

Appendix A: Draft 2017-2018 Annual Action Plan Public Comments and Agency Responses

The draft of the 2017-2018 Annual Action Plan was made available on July 24, 2017 for a 14-day public comment period ending August 7, 2017. The State of Montana held a public hearing on the Draft 2017-2018 Annual Action Plan on July 28, 2017, and recorded a [transcript](#) of all comments received at the hearing. All comments received in writing and at the hearing were considered, and the State of Montana's responses to each comment are provided below.

Comments Received and Responses Thereto

**North Central Independent Living Services, Inc.
Shyla Patera and Jerry Clark, IL Specialists**

Comment #1:

We, Shyla Patera and Jerry Clark, wish to submit the following comments on the Annual Action Plan for the 2016 -2017 year on behalf of North Central Independent Living Services, Inc. We, at NCILS, wish to commend the Board of Housing for much of its work regarding HOME funds, CDBG funds, HOPWA Funds, ESG Funds and more to assist Montanans with disabilities and others in housing crisis to find more stability in their individual housing situations. However, we feel that more needs to be done regarding physical accessibility, visitability, and universal design both in our rental and homebuyer housing stock. The Montana Board of Housing should undertake an assessment of not only its physical housing stock, but also the programs, policies, and partnerships it is forming to ensure that all are accessible and being utilized by those with disabilities that may need the programs most. Montana shelters should be accessible to all including those with mobility, sensory, and chemical disabilities.

We applaud the undertaking of efforts to address coordinated entry for homelessness. However, as federal funds may become extremely narrow in scope over the next years, NCILS encourages innovative practices and policies to ensure that low income Montanans have access to rental housing. We also would ask that the Board of Housing as well as the State of Montana advocate for those who wish to reintegrate into Montana communities that are coming out of institutional settings i.e. the Montana Developmental Center, Warm Springs, correctional, and other nursing home settings have appropriate DPHHS and housing supports available in order to facilitate successful community transitions and meet Montana's Olmstead priorities. To meet this goal, we are advocating for both state wide and local housing navigator to be hired on staff when possible. Given potential funding constraints, we encourage public private partnerships and training to meet this goal.

Given the potential impacts of potential funding losses in future federal budgets. Montana and other states should begin building educational coalitions to ensure that Montanans understand the economic impacts that housing plays in our communities.

Response to Comment #1:

The Montana Department of Commerce's Community Development Division administers the HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and Housing Trust Fund (HTF) programs; the Department of Public Health and Human Services administers the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) and Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) programs and establishes guidelines as to how these programs can assist all eligible households with improved access. Commerce and DPHHS will continue to support the inclusion of accessibility and visit-ability in proposed projects to the greatest extent

possible. During our development of the Annual Action Plan, we will work together to further identify areas where accessibility and visit-ability can be implemented.

Additionally, Commerce and DPHHS will continue to work together to increase the public and private partnerships through the Consolidated Plan processes to ensure that opportunities for improved program delivery can address any potential funding or regulatory changes. Comments regarding other programs or new programs that are not included as part of the Annual Action Plan, such as the Montana Board of Housing and a Housing Navigator, will be shared to coordinate and collaborate on addressing needs across the state. Commerce and DPHHS continue this coordination through the collaborative work on the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice.

Private Citizen

Patti Jacques

Comment #2:

Regarding page 56 AP-60 Public Housing, - Since the State manages and oversees Tenant Based Section 8 funds, it should address if there is increase/decrease of funds and how these increase/decreases relates to any in increase/decrease of housing vouchers through the Public Housing Authorities by region (spreadsheet would work).

Regarding page 57 AP-65 Homelessness and Other Special Needs Activities – 91.320(h), A statement needs to be included “homelessness in Montana may be due to leaving State Facilities such as prison, contracted jails/detention centers, State and State Contracted Mental Health Facilities such as hospitals, group homes, recovery homes.

Non-homeless special needs individuals include persons with disabilities involved in criminal justice system, but is disqualified for public housing. These individuals are the ones spending over 50% of their income for rent due to the fact they are disqualified from public housing assistance.

Relating to Corrections/DPHHS/MT Board of Crime Control. There needs to be new program created specifically for these individuals disabled involved in criminal justice system. Could be both federal/state program. Temporary housing funds for 1 to 3 months does not stabilize people in this category.

Page 61.AP-75 Action Plan Barriers to Affordable Housing 91.320(i) – under Rental owners or managers refusing...include “individuals with criminal convictions especially those with mental illnesses.” This should definitely be identified as this is what is called the “quiet discrimination” when rejected.

It would have been nice to see somewhere in the Action Plan identifying the number of public housing units, number of vouchers issued, current total number on waitlists, MT’s most recent homeless survey total number. This information is important in helping explain the need, plus it shows the shortage of what is available, and why the state is going in the direction its going, helps with the comparison of the consolidated plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to make comments.

Response #2:

The Annual Action Plan includes several objectives and outcomes identified to particularly benefit certain populations. These include homeless, disabled, elderly, and other disadvantaged populations; which may include those individuals listed in the comment. AP-65 was modified to include this more detailed discussion. Commerce and DPHHS will continue to work together to increase the public and private partnerships through the Consolidated Plan processes to ensure that opportunities for improved program delivery can address any potential funding or regulatory changes. Comments regarding other programs or new programs that are not

included as part of the Annual Action Plan will be shared to coordinate and collaborate on addressing needs across the state. Commerce and DPHHS continue this coordination through the collaborative work on the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice, Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report, the Housing Coordinating Team, and eligible applicants as they consider applying for funds listed in the Annual Action Plan.

Montana Continuum of Care Coalition
Bob Buzzas, Executive Director

Comment #3:

The Montana Continuum of Care Coalition had hoped to submit comments on the Annual Action Plan based upon an update to the CoC Strategic Plan for Ending Homelessness. Unfortunately, the Board of Directors will be reviewing and adopting that plan at the earliest on August 10th.

Nonetheless, I want to share with the Community Development Division some of the targeted priorities being considered to produce more critically needed permanent housing for the homeless. These targets have not been prioritized or adopted, so they are for background only.

- All Public Housing Authorities adopting HUD CPD Notice 14-012 whereby they prioritize the most vulnerable persons and families (e.g. chronically homeless) for public housing (e.g. chronic homeless).
- Changing the Consolidated Plan to allow HOME to be used for homeless rental assistance.
- Tax Credit set asides for developments with dedicated units for homeless.
- Promoting greater use of the Noncompetitive 4% Tax credit deals with dedicated or set-asides for homeless.
- Prioritizing Housing Trust Funds for developments with dedicated units for homeless.
- Section 8 set-asides or priority for homeless.
- Allow Project-basing of Section 8 with set asides for homeless.
- Landlord Engagement and Recruitment supporting housing for homeless.
- Direct state funding, such as \$1 million for fifty vouchers to house persons discharged from institutions into homelessness or to house homeless families with children.

The Strategic Plan Table contained on page 58 of the Annual Action Plan comes from the CoC Strategic Plan adopted four years ago and has fallen far short of reaching its goal for generating new beds. While we have identified more opportunities in the updated plan and will include them in our updated strategic plan, their success will rely heavily on policy makers and legislators to enact or fund. We will provide that as soon as possible.

By way of illustrating, however, how far we have to go in providing safe and stable housing to all, consider the following.

The most recent Point-in-Time statewide homeless survey counted 1097 individuals while on that same night our CoC and ESG Rapid Rehousing and Permanent Supportive Housing program were already housing an additional 380 individuals. The PIT also counted 542 homeless persons in families with children while on that night we were housing another 331 persons in families. Clearly, we are not close to being able to address the need.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Action Plan and thank you and your staff for your hard work.

Response #3:

Commerce and DPHHS encourages collaboration with the CoC to further identify and prioritize needs across the state. Any updated information through other planning documents such as, the CoC Strategic Plan for Ending Homelessness, may be used to inform the planning process and potential modifications to future Annual Action Plans. Commerce and DPHHS will continue to work together to increase the public and private partnerships through the Consolidated Plan processes to ensure that opportunities for improved program delivery can address any potential funding or regulatory changes.

Housing Trust Fund projects are required to serve 0% to 30% of area median income. The program application guidelines and application specifically requests information to ensure that Housing Trust Fund projects serve this disadvantaged population, which includes homeless and at-risk of homelessness households. The eligible applicant presents the rationale and supporting documentation of the population to be served by the project. All projects are reviewed to be consistent with the objectives and outcomes established in the Annual Action Plan and Consolidated Plan to particularly serve the homeless, disabled, elderly, and other disadvantaged populations.

The HOME Investment Partnerships program does not allocate funds for tenant based rental assistance due to the limited amount of federal funds received by the state, meeting the CHDO set aside requirements, the demand for other housing priorities, and the complex and resource-heavy administrative and reporting responsibilities. Currently the HOME Investment Partnership Program works diligently and effectively, with limited resources, to provide funding for affordable housing opportunities, across the state with CHDO and non-profit organizations, to serve disadvantaged populations.

Comments regarding other programs or new programs that are not included as part of the Annual Action Plan will be shared to coordinate and collaborate on addressing needs across the state. Commerce and DPHHS continue this coordination through the collaborative work on the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice, Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report, the Housing Coordinating Team, and eligible applicants as they consider applying for funds listed in the Annual Action Plan.