

A Social Barometer

for Connecticut

Spring 2004

2-1-1

INFOLINE

This bulletin is published for state leaders, planners and others interested in Connecticut's well-being. The focus of this edition is the shortage of affordable housing and the problem of homelessness in Connecticut.

Housing and Homelessness in Connecticut

We have all seen the headlines in the daily newspapers about the affordable housing crisis and homelessness on the rise in the wealthiest state in the United States. At 2-1-1 Infoline these headlines represent the plight of callers as year after year 2-1-1 Specialists respond to Connecticut residents who are struggling with their need for safe, affordable housing. Over the past five years the number of housing related requests handled by 2-1-1 Specialists increased by 120%, compared with the overall number of service requests which increased by 53%. During the same time period the number of calls from homeless individuals increased by an astounding 357%.



Throughout the state communities are coming together to address the shortage of affordable housing and the related issue of homelessness. Programs have been established to assist working poor families and the results are good, but demand far exceeds the resources to meet the needs. Other initiatives, such as the Governor's recent proposal to dramatically increase the number of supportive housing units in the state, will help to address the challenges faced by persons struggling to maintain their homes while dealing with disabling conditions such as mental illness or substance abuse.

The extent of the affordable housing issue is enormous. This report is meant to enhance the information that will augment the planning and solution implementation process needed to address this problem. The content of this report reflects information from 2-1-1 Infoline's database of community resources and five years of data collected from calls to 2-1-1 Infoline. Other sources are also cited, including links to websites where additional information can be accessed.



2-1-1 Infoline is a partnership between the State of Connecticut and Connecticut United Ways.

DEFINING TERMS:

Throughout this report the reader will see references to **transactions** and **service requests**. At 2-1-1 Infoline all calls are documented in a database using software that tracks calls by transactions and service requests with relevant **referrals**.

TRANSACTION: A transaction can consist of one phone call or several, depending on the nature of the caller's needs. For example, the call may involve a simple request for the phone number and hours of service for an agency; or the call may require helping the caller sort through a number of options and resources that require additional research and follow-up calls.

SERVICE REQUEST: Because callers frequently have multiple needs a transaction can include multiple service requests. As an example, a caller may need subsidized housing and also consumer credit counseling. A national taxonomy is used to categorize service terms.

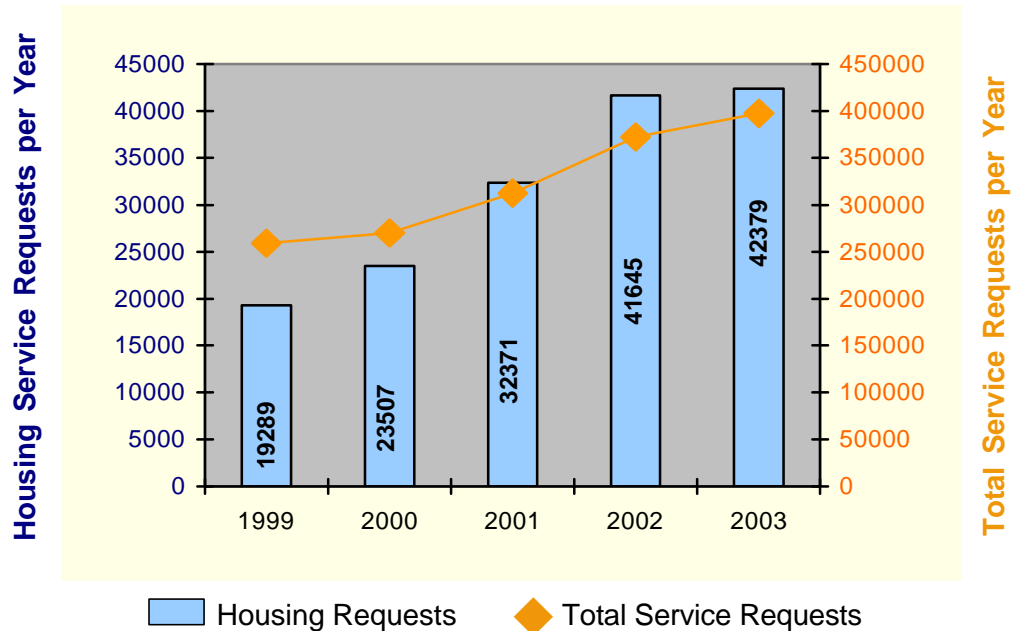
REFERRAL: Where options for referrals exist, a caller can be referred to more than one program or agency. However, reports do not include duplicated referrals. The multiple referral is especially relevant in cases of homelessness where shelters are most often full, and referrals for subsidized housing units which typically have long waiting lists.

Housing Service Requests Per Year

Housing service requests include inquiries about rental assistance and subsidy programs, homeless shelters and drop-in centers, and transitional living. As shown in Figure 1, housing service requests have increased 120% from 1999 to 2003. This increase has outpaced the rate of increase of all caller requests in the same five years (53% increase from 259,162 to 397,223).

Beginning in 2000 and significantly increasing by 2001, the trendline leveled off by 2003. From 2002 to 2003 the increase in housing requests was less than 2%. During this five year period, requests for housing services increased at a rate higher than the rate of all caller requests beginning in 2001.

Figure 1



Source: United Way of Connecticut/2-1-1 Infoline

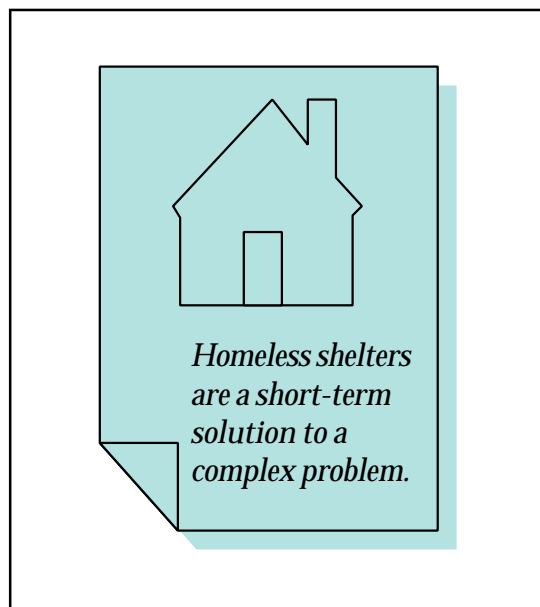
Requests for Homeless Shelters: 2003

2-1-1 Infoline receives requests for referrals to homeless shelters from all over the state. From Ansonia to Woodstock, callers are trying to get shelter in one of Connecticut's 52 homeless shelters. Windham, Vernon, Killingly, Norwalk, Milford, and Groton each have only one homeless shelter, yet Infoline received over 150 requests for homeless shelters from each of these towns. Over 300 calls for homeless shelter referrals were received from Manchester, Meriden, Bristol, and Norwich, yet again each of these towns have only one shelter. Infoline received over 500 calls for homeless shelters from New London and East Hartford, each with only one shelter. See Figure 3.

People who are homeless called from towns where there are no shelters and had to be referred to nearby towns with the needed service. Last year, more than twenty calls for homeless shelters were received from people in each of the following towns...Windsor, Bloomfield, Plainville, Newington, Southington, New Milford, Shelton, Seymour, Greenwich, East Haven, Branford, Ledyard, Plainfield, and Putnam.

2-1-1 Infoline does not collect personal information that would allow us to identify repeated requests from the same caller. The number of requests per town likely includes repeat callers, which may explain higher numbers in some of the smaller towns.

A homeless person is defined by federal law as one who lacks a regular and adequate night time residence and whose primary night time residence is in a public or private shelter that provides temporary living accommodations. A homeless person also is someone who uses places not ordinarily associated with regular accommodations such as building doorways, automobiles or under bridges; therefore, the number of homeless people seeking and using shelters represents only one segment of the homeless population. Those who double up with family and/or friends on a temporary basis are not always counted.



Chronic Homelessness

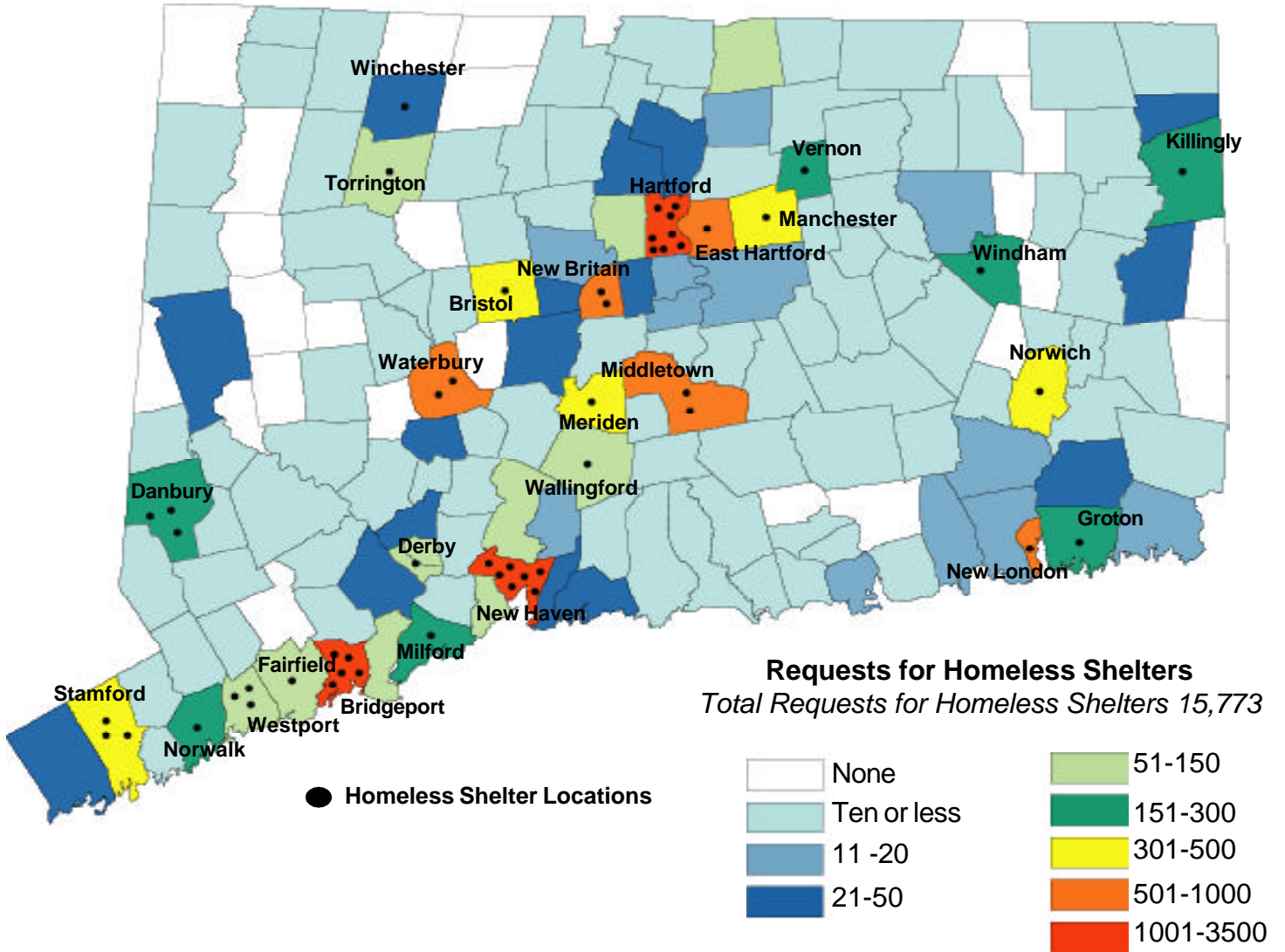
Homeless shelters are a short-term solution to a complex problem. According to the Connecticut Partnership for Strong Communities "there are 1,700 units of supportive housing scattered throughout the state. Some projects have been new construction, others restoration of existing structures. But the impact is virtually uniform: higher property values, lower social service costs and a rule of thumb -- \$3.43 of economic development for every \$1 spent on supportive housing development. It is a proven, effective answer to long-term homelessness. The Reaching Home Campaign seeks to develop 10,000 more units of supportive housing over the next 10 years."

Over 700 requests were made to 2-1-1 Infoline in 2003 for selected supported housing services by those individuals with multiple barriers to finding and maintaining permanent housing.

Figure 3

Requests for Homeless Shelters
January 1, 2003 - December 31, 2003

Source: United Way of Connecticut/2-1-1 Infoline



Shelter Capacity by Town

Bridgeport	183
Bristol	25
Danbury	46
Derby	36
East Hartford	40
Fairfield	31
Groton	10
Hartford	406
Killingly	60

Manchester	40
Meriden	66
Middletown	72
Milford	32
New Britain	82
New Haven	355
New London	35
Norwalk	95
Norwich	45

Stamford	196
Torrington	25
Vernon	15
Wallingford	15
Waterbury	157
Westport	30
Winchester	17
Windham	27

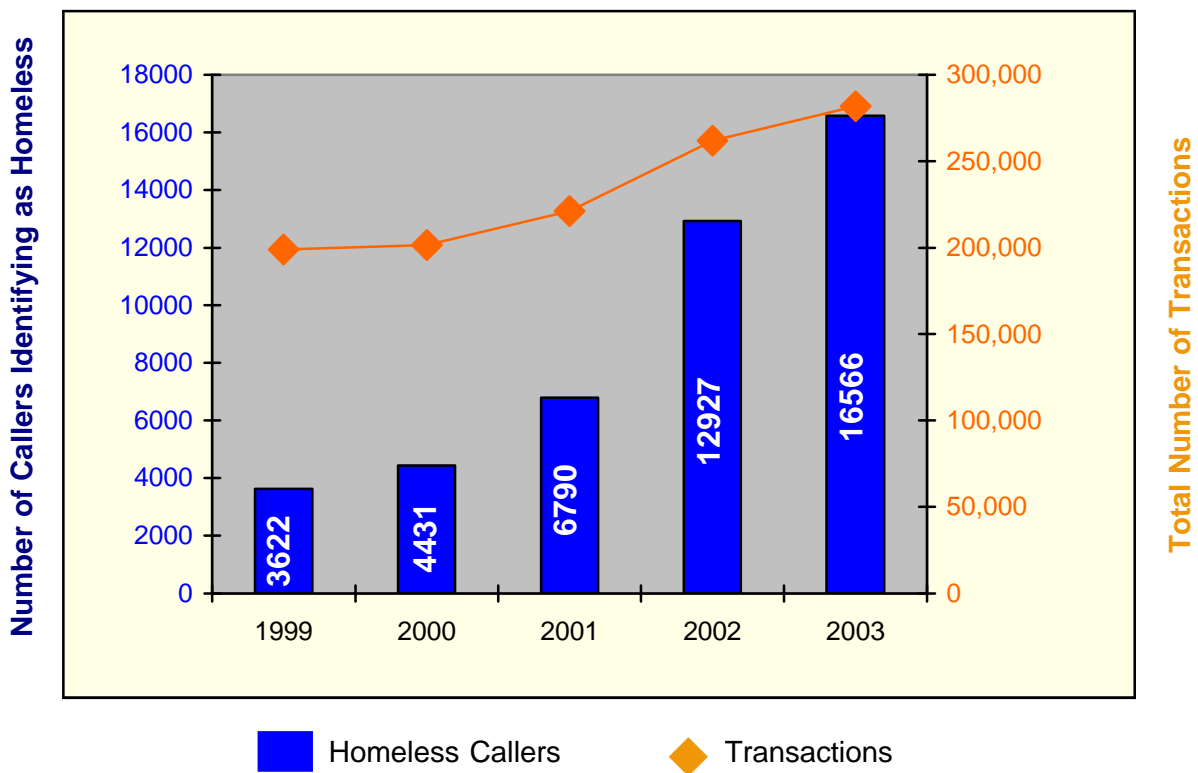
Source: DSS Homeless Shelter Report for FFY 2003. These numbers apply only to the 46 emergency shelters that receive state funding.

Homeless Infoline Callers

Figure 4 shows the number of calls received by 2-1-1 Infoline each year by someone identifying themselves as homeless. In the last five years, the number of these calls has increased more than fourfold. It is important to note that the overall increase in call volume has increased since 1999 as well, though at a lesser rate (42% increase in transactions over this 5 year period). Callers who are referred to domestic violence shelters are not included in this group.

The number of callers identifying as homeless is collected per transaction and may include repeat callers.

Figure 4



Source: United Way of Connecticut/2-1-1 Infoline

Other Service Needs of Homeless

Homeless callers have multiple needs in addition to housing. Some call looking for medical care, while more call for legal services and assistance. Still more call looking for financial services, such as public assistance programs and financial assistance. The highest number of other service needs among this group are for mental health and substance abuse services, including counseling, inpatient and outpatient treatment programs, and psychiatric support programs. Figure 5 shows the increase in each of these types of requests from 1999 to 2003. The needs of callers to 2-1-1 Infoline are comparable to contributing factors to homelessness reported by the Department of Social Services annual Homeless Shelter Demographic Report.

Figure 5

Source: United Way of Connecticut/2-1-1 Infoline

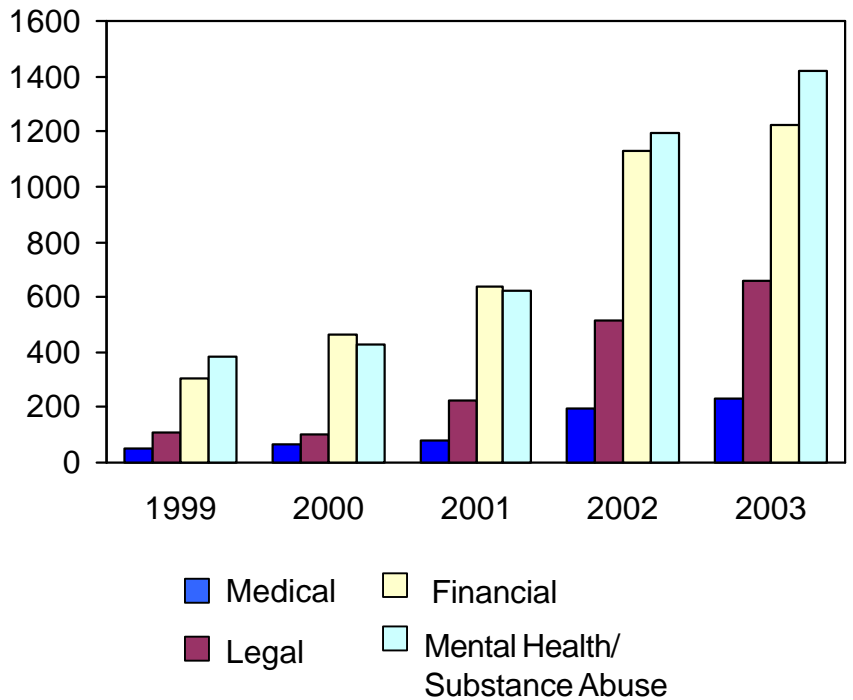
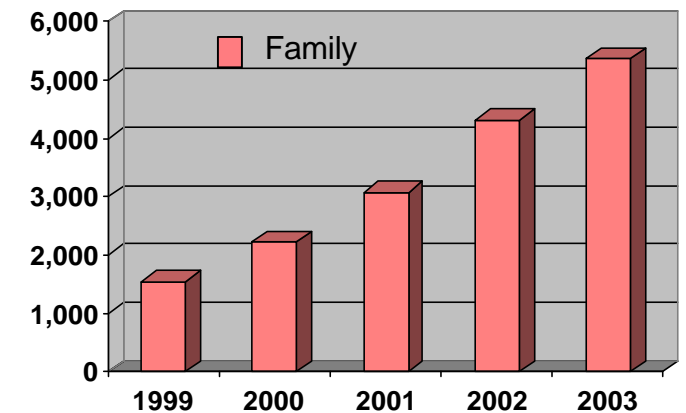
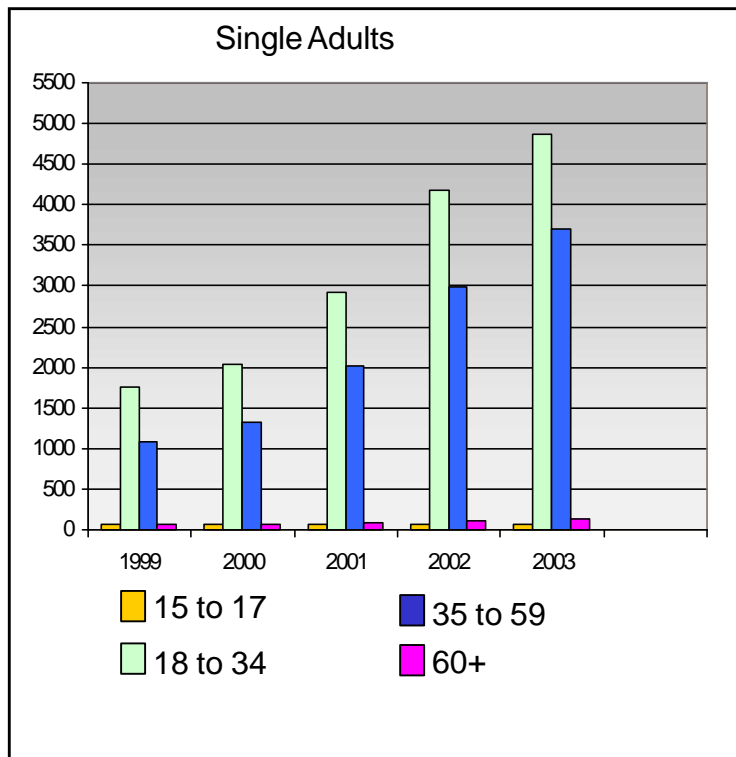


Figure 6

Requests for Homeless Shelter by Age and Family

1/1/1999- 12/31/2003

Source: United Way of Connecticut/2-1-1 Infoline



From 1999 through 2003 requests from families for homeless shelter increased by 248% while the requests from adults 18-34 increased by 177%.

SOURCES

Many sources are available that provide extensive information regarding the many facets of the affordable housing issue. Listed here are only a few of these sources that can be accessed via their internet websites.



- **Connecticut Partnership for Strong Communities**
<http://www.ctpartnershiphousing.com>
- **Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness**
<http://www.cceh.org>
- **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**
<http://www.hud.gov>
- **U.S. Federal Register**
<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html>
- **Connecticut Department of Social Services**
<http://www.dss.state.ct.us>
- **Connecticut Housing Coalition**
<http://www.ct-housing.org>

Editor: *Melanie Loewenstein, Senior Vice President,
United Way of Connecticut/2-1-1 Infoline*

Associate Editor: *Beverly Nadler, Director of Support
Services, United Way of Connecticut/2-1-1 Infoline*

Research: *Jessica Jagger, University of Connecticut,
Master of Social Work Intern*

Graphics: *Jeanette Baker, Director of Internet Services,
United Way of Connecticut/2-1-1 Infoline*

United Way of Connecticut
1344 Silas Deane Highway
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
860-571-7500
www.211infoline.org