



**Search for the Chief Executive Officer
Columbus House, Inc.
New Haven, Connecticut**

THE SEARCH

For over 40 years, Columbus House has worked tirelessly to provide shelter and connections to permanent supportive housing for individuals experiencing homelessness in New Haven and across the state of Connecticut. As Columbus House embarks upon its next chapter, the organization seeks an experienced, collaborative, strategic, and innovative leader who is deeply passionate and knowledgeable about its housing-first, community, and client-centric mission to serve as its next Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

Reporting to the Board of Directors and overseeing an annual budget of about \$16M and 175 full, part-time, and seasonal staff, the CEO will be responsible for charting the organization's strategic vision and facilitating its implementation. A tested and skillful manager of people and process, this CEO must be comfortable leading through change and facilitating a working environment that centers belonging and engagement for all. As the public face of Columbus House, the incoming CEO must remain abreast of changes in policies related to housing and homelessness and advocate for the well-being of the organization's clients at the state and federal levels. As the discourse around shelters and permanent supportive housing shifts across the nation, the CEO should serve as a thought leader and convener, elevating the concerns of housing-first organizations to a broader audience. Partnerships are vitally important to Columbus House's work, and this leader must continue to strengthen existing and facilitate novel partnerships to advance the organization's mission.

Columbus House is committed to meeting clients "where they are", and in FY24 the organization served 2,122 clients and placed 444 people in housing, leveraging a variety of programs across the state to provide innovative solutions for people experiencing homelessness.

Columbus House has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in the recruitment of this important position. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence as noted at the end of this document.

ABOUT COLUMBUS HOUSE

Columbus House is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that has been providing solutions to homelessness since 1982. Throughout the years, Columbus House has expanded its mission and programs to include not only emergency shelter, but a continuum of housing and services designed to help people who are homeless move toward independence. The agency's primary goal is to provide housing either through its own programs or through referrals throughout Hartford, Middlesex, New Haven, and New London counties to service-enriched or independent housing.

Columbus House values the uniqueness of each person that they serve. The agency adheres to a “Person-Centered Philosophy” ensuring all programs and services offered reflect that uniqueness. Columbus House follows a “Housing First” model in an effort to get people into a home as quickly as possible – many times bypassing the shelter system altogether. The agency’s services support best practices of “Harm Reduction” and “Trauma-Informed and Gender-Specific Care” so that each person receives services specifically tailored to their personal goals and aspirations.

Columbus House’s service areas include: [Outreach & Engagement](#), [Shelter Services](#), [Housing Services](#), [Veterans Services](#), [Income and Employment Services](#), [Housing Security](#), and [Youth Services](#). All Columbus House programs serve those experiencing homelessness or those at risk of homelessness, and support housing first, harm reduction, and trauma-informed and person-centered best practices. Many programs also include services for special populations such as families with children, people living with or at risk of HIV/AIDS, and Veterans.

SIGNATURE PROGRAMS

Columbus House provides shelter and shelter services, including case management, referrals to mental health and substance abuse treatment programs, employment training programs, education, health services, and connections to permanent supportive housing. Some of Columbus House’s signature programs include the following:

- [New Haven Shelter](#) – Located in the Hill neighborhood of New Haven, the shelter provides beds, meals, and case management for 81 adult men and women nightly.
- [Middlesex Family Shelter](#) – The Middlesex Family Shelter provides beds and case management for approximately 20 families per year, this includes around 70 people with over half of them youth (under age 24).
- [Wallingford Emergency Shelter](#) – Located in Wallingford, the four-unit shelter provides temporary accommodations and case management for approximately 17 families with children annually.

Two units are reserved for shelter families and the remaining units provide low-income housing for families.

- Abraham's Tent – A community-based program that, through the generosity of local religious organizations and businesses, provides shelter and case management for up to ten adult men during the winter months. On a rotating basis, volunteers from each organization provide meals and fellowship during the early evening each day for one week. The program currently operates out of the Wallingford Emergency Shelter building but may return to a more rotational site model in the future.
- Seasonal Warming Center – In partnership with town officials, service providers, and local religious organizations, Columbus House operates a seasonal warming center in Hamden. Columbus House employees staff the center which opens in the evening and accepts walk-ins throughout the night. Those seeking refuge from the cold are offered a welcoming, safe space to get warm along with some snacks and hot beverages. Beds are not provided.
- Recovery House – A short-term program for 17 men (including seven veterans) who are awaiting placement in sober housing, treatment programs, or permanent housing with outpatient treatment support.
- Medical Respite Program – This innovative program provides recuperative care to those who are homeless and exiting the hospital. In addition, the program lowers public healthcare costs by reducing unnecessary hospitalizations. Based out of Columbus House's New Haven Shelter, referrals come directly from Yale New-Haven Hospital and the VA Hospital in West Haven. The 12-bed program includes 24-hour supervision, referrals to healthcare providers, transportation, and case management.

GOVERNANCE

Columbus House is currently governed by a 17member independent [board of directors](#), which meets monthly to discuss and review organizational impact, progress, and compliance and monitor financial activity. Board members serve three-year-long terms and represent a variety of Connecticut's public and private sectors, including Traveler's Insurance, Webster Bank, NationSwell, Amazon, Yale Divinity School, Elm City Communities, New Haven Legal Assistance Association, Quinnipiac University, Pennrose, the Department of Veterans Affairs, Temple Emanuel of Greater New Haven, Bayer Pharmaceuticals, Connecticut State Community Colleges, and the Helen Street School.

FINANCES

Columbus House has an annual budget of about \$16M, and in FY25, the organization will receive nearly \$13M in government grants and generate about \$1.3M through fundraising, with the remainder coming

from fee-for-service programs. The organization's greatest operating expenses are related to overhead, including compensation and occupancy. Columbus House provides a variety of vitally important programs and operates with slim margins. The incoming CEO will need to partner with the Chief Development Officer (CDO) to expand philanthropic and grant support and with the Chief Programs Officer (CPO) to streamline programmatic offerings in alignment with organizational strategic priorities.

THE ROLE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The incoming CEO will join a mature organization with a talented, dedicated, and passionate staff of 175. This leader will work closely with senior leadership and board members to streamline programmatic offerings, build organizational capacity, and generate the necessary funding to help advance Columbus House's mission of providing shelter, case management, and wrap-around services to support people experiencing homelessness.

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the CEO will oversee an experienced senior leadership team of six including a Chief Development Officer (CDO), Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Chief Human Resource Officer (CHRO), Chief Operating Officer (COO), Chief Program Officer (CPO), and Chief Real Estate Officer (CREO). This leader must be a consummate proponent of inclusive, collaborative, and transparent organizational culture. The incoming CEO must be dedicated to creating an open environment where staff voices are heard and valued, opportunities for growth are facilitated, and pathways for career development are clearly articulated.

As the public face of the organization, the CEO will champion Columbus House's mission in the community and beyond, generating philanthropic support and strategic partnerships while marshaling state and federal support through grants and advocacy for beneficial policy changes. The CEO will strengthen existing partnerships and facilitate the creation of innovative, strategic partnerships that ease client transitions and improve client outcomes.

In this context, the successful CEO will be expected to specifically address the following opportunities and challenges:

Develop and implement Columbus House's long-term strategic vision.

In collaboration with the CPO, the incoming CEO will be responsible for streamlining Columbus House's programmatic offerings and charting the organization's strategic vision for the future. The landscape around homelessness/housing policy and legislation is shifting, and the incoming CEO must be agile and proactive, ensuring that the organization is able to remain responsive to the needs of clients while securing appropriate philanthropic and grant support to sustain its mission.

In response to client and community needs, Columbus House is preparing to redesign its current congregate shelter in New Haven into a multi-level structure with at least 80 one- and two-person rooms

for clients. The CEO will work closely with the CREO and COO to produce a comprehensive audit of Columbus House's properties and craft a facilities strategic plan.

Grow and steward financial resources to enhance Columbus House's impact.

Working closely with the CDO and CFO, the CEO will provide leadership over Columbus House's finance and budget, aiming to generate and strengthen organizational reserves through grants and the cultivation of philanthropic donations. In tandem with the CFO, the CEO will assist in developing Columbus House's budget and monitoring organizational spending. As the face of the organization, the CEO will assist in cultivating relationships with key local and national funders and the federal government. The CEO will work in partnership with the CDO to expand the strategy for the generation of new grants and the stewardship of existing grants, culminating in the development and implementation of a multi-year fundraising plan.

Cultivate strong local, regional, and national partnerships.

As housing and homelessness legislation and policies continue to shift, in order to provide the most comprehensive wrap-around services for clients, Columbus House must leverage a network of local, regional, and national partners. The CEO must be a facile relationship builder and advocate, deepening existing relationships and facilitating those that amplify the impact of housing-first organizations and consolidate client resources. As a mature organization, Columbus House has a long history of successful partnerships and requires a thoughtful and deliberate CEO to communicate the strategic bent of the organization's next chapter.

Recruit, retain, and develop a diverse and talented staff and board.

Columbus House serves clients and has sites across the state of Connecticut. Given the nature of the organization's distributed workforce, the incoming CEO must be a clear and effective communicator who is committed to cultivating and nurturing an innovative and accessible workplace culture for all. This leader must also remain committed to being an employer of choice and attracting a workforce that is reflective of the population served.

In addition to streamlining recruitment, orientation and onboarding and retention, and succession planning efforts, the CEO will work closely with the CHRO to provide robust career development, training, and mentoring supports for current employees and managers. This leader will also work closely with the board chair to develop and implement a long-term strategy for board development, recruitment, expansion, and succession.

Expand and strengthen Columbus House's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB)

Sixty-eight percent of the clients served by Columbus House annually and 69% of its staff identify as persons of color. It is imperative that the incoming CEO has a demonstrated commitment to the advancement of DEIB principles and the capacity to lead and engage in meaningful, and sometimes challenging organizational conversations. This leader must also remain steadfast in the continuing efforts to hire, retain, and cultivate a staff that is reflective of the population being served and of Connecticut more broadly. The organization leverages a small, but mighty Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee that meets regularly to discuss related challenges and opportunities and to advocate for training, professional development, and organizational dialogue and the CEO must be a close partner and promoter of the work of this group.

PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS

The successful CEO candidate will have many of the following qualifications and attributes:

- 10+ years in leadership positions within nonprofit and housing-first organizations preferred.
- Experience leading a distributed workforce in a complex organization with multiple community partners and stakeholders;
- Proven track record with organizational change management and strategic planning; confidence in making hard choices and experience establishing clear decision-making processes and channels;
- Experience raising funds and cultivating strategic external partners;
- Financial management experience with budgetary oversight of an organization comparable in size to Columbus House;
- Inspiring and engaging public speaker and storyteller, with experience serving as the external and internal face of an organization;
- Demonstrated ability to build and support a strong, diverse team and effectively delegate and communicate across the organization;
- Deep experience in or familiarity with the permanent supportive housing sector; Experience leading national conversations around solutions to housing insecurity and homelessness;
- Ability to grow and maintain strong relationships with a Board of Directors, and to develop and recruit new Board members;
- Creativity, adaptability, wisdom, vulnerability, and high emotional intelligence;
- Ability to empower others by listening deeply, holding space for novel ideas and perspectives, and building strong relationships;
- Lived commitment to Columbus House's core mission and vision, with a special focus on building and supporting a diverse, inclusive, and equitable community and culture;

- Proven record of agile, responsive leadership that prioritizes entrepreneurial, data-driven decisions;
- Comfortable operating in a fast-paced, changing environment; and
- Adept conflict management skills and calm in a crisis.

TO APPLY

All correspondence, including applications, nominations, and general inquiries can be submitted electronically. Applications should include a letter of interest and a CV or resume. All correspondence will be held in strict confidence.

Donna Cramer, Partner
Afi Tettey-Fio, Senior Associate
Ryan Smillie, Senior Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

Apply at the website: <https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/columbus-house-inc/chief-executive-officer>

Electronic transfer of materials is strongly encouraged.

Columbus House is an equal opportunity employer and does not unlawfully discriminate in employment.

No portion of this application is used for the purpose of limiting or excluding any applicant from consideration for employment on a basis prohibited by local, state, or federal law. Equal access to employment, services, and programs is available to all persons.