



Coalition on Homelessness
and Housing in Ohio
COHHIO

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Images and Numbers tell the Story of Increasing Homelessness Across Ohio

“We can do better than this. . . We have to.”

With deep federal cuts looming to affordable housing and homelessness programs, the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO) and Homefull of Dayton today joined forces to call on state and federal lawmakers to protest budget decisions that would push more people into poverty and housing insecurity.

The event included the unveiling of Homefull’s dramatic portrait exhibit of homeless individuals and families that will remain in the statehouse through November. Both were coordinated in conjunction with National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week, November 12-20.

“Homelessness is a lagging indicator, meaning it begins to register only after people have exhausted all other options and resources to stay housed,” said Bill Faith, executive director of COHHIO. “So when it’s up dramatically – as it is all over the state – it means the floodgates have begun to open.

“Current allocations are insufficient to meet today’s demand, let alone tomorrow’s *higher* demand with less funding. How can we hope for economic recovery if our federal budget strategies cut programs that are helping poor people just get through the day? It is senseless to intentionally push more people in a direction in which they can not soon recover.”

Faith noted increases in homeless numbers across Ohio. Especially disturbing, he said, are the numbers of individuals and families who are accessing help for the first time in their lives.

- In Columbus, shelters are “bursting at the seams.” Two years ago on 56 occasions there were no beds in the regular shelter capacity for families in need. Last year this happened 3,312 times. Spending on overflow shelter by the Community Shelter Board increased 5000% this year over last. (**Tiffany Nobles**, Community Shelter Board, 614-221-9195, ext. 117)
- Demand at the Norma Herr Women’s Center in Cleveland is up an alarming 44 percent for the same reporting period this year over last; 1275 women sought emergency housing at NHWC in 2011 versus 880 in 2010. (**Eric Morse**, Norma Herr Women’s Center, 216-274-3312)
- The Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless reports that family homelessness is so huge that it’s creating a bottleneck in the system. They can’t cycle families

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- through fast enough to accommodate those on the waiting list. (**Josh Spring**, Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless, 513-716-7455)
- The executive director of the Findlay Hope House for the Homeless says, “We are drowning. Housing rental assistance is gone for the year and the waiting list for women and children is the longest we’ve ever had. . . We are drowning.” (**Sammie Rhoades**, Findlay Hope House for the Homeless, 419-788-1370)
 - In Lorain County, seasonal shelter was full within one week of opening -- earlier than ever before. The transitional housing program is up 20 percent over last year, and the street outreach program averages 51 new clients each month who have never received services before. (**Christine Matusik-Plas**, Mary Housing Ministry and Lorain County Task Force for the Homeless, 440-315-7689).

The federal FY 2012 appropriations budget for homelessness prevention and affordable housing, to be voted on in the coming days, will fall about eight percent short of 2010 appropriations, Faith said; and that doesn’t count the deficit reduction cuts that will be made later this month by the Super Committee.

All of which will make things harder in Ohio, he said. Despite our state’s current budget problems, the administration has remained supportive of critical housing needs. “The good news is that there’s a track record on both sides of the aisle – and at the top – to protect our state’s most vulnerable. We hope that commitment continues through the mid-biennial budget review process.

“I look at these homeless numbers across the state and I think, ‘We can do better than this. We have to.’”