
- › The group began with 1 by-name list, and now meets weekly focusing on 7 by-name lists.
- › As we examined more data demonstrating progress, community engagement increased, and commitment grew. The group is poised to continue this effort working from longest to shortest lengths of time homeless, with the mission to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring.



The Long Term Stayers Initiative (LTS):

Using data to demonstrate progress & generate more stakeholder support



- › To date, this initiative has targeted 366 people.
- › The group has worked collaboratively to make 218 Housing First placements, housing a group that collectively had more than 315 years of homelessness.
- › The monthly occupancy highs have markedly decreased:
 - Before this initiative, OSS monthly occupancy highs exceeded 250 people the majority of the time, with the six-year high being 292 in February 2015.
 - Since this initiative's inception, OSS monthly occupancy highs have just barely gone above 250 people two times.
- › Approximately 95.6% of Long Term Stayers (LTS) have remained in their housing.

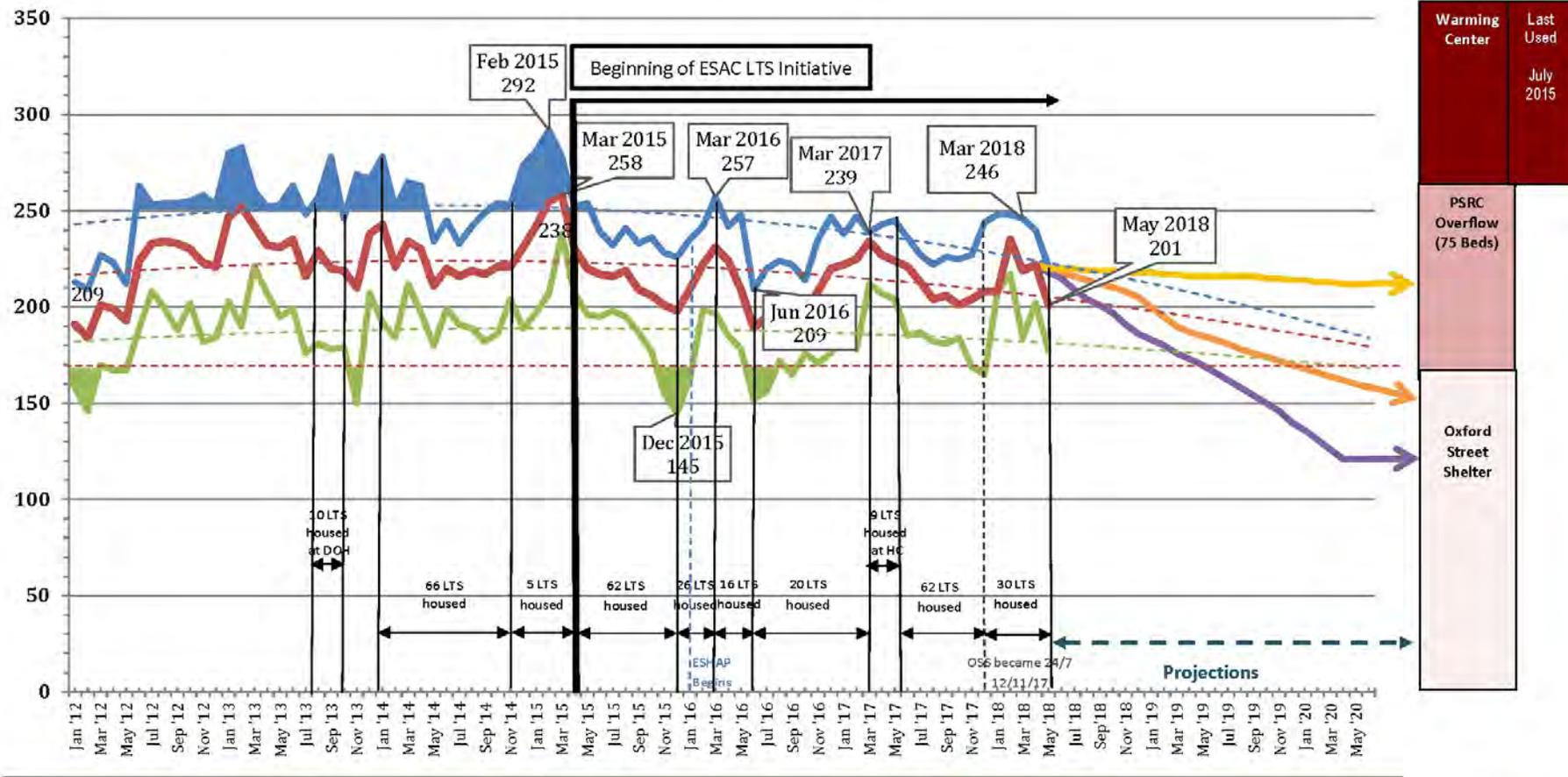
CITY OF PORTLAND
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT
SOCIAL SERVICES DIVISION

OXFORD STREET SHELTER & COMMUNITY OVERFLOW

Average Number of Individuals Served on Any Given Night – Per Month

January 2012 - June 2020

Shaded areas = Highs above 250
Shaded areas = Lows below 170, or OSS capacity assuming turnover



Actual Data – The highest number of people served at OSS

Actual Data – The average number of people served at OSS

Actual Data – The lowest number of people served at OSS

Projections 4/2018 based on housing placements at a rate of 2.5 per month

Projections 4/2018 based on housing placements at a rate of 5 per month

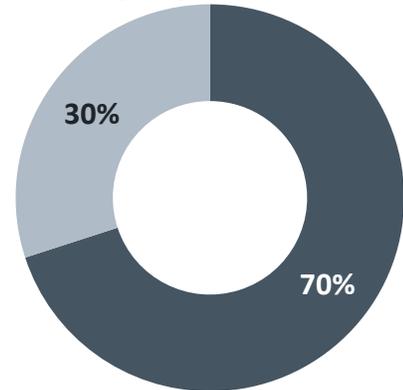
Projections 4/2018 based on housing placements at a rate of 8 per month

Warming Center	Last Used
	July 2015
PSRC Overflow (75 Beds)	
Oxford Street Shelter	

The Long Term Stayers Initiative (LTS): Using data to illustrate progress

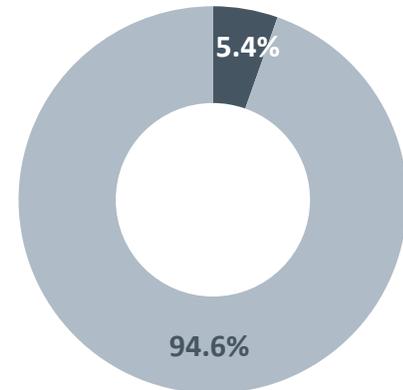
**Number of people served
at OSS – monthly highs**
Percentage of months with highs
250 people or more

Before the
LTS Initiative
began



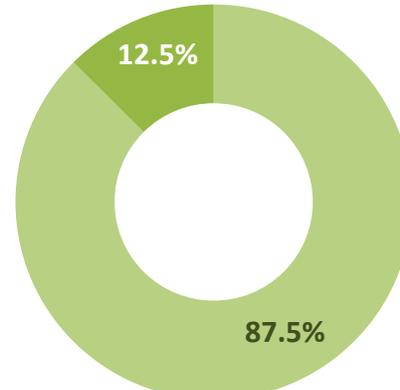
■ 250 or more ■ Less than 250

After the LTS
Initiative
began

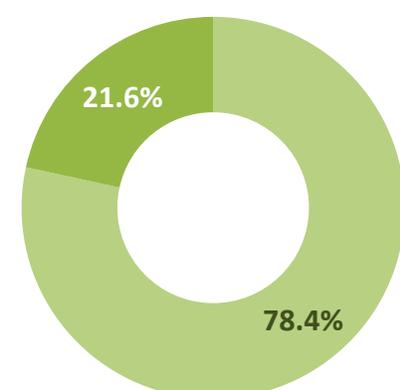


■ 250 or more ■ Less than 250

**Number of people served
at OSS – monthly lows**
Percentage of months with lows
less than 170 people

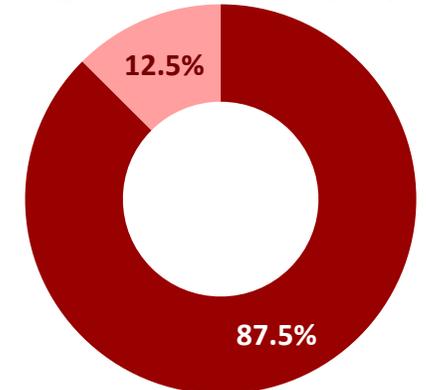


■ 170 or more ■ Less than 170

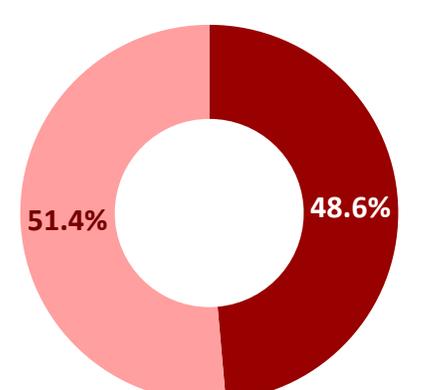


■ 170 or more ■ Less than 170

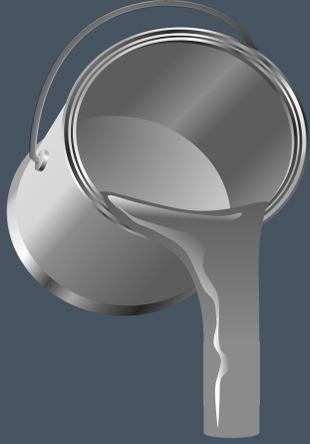
**Number of people served
at OSS – monthly averages**
Percentage of months with
averages less than 210 people



■ 210 or more ■ Less than 210



■ 210 or more ■ Less than 210



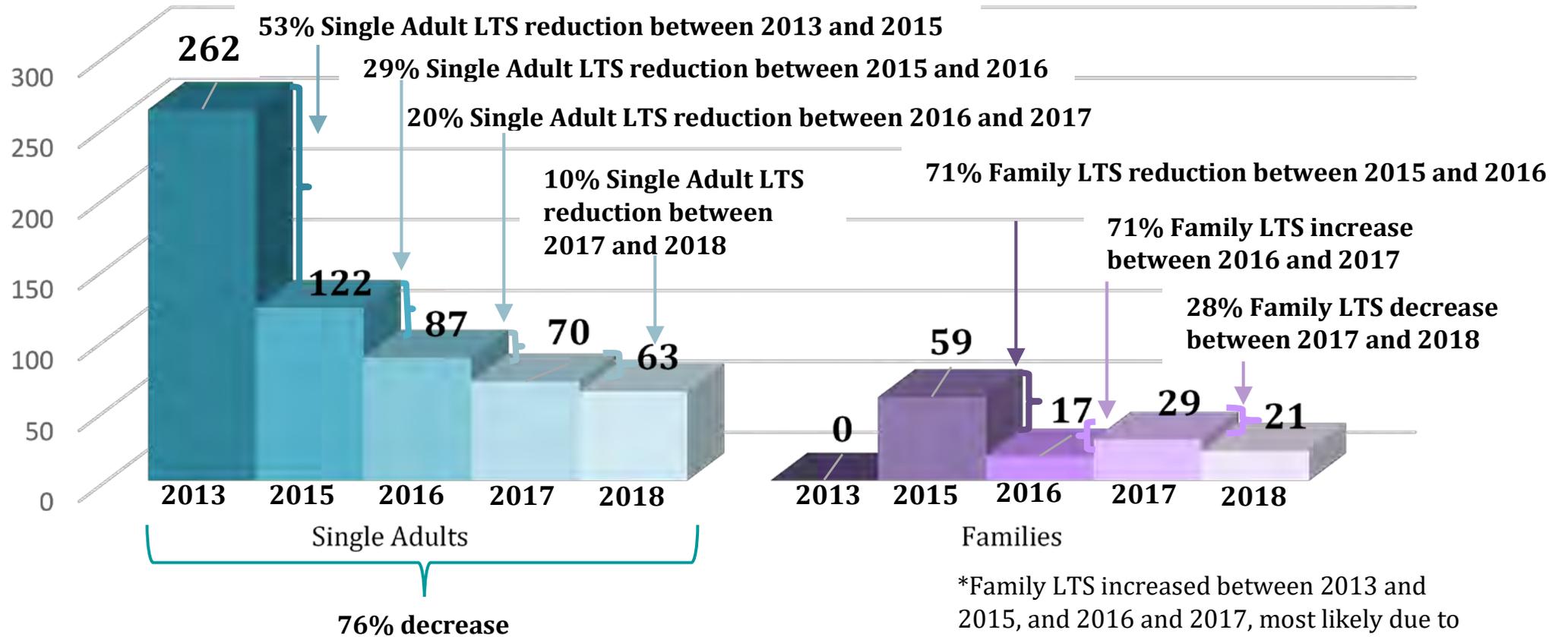
The Long Term Stayers Initiative (LTS):

Using data to
demonstrate statewide
progress



- › On July 1, 2013, there were 262 LTS in Maine.
- › By July 1, 2018, there were:
 - 63 single adult LTS (down from 70 in 7/17, and 262 in 7/13 – a 76% decrease)
 - 21 family member LTS (down from 29 in 7/17 – a 28% decrease)
- › Overall, LTS now represent 1.3% of the overall population, down from 5% of the population in 2013.

The Long Term Stayers Initiative (LTS): Using data to illustrate statewide progress



*Family LTS increased between 2013 and 2015, and 2016 and 2017, most likely due to interruptions in the supply of Section 8 caused by sequestration. A Section 8 freeze continued in 2018.

Bringing it all to Capitol Hill Day

- › Maine comes into Capitol Hill Day with 2 main “asks”:
 1. Full funding for Section 8 in all forms, and
 2. Full funding for McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants.
- › We speak with a unified voice, showing our Delegation that this funding is used effectively and efficiently, towards collaborative, streamlined initiatives.
- › We use data to show the effectiveness of our LTS initiative, as well as its affect on Maine’s system performance measures.
- › The overall message: We know exactly how to end homelessness in Maine -- we have the research and data, and have developed and implemented evidence-based, best practice models -- we simply need the resources to do so.

Capitol Hill Day Takeaways

1

Showcase your collaborations!

2

Use **annual** data to highlight the problems, the solutions, and your progress.

3

Use compelling visuals to present the data.

4

Present your top 2 priorities as your “asks.” Too many requests can be overwhelming and can make your advocacy less effective. Stick to a few key asks to best effect change and build a relationship with your Delegation.



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