



JUNE 2025

Impact Report



**Opening
Doors**

Mission

The goal of the Opening Doors Initiative is to make homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring.

The Housing Collective's Opening Doors Initiative (ODI) coordinates collaboration among more than 150 homelessness emergency response and prevention service providers throughout the homeless services networks in Western Connecticut, including Fairfield County and Northwest Connecticut (Litchfield County and Greater Waterbury). By providing the dedicated staff and administrative support needed to align and coordinate the partner network's collective efforts, ODI ensures system-wide efficiency and efficacy.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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Introduction

Over the past year, the Housing Collective’s Opening Doors Initiative (ODI) has continued to serve as the backbone of the homeless emergency response system across Western Connecticut. As the lead coordinator for the region’s two Coordinated Access Networks (CANs) and the Continuum of Care in Fairfield County, ODI brings together more than 150 frontline providers to ensure a unified, effective response to rising housing instability and unsheltered homelessness. Led by the ODI team, Western CT’s partner network has strengthened shelter diversion efforts, enhanced system-wide data, and launched targeted strategies to reduce the length of time people experience homelessness—helping make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring for individuals and families across the region. ODI has also provided essential, system-wide infrastructure to help the partner network adapt to a rapidly shifting federal landscape—facilitating communication, aligning resources, and delivering training and support to frontline staff across the region. In the face of rising need and diminishing federal resources, ODI continues to deliver critical regional capacity—keeping people housed, improving outcomes, and advancing long-term systems change.

Highlights

SURVEYING & SUPPORTING FRONTLINE STAFF

In order to identify and respond to challenges facing frontline staff in Western CT, the Housing Collective designed and deployed a comprehensive survey of 146 individuals from the ODI partner network, including 85 frontline staff, 48 supervisors, and 13 executive directors. The survey investigated topics including working conditions and trends, racial and gender equity concerns, and the degree to which people with lived experience can/are contributing to systemic response efforts. The Housing Collective published results alongside a set of actionable recommendations for both partner organizations and for the system as a whole.

[*read the report*](#)

COLLABORATING TO FIND HOUSING SOLUTIONS

Throughout 2024, the ODI team facilitated bi-weekly, in-person meetings within greater Bridgeport, Danbury, Norwalk, Stamford, Torrington and Waterbury where network partners came together to identify housing opportunities for people experiencing homelessness. During the meetings, the group would review a list maintained by ODI that includes every individual and family experiencing homelessness in the region, and together, the group would identify a housing solution for everyone on the list, prioritizing housing resources for people facing the greatest barriers to housing.

[*read the case study*](#)

MAKING SPACE FOR FAMILIES

To address the lack of a proper family triage space in Fairfield County, the Opening Doors Fairfield County (ODFC) team collaborated with partners to establish once at the beginning of winter in 2024. The ODI team turned to Inspirica, Inc. in Stamford to identify a space, and worked with the CT Department of Housing to unlock resources from the state's cold weather fund. Within weeks, Fairfield County had an operational family triage center, with staff, heat, and food provided by Inspirica.

[*read the case study*](#)

KEEPING PEOPLE WARM

Alongside the City of Waterbury and United Way of Greater Waterbury, ODI helped Waterbury's Center for Human Development (CHD) expand hours at

their Hospitality Center on Main Street so that the facility—the only warming center in the city—could remain open 24 hours per day from December through March. ODI also provided financial support to homeless shelters in Bridgeport, Danbury, Norwalk, Stamford, and Torrington.

[watch the news coverage](#)

PROVIDING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

ODI provided several trainings and learning opportunities to our partner network and the public throughout 2024. These included 10 training sessions for service provider partners including sessions on understanding SNAP, Medicaid, and HUD rules, recognizing human trafficking, and more. The ODI team also hosted a series of in-person panel discussions and networking events that showcased resources for mental health, employment, and immigration support available for individuals and families facing homelessness.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Opening Doors Fairfield County developed a strategic plan through a series of intensive, in-person strategy sessions with the partner network, conducted in partnership with organizational transformation consultants Abby Miller and Jen Miller Cribbs. The strategic plan includes a vision, and four key strategies or “Big Rocks:”

- **Vision:** Everyone in the Fairfield County region has access to housing that supports the conditions for them and the community to thrive.
- **Big Rock #1:** ODFC engages in coordinated, year-round advocacy focused on positively impacting conditions in Fairfield County.
- **Big Rock #2:** ODFC champions community-led housing efforts in and for Fairfield County so that ALL households have housing security and housing options in their home communities.
- **Big Rock #3:** All staff across all ODFC service provider agencies are supported so that they are able to invest themselves in the shared commitment.
- **Big Rock #4:** ODFC actions and member composition reflect the inclusive, open nature of our shared commitment and the Collective Impact model.

ENHANCING INTERNAL & EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

In response to feedback from our partner network, Opening Doors Initiative began using Civic Roundtable, a government operations and communications platform, to enable more rapid, consistent two-way communication between the Housing Collective and our partners. In addition, ODI began to leverage strategic communications capacity to raise public awareness about the homelessness crisis and build public will for solutions, earning more than 10 media appearances.

ODI By the Numbers

TRACKING PROGRESS, DRIVING RESULTS

2,189 people housed

314 people placed into supportive housing

454 people placed into rapid rehousing

2,467 people diverted from homelessness

1,107 people placed into shelter

7,832 people engaged through the homelessness response system

13 trainings and events hosted

Looking Ahead

EXPANDING IMPACT, STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

OFFERING UPSKILLING OPPORTUNITIES

In 2025, ODI is collaborating with national and local experts and leaders in homelessness response to provide more frequent training and learning opportunities for our partner network, as well as professional development training for our staff. ODI intends to help partners build skills and master different approaches to homelessness response, including motivational interviewing and housing problem solving.

PUTTING FAITH IN HOUSING

ODI has begun to collaborate with a group of faith leaders in Fairfield County to help change the public narrative on homelessness and build public will for solutions. ODI will expand and further develop these partnerships in 2025, to ensure faith-based organizations have the information and resources in order to support regional efforts to solve homelessness.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Opening Doors Northwest Connecticut will undertake a strategic planning effort to identify a vision for the initiative and key strategies for achieving that vision. Notably, Opening Doors Northwest intends to expand its network beyond traditional homeless service providers, to include representatives from city government, the Council of Government, employment agencies and beyond, with the intent to cultivate the health of communities as a whole.

PROVIDING PEER SUPPORT

In response to feedback that partners lack the in-person connectivity and engagement that existed pre-pandemic, ODI will facilitate more peer-to-peer support opportunities in 2025. ODI has already convened a group for permanent supportive housing case managers in Fairfield County that meets monthly in-person. In 2025, ODI will convene a monthly, in-person group of front entry staff, including outreach workers and navigators, to help these individuals operate as a team.

LEVERAGING STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

Building on progress in 2024, ODI continues to leverage strategic communications capacity to raise public awareness about the homelessness crisis and build public will for solutions.