

January  
2024

**The Answer to Homelessness is a Home.**  
**The Answer to Hopelessness is Hope.**

**PCHO Provides Both.**



**PERSON CENTERED HOUSING OPTIONS –  
2023 COMMUNITY-WIDE OUTREACH REPORT**  
PREPARED BY PCHO LEADERSHIP AND OUTREACH  
STAFF

## **A Brief Word From PCHO:**

PCHO's vision is to create a world where no person has to sleep on the streets, and we all have access to safe affordable housing and supports to live a meaningful life. Everyone has a home.

If we are to embody and live out this vision, it means that we are part of implementing, expanding, creating, and advocating for safe affordable housing and it also means that we are serving each person who experiences street homelessness by providing individual solutions and resources that help sustain that vision.

PCHO's staff, consumers, board members, volunteers, collaborative providers, donors, vendors, and sponsors all believe that homelessness can end but only in the right political, socio-economic, and behavioral healthcare environments. We must have the will to end homelessness county wide.

What is written in this report is intended to spark a fire of support for this cause. The information we share is data we have collected over the last 2 years (2022 & 2023) to provide our community with a window into a rising tide of homelessness, a rising tide of unaffordability, a rising tide of lack of access that we all collectively will face without addressing solutions like reducing rents and controlling them, increasing incomes to meet the markets demands, and increasing housing supply.

What we also highlight in this report, is the amazing work that PCHO has done to maintain its outreach to the community and how our numbers show tremendous outcomes in the face of these adversities.

***Our Peer Advocate, Calvin Barnes, engaging a person on the street.***



**A little about PCHO and Outreach...**

Founded in 2015 by Nicholas J. Coulter and Charlie C. Albanese, Person Centered Housing Options Inc. (PCHO) is a local pioneer in addressing chronic homelessness in Rochester and Monroe County, NY. With over 30 years of combined experience, the co-founders lead PCHO in its mission to alleviate chronic homelessness using the Housing First model. The organization, incorporated as a 501c3 in 2016, has secured crucial grants, partnering with multiple agencies to effectively implement a 8 person outreach team, offering services to the chronically homeless and implementing Housing First programs never before seen in Rochester and Monroe County.

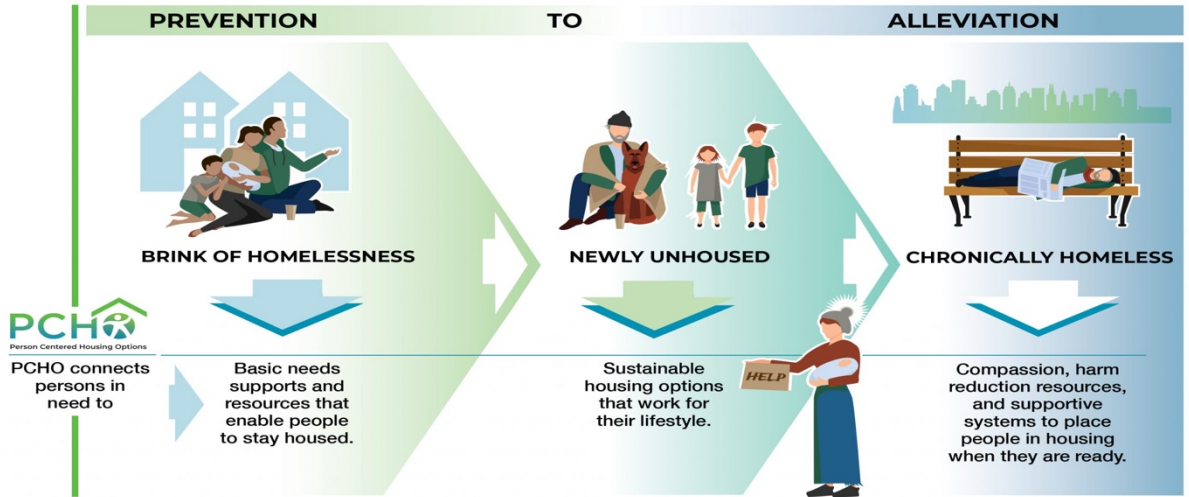
PCHO's outreach team, known for expertise and continuous learning, actively engages homeless individuals through collaborations with law enforcement, hospitals, government systems, advocate groups and community-wide outreach teams. Referrals come from various sources, including the Rochester Police Department, libraries, the NYS Department of Transportation, health home care providers, shelters, the City of Rochester, local businesses, and community members. PCHO's multifaceted approach, serving almost 400 households annually, involves meeting individuals where they are, building trust through essential survival items and access to benefits, and progressing each person's journey by address fundamental needs like housing and income.

**PCHO's Mission**

Person Centered Housing Options Inc. (PCHO) is dedicated to **addressing, preventing, and alleviating chronic homelessness in Monroe County, NY, and its surrounding communities.** Guided by the Housing First model, PCHO strives to provide comprehensive solutions that empower individuals and families, emphasizing access to housing as a fundamental step towards stability and well-being. Through outreach, support services, and strategic partnerships, PCHO aims to make a lasting impact on the lives of those facing homelessness, working towards a community where everyone has a secure and dignified place to call home.

**PCHO's Vision**

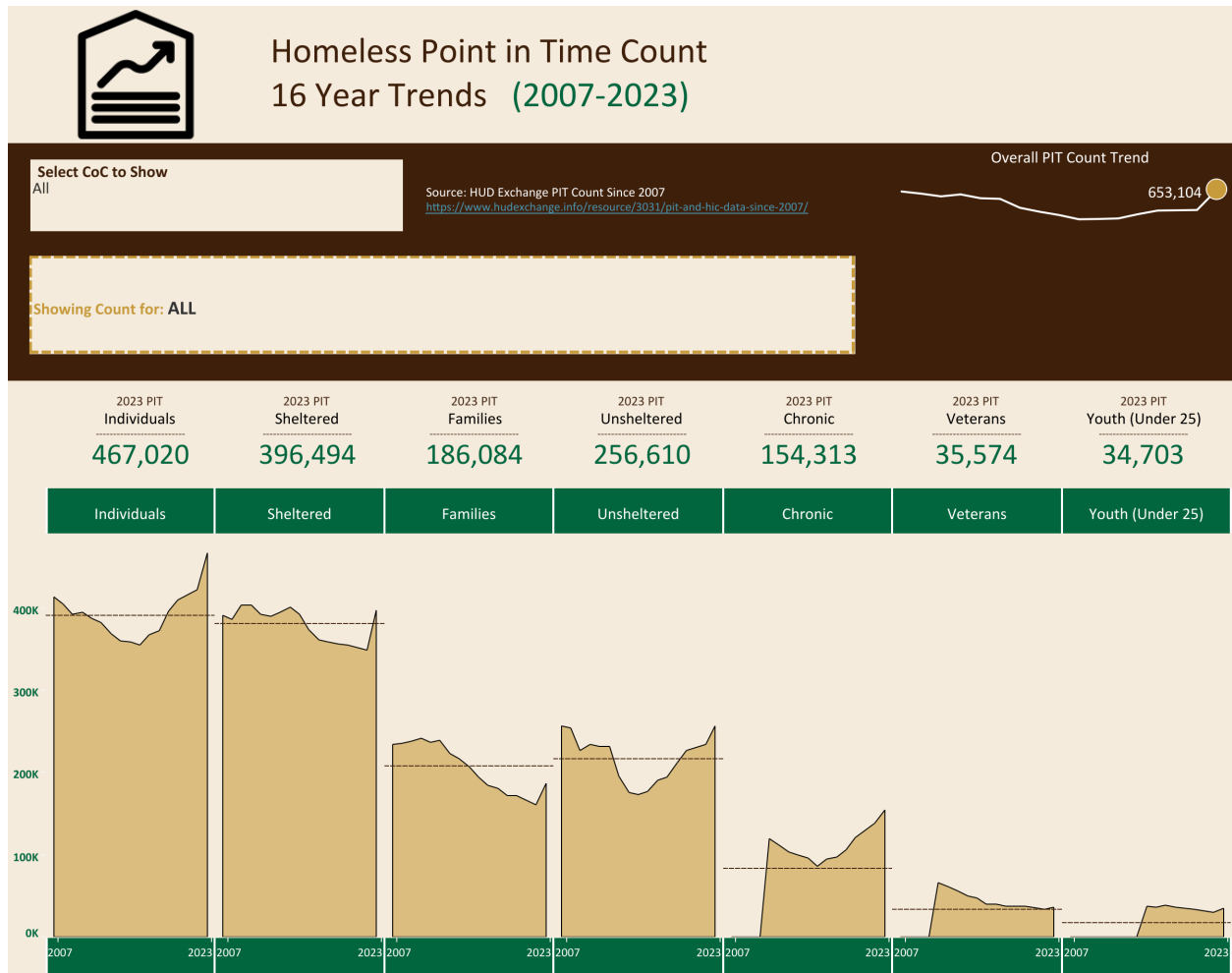
Person Centered Housing Options Inc.'s (PCHO) vision is to create a world where no person has to sleep on the streets, and we all have access to safe affordable housing and supports to live a meaningful life. Everyone has a home.



## What’s going on in the numbers Nationally?

In an effort to understand homelessness in 2022 and 2023; specifically chronic homelessness and street homelessness, we must first understand more about trends we have seen in Housing and Urban Development (HUD) data and collecting data since 2007. We can then examine reports in 2023 that show homelessness rising by 12% which is much larger than years prior.

For instance let’s have a look at **Graph 1:**



In almost all of these graphs we see a considerable drop starting in between 2011/12 and 2013/14 and beginning to climb again in 2017 showing a huge peak between 2022 and 2023. The peaks on the ends of these graphs in categories “Individuals, Families, Shelters, and Unsheltered” are the major population numbers while the subcategories of veterans and youth plateau when Chronicity has been climbing since 2016.

HUD's recent release of the 2023 Point-In-Time (PIT) homeless and housing inventory counts (HIC) revealed a concerning trend. Homelessness has reached a record high, with a 12% and 18% increase from 2022 and 2017, respectively. The average homelessness rate per 1000

population in 2023 was 20. The report, although extensive, lacked crucial insights into addressing the growing homeless problem.

Notably absent was a systematic analysis of the impact of increasing home prices relative to income, known as displacement pressure, on homeless displacement rates. Research from the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) Housing Center highlighted the significance of this factor, indicating that it can explain a substantial 78% of the variance in displacement rates across 369 Continuums of Care (CoCs). This analysis surpasses the explanatory value of other market predictors. Furthermore, the study emphasized that access to housing is pivotal to addressing homelessness, and the solution lies in **building enough homes**.

This post-pandemic Point in Time report also follows a pre-pandemic trend observed from 2016 to 2020. The Biden-Harris Administration's American Rescue Plan (ARP) prevented a surge in homelessness between 2020 and 2022, but the expiration of ARP resources has contributed to the current increase.

Despite challenges, the administration's Housing Supply Action Plan is yielding positive results, with a record number of apartments set to be built in 2023. HUD's recent announcement indicates assistance to over 424,000 households in connecting to homeless support services or avoiding homelessness in 2023. Additionally, the Department of Veterans Affairs has achieved its 2023 goal, housing over 38,000 homeless veterans two months ahead of schedule.

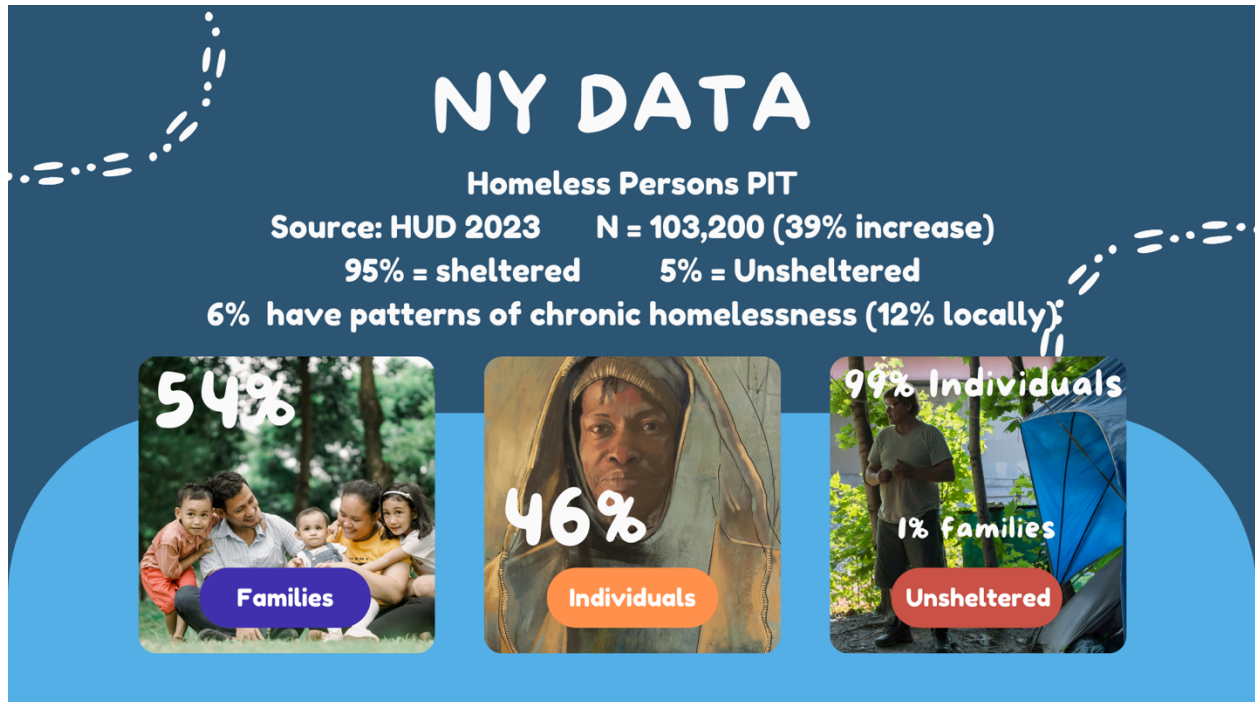
Secretary Marcia L. Fudge emphasizes that while progress has been made, urgent support for proven solutions is needed. **HUD data indicates a notable increase in first-time homelessness, attributed to factors such as changes in the rental housing market and the conclusion of pandemic protections.** The administration acknowledges the challenging rental housing conditions leading up to the 2023 PIT count, but notes a moderation in rent growth due to new housing becoming available.

The Biden-Harris Administration has been proactive in addressing homelessness, implementing pandemic-era protections, scaling Emergency Rental Assistance, and enhancing tax credits to prevent evictions and curb homelessness. State and local partnerships have been pivotal in supporting these efforts. Fact sheets detailing state-specific benefits from historic investments are being released.

With a commitment to reversing the rising homelessness trend post-2016, the administration's FY2024 Budget calls for commonsense investments, including guaranteed vouchers for low-income veterans and youth aging out of foster care. HUD's substantial investments in addressing housing needs, particularly for vulnerable populations, align with these goals. For insights into community progress in reducing homelessness, HUD provides fact sheets highlighting successful initiatives.

## How are we looking State-wide and Locally?

Diagram 2:



### HUD Numbers

The HUD 2023 NY Point in Time (PIT) reports shows a shocking **39% increase from 74,000 to over 103,000** in homelessness state-wide with an increase in unsheltered and more importantly a rise in unsheltered family homelessness. Albeit family unsheltered homeless is a small increase, we are seeing this trend locally and we will later correlate that increase with a lack of access to affordable apartments in our communities.

Locally we are seeing our total PIT numbers rise by 7% from 2022 to 2023, while our unsheltered count remains the same at 42. While this shows stability, in Rochester's climate in the last week of Jan, we have shown temperatures below freezing both years in a row and increases in warming center options and volunteer efforts which help to maintain this number in our region.

### How do Benefits fit with housing?

Social Service Benefits or Safety Net/TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) continued to remain the same from 2022 to 2023, where a household of 1 could access a total social service safety net grant of \$440 per month for rent and personal needs allowance, while an individual with a disability on SSI received \$1001 monthly for rent and personal needs. Each of these cases would receive full Medicaid benefits and full SNAP benefits as per regulation. **See Diagram 3 below:**

**Diagram 3:**

TABLE 13 - Monthly Temporary Assistance Cash Grant - Effective 10/1/12									
Family Size	Basic \$	Rent \$	Heat \$ Gas	Heat \$ Oil	Heat \$ PSC	Monthly \$ Heat Included	Total Monthly \$ Gas Heat	Total Monthly \$ Oil Heat	Total Monthly \$ PSC
1	183	257	54	69	107	440	494	509	547
2	291	298	54	69	107	589	643	658	696
3	389	343	54	69	107	732	786	801	839
4	501	374	56	72	111	875	931	947	986
5	618	405	58	75	117	1,023	1,081	1,098	1,140
6	714	420*	63	81	125	1,134*	1,197*	1,215	1,259
7	811	438*	67	87	134	1,249*	1,316*	1,336	1,383
8+	909	477	71	92	142	1,386	1,457	1,478	1,528
Each Added	97.50								

\* If no children are in the household, reduce these amounts by \$2.00.

**When the actual rent exceeds the rent allowance funds from the client's basic allowance make up the difference. The client must pay their monthly heating costs from the total grant when they reside in a unit where heat is not included in the rent.**

See **Diagram 4** below to show the breakdown and total of Supplemental Security Income as of January 1 2023:

2023 SSI and SSP Maximum Monthly Benefit Levels Chart (reflects the 8.7% federal COLA increase)

Fed L/A Code	State Supp Code	New York State Living Arrangement	Federal Benefit/ Individual	State Benefit/ Individual	Total Benefit/ Individual <sup>1</sup>
A	A	Living Alone	\$914	\$87	\$1,001
A, C	B	Living with Others	\$914	\$23	\$937
B	F	Living in the Household of Another <sup>2</sup>	\$609.34	\$23	\$632.34

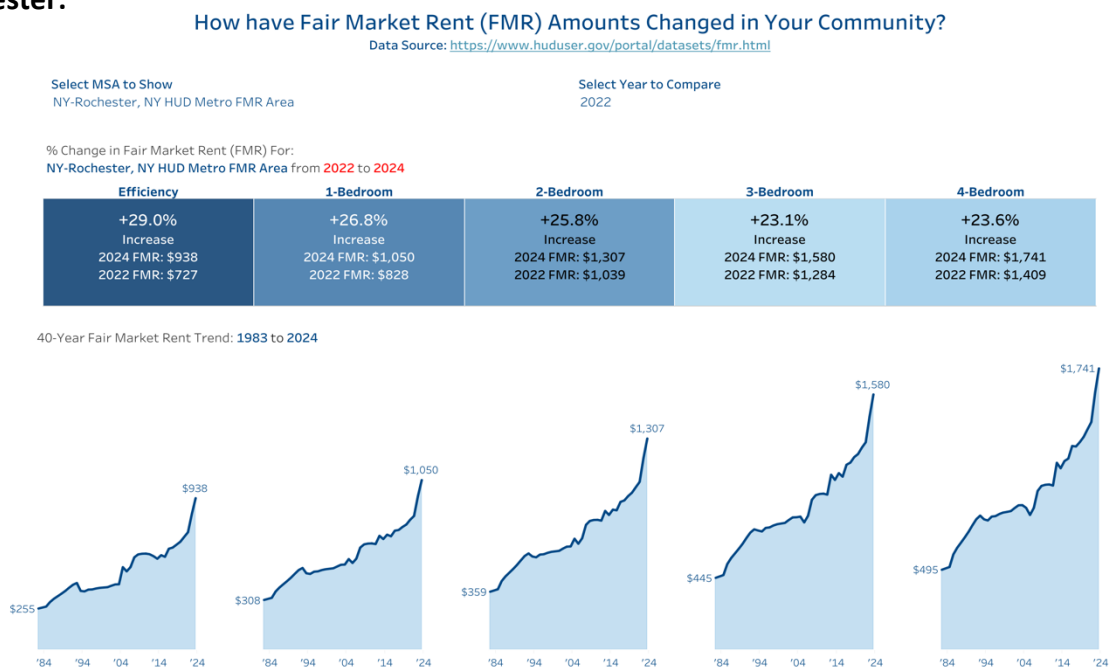
The US Census info from 2022 shows that **28% of Rochester is experiencing poverty while the median household income continues to decrease**. Considering that a large percentage of homeless and unsheltered households are well below the poverty line and relying on social services rental amounts and social security amounts finding and engaging the rental market to

access affordable housing, HUD Vouchers, Empire state supportive housing initiative apartments, rooming houses (otherwise known as congregate living), behavioral health housing, etc. is an essential skill of PCHO outreach workers but this is proving to be a bottleneck.

### What does housing cost look like locally though?

Affordable housing under Home and Community Renewal, HUD Continuum of Care funding, property owners in low income markets, Section 8 vouchers, local banks and financial institutions, as well as ESSHI funding all rely on Fair Market Rent (FMR) Values, local social service amounts, and below poverty incomes to effectively fund project, sustain rents, and execute loans on properties either to service the population PCHO serves or to sustain an income from a property that an owner has invested in. With that said, PCHO staff in outreach and housing must match income, benefits, and vouchers with units in an effort to efficiently reduce homelessness. The [Fair Market Rent rate](#) is established by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). It's the standard used by the government to calculate payments for programs like the Housing Choice Voucher Program (often called "Section 8") under [24 CFR Part 888](#). FMR prices are gross rent prices, meaning they include utility costs. Our current state and local rental market is showing a degree of barriers to that goal that are resulting in a rising tide of unsheltered and sheltered homeless in our communities. Currently NY has the 17th highest rent in the country out of 56 states and territories. In Rochester, Fair Market Rent (FMR) prices are notably higher than the national average, placing the FMR area in the upper echelon of expense among similar areas. Specifically, it surpasses 86% of other FMR areas. For a two-bedroom apartment in Rochester, the Fair Market Rent stands at \$1,307 per month, reflecting a substantial 10.2% increase from the previous year when it was \$1,186 per month.

This elevated FMR rate has implications for various cities within the region, including South Lima, NY, Scottsburg, NY, Livonia Center, NY, Sonyea, NY, Linwood, NY, York, NY, Retsof, NY, Groveland, NY, Lakeville, NY, Piffard, NY, and others, all falling under the Metro Code or CBSA code METRO40380M40380. See **Diagram 5 to show 2022 compared to 2024 for FMR in Rochester:**



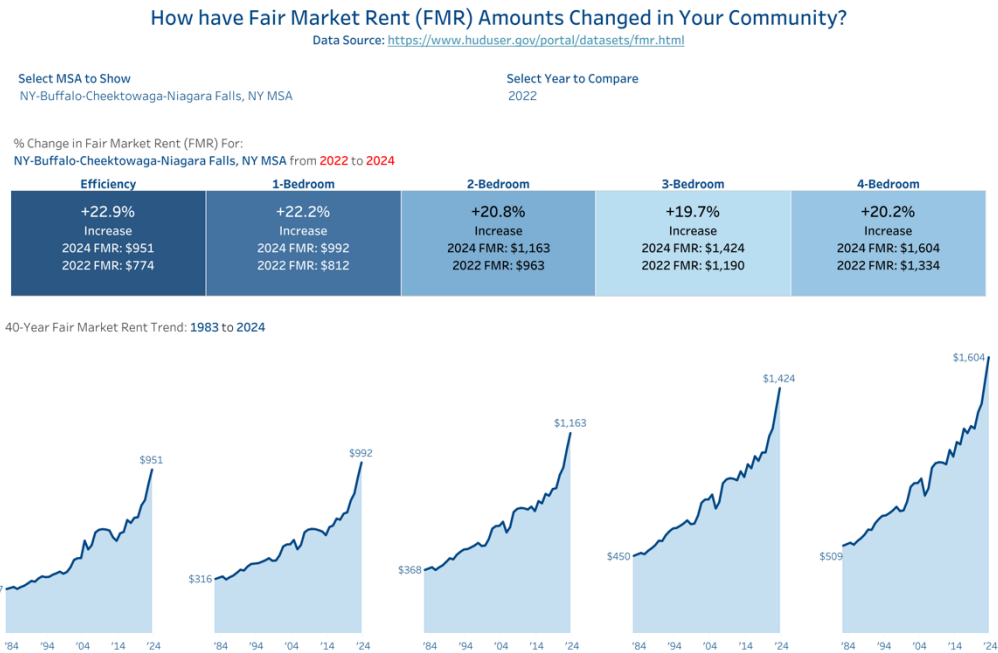


Moreover, the impact extends to the entire Rochester, NY HUD Metro FMR Area, covering one county or city in New York. The estimated population of this FMR area is 63,218 people based on the latest Census data.

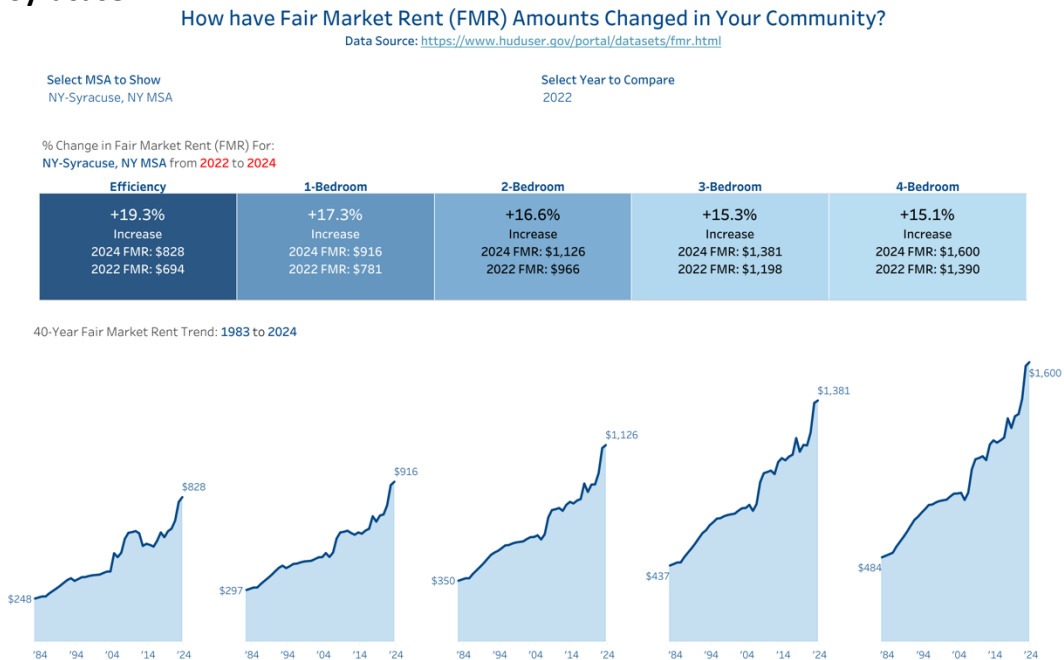
In comparison to the rest of New York state, the Rochester FMR area's housing costs stand out, being more expensive than 76% of the state. **See Diagram 6 and 7 below for comparisons to Buffalo and Syracuse in the same time frames.**

*Such elevated living costs can contribute to housing challenges, potentially affecting the local population's ability to secure affordable housing and, consequently, impacting homelessness rates within the region. The increased year-over-year rent highlights the pressing need for housing solutions and interventions to ensure housing affordability and prevent homelessness in the community.*

**Diagram 6 Buffalo NY FMR:**



**Diagram 7 Syracuse NY FMR:**



## **PCHO Outreach is keeping the tide at bay... but for how long?**

Person Centered Housing Options received **1763 calls for service** in 2023, a **27% increase** from 2022 while we sustained our referrals for outreach at 349 households each year. **72 of those households** being referred were **in their cars**, a **53% increase from 2022** and many of which included children. Of the **349 referrals**, we enrolled **302 households**, a **12% increase from 2022** (on par with the National HUD increase), while serving a total of **377 persons** which **47 of whom were children**. In 2023, we saw a **683% increase from 2022 in children** experiencing street homelessness with their parents or guardians. Street homelessness represents **64% of the total population we outreach to**. 36% are at risk of homeless, in a hospital or institution, in a shelter after being referred or exiting a congregate group home or facility. **Street homelessness increased by 21% this year.**

These increases are alarming, and often overwhelming for local officials, providers, and funders to grasp. The **average staff member can manage and serve on outreach roughly 20 client households at a time**. Serving the homeless is extremely challenging as you are both providing life-saving supplies, managing their basic needs, and guiding them to services and housing. Compounding factors like having children in the household, or severe substance use, mental illness, and challenging backgrounds like evictions and criminal histories can impede our process. Each staff member is beyond capacity holding an **average caseload of 30+**, with a length of stay average of **137 days in outreach**. A shining light is that PCHO's outreach sustained a **positive housing outcome of 67% of the total enrolled from 2022-2023**, along with sheltering roughly **4% of the total indicating that 71% of all enrolled households left the street**. What becomes worrisome, and suggests a strong need for controlling rents, increasing benefits, and accessing affordable housing is the time from referral to housed. On average it takes PCHO outreach **19 days from referral to fully engage a household**. With high caseloads staff are left to check on people until there is an opening with **the longest wait at 49 days**. While once enrolled, it takes almost another **68 days to access a housing program** and get a household in housing due to the lack income and housing available. Once households are provided with support, they are able to access housing and PCHO Outreach begins to phase out, an encouraging statistic is that **outreach has shown a 12% decrease in chronicity amongst the street homeless population**.

**What does this all mean?** These numbers continue to suggest that with higher requests for services and a PCHO team that is at capacity and meeting the evidence-based goals of outreach, while seeing larger households including children with longer periods of street homelessness, we can only point to challenges like: increased rents, lack of supply, and stagnant incomes as the source of these barriers locally. Political will, citizen support, and community-wide focus on evidence-based interventions can reduce homelessness, improve household incomes, and increase access to affordable options.