Community Services Department

Addressing Homelessness in Seminole County

"The Housing First Approach"

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Overview

At the Fiscal Year 2010/11 Preliminary Budget Development Work Sessions, the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) directed the Community Services Director to provide an assessment of additional needs for Seminole County citizens who have been adversely impacted by the current economic conditions. The assessment, as presented, identified a need for additional resources in the following critical areas:

- Rental Assistance
- Utility Assistance
- Food and Medical Care
- Homeless Prevention

The aforementioned services are currently provided by the Seminole County Community Services Department; however, a significant increase in the number of citizens needing assistance has invariably increased the need for additional funding. As such, in August 2010, the BCC allocated an additional $900,000.00 to assist in providing increased community assistance.

Subsequent to the actions initiated to augment and/or address critical needs in the community by the BCC and the Community Service Department, Homelessness in Seminole County gained national attention. In response, a community collaborative of homeless stakeholders in Seminole County, the Community Conversation on Homelessness (CCoH), began to work in partnership to concentrate on the growing homeless crisis in Seminole County through strategies that would ultimately reduce and/or prevent homelessness. The collaborative developed the following three (3) strategic solutions:

A. Develop a coordinated referral, communication and service provision System.
   a. Create a centralized, common database
   b. Increase and coordinate Case Management services
B. Increase service and resources capacity
   a. Develop a Housing Inventory of Shelters of all types – emergency, transitional, permanent, etc.
   b. Develop a Service Catalog of core assistance services currently in the community.
C. Develop a governance structure to support System improvements, monitor its progress, and continually evaluate its effectiveness.

The consensus and vision of the CCoH is *"No person in Seminole County has to be homeless."* The strategy solutions are attainable goals and can be achieved through a coordinated and concerted effort.

Addressing Homelessness – Program Plan

The number of homeless families and individuals has increased significantly over the last three (3) years as stated by the Council of Homelessness. In an effort to address the rising number of homeless families/individuals in Seminole County, the Community Services Department Homeless Prevention Program Plan is based on national best practice principles addressing homelessness:

1. Prevent families/individuals from becoming homeless; and
2. Help families/individuals that become homeless move into permanent housing as quickly as possible.

This Plan will be implemented pursuant to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) definition of homelessness as contained in the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act (HEARTH) as well as a modified *"Housing First Approach"*.

The "Housing First Approach" as defined by the National Alliance to End Homelessness (November 9, 2006), is an approach that primarily focuses on providing homeless families/individuals with housing quickly and services following placement. Housing First services typically include the following components:

- initial emergency services;
- housing and resource assessment and planning;
- housing placement assistance, including housing search and direct housing focused financial assistance (e.g., short-term subsidies, move-in costs, etc.); and
- case management to stabilize participants in housing and ensure community supports for maintaining housing are in place.
  (http://www.endhomelessness.org/section/solutions/housing_first)

"A central tenet of the Housing First approach is that social services to enhance individual and family well-being can be more effective when people are in their own home." (http://www.endhomelessness.org/section/solutions/housing_first)

Housing – Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) Program and Case Management Plan

The County's Homeless Prevention Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) Program, a US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) HOME Investment Partnership Program Initiative, is a seven (7) month rental housing assistance program with an option to renew for two (2) additional seven (7) month terms, with a maximum of twenty-one (21) months of rental assistance. Monthly rental allowances are as follows:

- 4 Bedroom   will be considered and approved on an as needed basis
- 3 Bedroom $900.00/month
- 2 Bedroom $800.00/month
- 1 Bedroom $700.00/month

- Efficiency $600.00/month

TBRA Only – The initial seven (7) months of rental housing assistance does not require the recipient to enroll in case management/family self-sufficiency; however, it is strongly encouraged. Eligible families/individuals that choose not to enroll into a case management program will receive Rental Housing Assistance, including rental and utility deposits, for a maximum of seven (7) months.

TBRA and Case Management (Family Self-Sufficiency Program) – Eligible families/individuals that voluntarily enroll in the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program will be eligible for up to twenty-one (21) months of housing assistance. Participants will be required to work with a case manager and complete a case management plan for self-sufficiency. Participants will be required to meet with case managers on an as needed basis and must be recertified for eligibility every seven (7) months, with a maximum of twenty-one (21) months of assistance. The FSS Program case plan may include, but not limited to the following services: housing search and placement, credit repair, legal service referrals, job training, and education assistance.

Utility Assistance Program

One time assistance, up to $1,000, may be provided to eligible families/individuals to assist with the payment of electric, gas, or water services. The services must be in the name of the applicant, spouse, or other adult household member. Payments will only be released to the approved agency.

Eligible services include:

- Utility Assistance (electric, water, sewer, and gas)
  - Current Bill
  - Arrearages Billed
  - Utility Deposits
  - Utility Connection and Reconnection Fees
  - Additional Utility Deposit Fees
  - Old Account Balances
  - Late Fees

Emergency Housing Voucher Program

The Emergency Housing Voucher Program is a short term immediate housing program that provides hotel/motel vouchers to families/individuals that are homeless. The following criteria must be met:

- Applicants have applied for the TBRA/FSS Programs;
- No appropriate shelter beds are available; and,
- Rental housing has been identified but is not readily available.

This program will provide a hotel/motel voucher for a maximum of four (4) weeks, not to exceed $900.00.

Emergency Shelter Operations

Emergency Shelter Operations, inclusive of men only shelters, funds may be used for renovation of emergency shelter facilities and/or the operation of those facilities, as well as services for the residents.
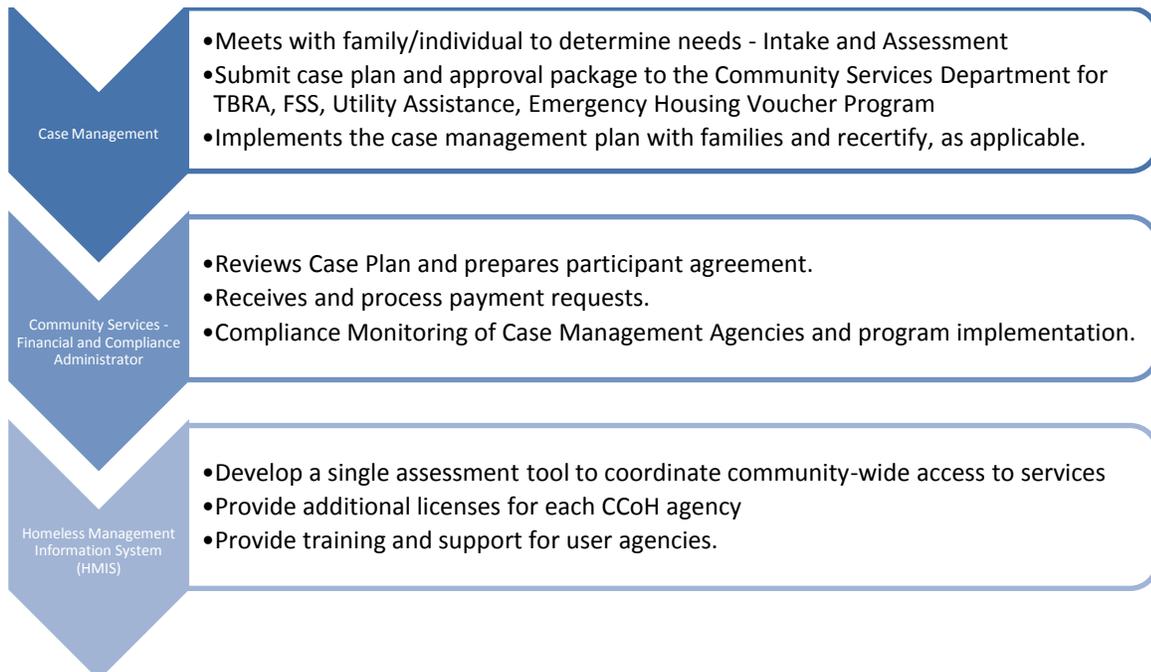
Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and Administration

The Homeless Services Network (HSN) of Central Florida:

- is lead agency for the HUD Continuum of Care Supportive Housing Program and Shelter + Care funding for Osceola, Seminole and Orange Counties, including the City of Orlando

- administers more than 40 grants through its sub-recipient agencies who provide services to the homeless in Orange, Seminole and Osceola Counties

- administers the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) as mandated by HUD.

HSN's HMIS will allow Seminole County to create a centralized, common database as well as allow community stakeholders to strengthen services in a more streamlined manner, and obtain information to guide future planning (www.hud.gov). HSN will develop a single assessment tool to coordinate community-wide access to services, provide additional user licenses for each CCoH agency, and training and support for user agencies.

Implementation

Case Management
- Meets with family/individual to determine needs - Intake and Assessment
- Submit case plan and approval package to the Community Services Department for TBRA, FSS, Utility Assistance, Emergency Housing Voucher Program
- Implements the case management plan with families and recertify, as applicable.

Community Services - Financial and Compliance Administrator
- Reviews Case Plan and prepares participant agreement.
- Receives and process payment requests.
- Compliance Monitoring of Case Management Agencies and program implementation.

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)
- Develop a single assessment tool to coordinate community-wide access to services
- Provide additional licenses for each CCoH agency
- Provide training and support for user agencies.

Case Management Services

The Community Services Department will issue a competitive Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to select an organization(s) to administer the case management process of the Homeless Program Plan. The County, specifically the Community Services Department, will serve as the Financial and Compliance Administrator for the Homeless Program Plan.

The organization(s) must be a nonprofit 501(c) 3 organization(s) that are current members of the Seminole County Community Conversation on Homelessness. Organization(s) must currently provide programs or services similar in nature to those proposed within the boundaries of Seminole County. Proposals must include the agency's mission and purpose, capacity, staffing, experience, and financial position in order to demonstrate its ability to complete the proposed activities.

Special preference will be given to the following agencies:
- Organizations that have the ability to leverage the County's commitment of $900,000 at a minimum of 2:1 ratio.
- Organizations that partner with other social service agencies and respond as a collaborative.
  - Must include list other organizations that will be included in the implementation and ongoing operation of the project
  - Must include current letters from the organizations that have agreed to partner with your agency detailing the specific resources and services they will provide
- Organizations with five (5) years of homeless case management experience

Plan for Self Sufficiency

It is expected that all case managers will develop individualized written plans for self sufficiency that set forth mutual and time-bound responsibilities, expectations, and goals designed to prevent households from becoming homeless in the future.

At a minimum, the plan should include:

- Client identification
- The client's time-bound goals, responsibilities, and work activity participation designed to further the transition to self sufficiency
- An agreement that states the expectations of the program, the client and the natural consequences of not meeting expectations
- The agency's commitment to assist all clients to smoothly transition off homeless prevention assistance programs and move toward becoming self sufficient
- Plan updates at least every seven (7) months or as the clients' needs, goals, barriers, and family circumstances change
- Any referrals to outside source

Compliance Monitoring

The Community Services Department will be responsible for compliance monitoring of the organization(s) selected. The overriding goal of monitoring is to determine compliance, prevent/identify deficiencies and design corrective actions to improve or reinforce the organization's performance. Where possible, any identified deficiencies in need of corrective action should be handled through discussion, negotiation, or technical assistance in a manner that maximizes local discretion. Monitoring also provides opportunities to identify program participant accomplishments as well as successful management/implementation/evaluation techniques that might be replicated by other project sponsors.

The Community Services Department is responsible for the following:

- compliance monitoring with all the applicable rules and citations for a particular program and/or agreement;

- review case plan to ensure program funds are allotted in accordance with all program rules and regulations;

- determine the adequacy of performance under the written agreements; and

- take appropriate action when performance problems arise.

One of the most important steps of grants financial management and/or compliance monitoring is to review proposed costs of the activity to determine if they appear to be necessary and reasonable and will otherwise conform with the requirements of grant regulations as well as OMB Circulars A-87, "Cost Principles for State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments," A-122, "Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations," A-21, "Cost Principles for Educational Institutions," 24 CFR Part 84, "Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations;" or 24 CFR Part 85, "Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments," as applicable.

The monitoring process involves frequent telephone/email contacts, written communications, analysis of reports and audits, and periodic meetings. It is the responsibility of the Community Services Department staff to keep fully informed concerning project sponsors compliance with program requirements and the extent to which technical assistance is needed.

Purpose of Tool: The Program Design Matrix outlines the key features of the component services and service delivery model and to and					
by whom they will be provided.					
Housing First Component	**Service Description**	**Recipient**	**Who will provide the Service**	**Frequency, Duration, or Limit of Service**	**Anticipated Number to be Served Annually (Outcomes)**
Program Referral	Potential participants are referred; referral documentation is reviewed for eligibility determination.	Families/Individuals that are Homeless or at risk of becoming Homeless.	Case Management Agency/HMIS	One-time	125-150 households
Intake and Assessment	Intake documentation and assessment of housing needs and barriers; resource acquisition; and services needed to sustain housing	Families/Individuals that are Homeless or at risk of becoming Homeless that meet eligibility guidelines.	Case Management Agency/HMIS	Initial visit and ongoing.	85 – 125 households
Housing/Case Management Plan Development	Action plan for locating and securing appropriate housing and supportive services.	Families/Individuals that are Homeless or at risk of becoming Homeless that meet eligibility guidelines.	Case Management Agency/HMIS	One-time with weekly progress review	TBRA non-CM - $248,000 will serve at least 44 households for 7 months @$800 per month (2 BR) or at least 39 households for 7 months @$900 per month (3 BR) TBRA w/CM - $644,350 will serve at least 39 households for 21 months @$800 per month (2 BR) or at least 34 households for 21 months @$900 per month (3 BR)
Housing search and placement	Landlord cultivation; apartment search; landlord negotiation; unit rent reasonableness assessment; rental application, leasing and move-in assistance.	Families/Individuals that are Homeless or at risk of becoming Homeless that meet eligibility guidelines.	Case Management Agency	Ongoing	85 – 125 households

Emergency Financial Assistance	Short-term emergency housing and utility assistance to be paid directly to housing, utility, or service provider.	Families/Individuals that are Homeless or at risk of becoming Homeless that meet eligibility guidelines.	Community Services Department	Hotel/Motel Voucher for up to four (4) weeks with a maximum of $900; one time utility assistance with a maximum of $1,000.	Utility Assistance $32,650 – 88 clients @ $371 of assistance or 78 clients @ $418 of assistance or 32 clients @ $1,000 of assistance Emergency Housing $35,000 – at least 40 households at $900 of assistance
Follow up case management	Wrap-around case management	Families/Individuals that have been successfully placed in housing	Case Management Agency	Weekly, bi-weekly, or on an as needed basis.	Case management - $200,000 – 44 clients for 21 months or 39 clients for 21 months. Training - $100,000 – between 20 to 30 individuals could be served with awards between $5,000 and $3,300.

Resource: www.endhomelessness.org

Budget

Budget Sources

Seminole County General Funds	$900,000.00
HOME Investment Partnership Program	$400,000.00
Community Services Block Grant (Training)	$100,000.00
HEARTH	$48,000.00
Emergency Solutions Grant	$10,000.00
Total Budget	**$1,458,000.00**

Homeless Program/Services Budget

Tenant Based Rental Assistance	$892,350.00
Case Management	$298,000.00
Utility Assistance	$32,650.00
Emergency Housing Voucher	$35,000.00
Job Training/Education Assistance	$100,000.00
Emergency Shelter	$50,000.00
HMIS System/Administration	$50,000.00
Total Homeless Program/Services Budget	**$1,458,000.00**

Appendix A

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)

Homeless Services Network HMIS Overview

Homeless Services Network's (HSN) Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is the centralized repository of information for homeless services in Orange, Osceola, and Seminole Counties, as well as the cities of Orlando, Sanford and Kissimmee, as designated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 2001.

The HSN HMIS streamlines the coordination and delivery of homeless assistance and homelessness prevention services in the region. Through the system, more than 220 users across more than 65 agencies and programs are able to collaborate by sharing information on precariously housed, low-income and homeless clients being served across the tri-county region. The HSN HMIS draws together disparate providers (including ESG, CDBG, and HPRP grantees, HOPWA programs, homeless outreach teams, emergency shelters, transitional housing facilities, and permanent supportive housing programs) to offer focused and effective care for every client served. Automating paper and manual processes increases agency case management efficiency, while enhanced communication and feedback ensure reduced duplication of services and support a more integrated system of care for each household served.

HMIS as a Data Collection & Case Management Tool

When a service provider begins to participate in HMIS, the service provider may determine its level of engagement. There are multiple levels of engagement:

1. Collecting mandatory demographic data on clients being served, including services provided and entry/exit dates which are shared with other HMIS participating agencies. Minimum collection requirements are standardized by HSN for all HMIS participants and may be further augmented by additional requirements by funders.
2. Collecting a broader array of client demographic data than required. Individual agencies may request that their data collection workflow be customized accordingly.
3. Utilizing HMIS to deliver client-level, case management level and program management level data to manage and report on program outcomes.
4. Integrating HMIS into the case management process for each client, including the use of standardized or customized assessment tools and employment of a robust case management model which includes an individualized case plan with room for case notes, referrals and follow-ups as well as the capacity to electronically store copies of IDs, release of information, and other relevant documents.

HMIS as a Community Knowledge Base

Many precariously housed and homeless individuals demonstrate regional mobility, utilizing services over time in all three counties, depending on their household's needs. For example, Seminole County has approximately 4% of the region's inventory of beds, but serves as the home for more than 23% of the homeless in the region. Many clients served by agencies in Seminole County are referred for services, shelter, specialized treatment and/or housing in other counties.

Since 2002, HSN's HMIS has collected nearly 100,000 records on clients who have received services to prevent homelessness and/or assist the client to return to self-sufficiency in the region. Agency staff commonly find that many of their clients are already in HMIS because the clients have drawn on resources somewhere within the tri-county region – and that a prior case manager has obtained much of the client's demographic data, service history and disabilities. Further, a resource directory is available to support the case manager in identifying a broad spectrum of regional resources that may be needed by the client; referrals can be made electronically. Analyses of referral patterns and frequency support the development of relationships between partner agencies and assist in identifying gaps within the services network for which funding may be requested.

Confidentiality & Security

The HSN HMIS ensures that client and provider data is confidential at all times. Accessibility to the system is as flexible and customizable as the system itself; data can be locked or unlocked, viewed or withheld, changed or protected, all depending upon the permission level assigned to each user. When there are new legal mandates, from HIPAA to state regulations and agency guidelines, participating agencies have the full support of HSN HMIS staff in implementing any required changes to the system.

Software Accessibility, Training and Support

HSN's HMIS employs a web-based application meaning that there is no additional hardware to purchase, no new software to install, nor any need for an internal IT staff to manage the system. Participating programs need only ensure that their current computer systems have the latest web browsers and a reliable broadband Internet connection and they may access HSN's HMIS.

HSN offers weekly HMIS software training for HMIS users to both new and experienced HMIS users with each training tailored to a user's specific data collection workflow. Additional training is available to program managers and supervisors on the use of system monitoring and program reporting tools.

To address any software problems or user questions that arise, the HSN HMIS Help Desk employs a ticketing system to track submitted issues in order to ensure a quick issue resolution and to minimize lost productivity by HMIS users.

The Role of HSN's HMIS in Community Planning

HUD's Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) which produces a national estimate of homelessness is derived from aggregate data compiled through HMIS implementations across the country.

HSN's efforts to contribute to the national AHAR also result in a comprehensive local report on the homeless being served at emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing programs throughout Orange, Osceola, and Seminole Counties. This report provides counts of the homeless population and describes their demographic characteristics and service use patterns.

HSN's HMIS also serves as the central repository for the annually updated Housing Inventory Chart which serves to identify all the emergency, transitional and permanent supportive housing beds in the region, disaggregated by county, type of housing and type of client being served (individual, family with children, unaccompanied youth, domestic violence victims). The resultant analysis creates a data-driven

report that identifies the "gaps" in the bed inventory for each population, which can support evidence-based funding allocations for specific projects to fill those gaps.

Appendix B

Affordable Housing/Homeless

Services Provided by

Seminole County

Community Services Department

PROGRAM	DESCRIPTION	FUNDING
HOUSING: Prevention/Rapid Re-Housing	County provides up to three months financial assistance to those who need help with rent, mortgage or utilities to prevent homelessness FY 10/11	$474,975
	Security and Rental deposit program to assist homeless individuals and families; SHIP – FY 11/12 - Budgeted Units 41	$40,000
	County's Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing (HPRP) program provides financial assistance, case management services, housing relocation, legal services, credit repair assistance to those who are recently homeless due to the economic downturn or those individuals and families who are on the verge of homelessness. A portion of these funds were subcontracted through Jewish Family Services and Community Based Care of Seminole, Pathways to Home Program. Homeless Prevention-served 245 individuals and 70 households, Homeless families living in cars, hotels, tents, etcetera, 242 individuals and 69 households served –FY 09/12	$991,000
	TOTAL	$1,505,975.00
TRANSITIONAL/PERMANENT HOUSING	County received federal funding for the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) which is funding to acquire, rehabilitate and either sell or rent foreclosed homes to the low to very low income eligible citizens. Some of the rental properties are geared to assist homeless families. (FY 2008-2014) *	$7,019,514 NSP1 $3,995,175 NSP3
	Donated transitional houses to CBC 4-3/2 and 1-4/2 transitional houses, and 1 3/2 permanent house. $706,546.97 Donated 6 transitional housing units to Heart to Heart 2-3/2 and 4 2/2.	$ 450,000
	County funds have been allocated to develop 17 senior housing units.	$1,300,000

	CDBG/HOME	
	County provides Tenant Based Rental assistance to assist and prevent 48 seniors and disabled individuals from becoming homeless.	$250,000
	County provides Shelter + Care grant funding to Homeless Services Network; provide rental assistance, counseling, serving 41 plus chronically homeless individuals with a disability (FY 09 – 15)	$1,425,900
	TOTAL	$14,440,589.00
NON-PROFIT SERVICES – General Funds	County funds are provided to Seminole County Non-Profits to assist in preventing and assisting homeless individuals and families	
	Catholic Charities – Pathways to Care Program – Provide services to adults released from the hospital re-cooperating from an injury or illness. Services provided: room and board, nutrition, transportation, medication oversight, assistance with daily living. (FY 10 – 12)	$76,000
	Safe House – Victims Right Program - Shelter nights and counseling (FY 10 – 12)	$135,000
	Intervention Services – Juveniles aged out of foster care- life skills and development and supervision at the transitional living site (FY 10 – 12)	$25,000
	Christian Sharing Center – 2000 bags of food; County pays $26.00 per bag (FY 10 – 12)	$103,000

		TOTAL	$339,000.00
HOMELESS SHELTERS	County's CDBG funding used to expand/renovate Rescue Outreach Homeless Shelter women and children's residence. Allowing 10 additional beds; County's CDBG funding used to renovate Rescue Outreach $700,000Homeless Shelter men's residence. FY 10/11		$700,000
	County provides Emergency Shelter Grant funding to 2 homeless shelters (Rescue Outreach and Safe House)for their general operation and provides a limited amount of emergency financial and medical services – FY 10 - 12		$185,472
	County provided funding to build the SAFE House – a domestic violence shelter and transitional housing for women and children of domestic abuse 39 beds. FY 2007		$2,000,000
		TOTAL	$2,885,472.00
MEDICAL	Assist indigent individuals residing in Seminole County with their medical bills (HCRA & Central Florida Regional Hospital) HCRA: FY 10/11 $403,648, Central Florida Regional: $372,260 FY 10/11		$775,908
	County is partnering with the Health Department and community nonprofits involved with medical care to increase access to medical and dental care to those who are indigent and/or homeless		$120,000
	Expansion of Central Florida Health to add a Radiology Unit and a machine.		$85,000
	Indigent Burials FY 10 - 12		$40,000
		TOTAL	$2,810,469.00

VETERAN SERVICES	County staff actively participates in Veterans Stand downs that focus on addressing the needs of homeless Veterans.	
	GRAND TOTAL	**$21,981,505.00**

Appendix G

Resources

National Alliance to
END HOMELESSNESS

www.endhomelessness.org
IMPROVING POLICY | BUILDING CAPACITY | EDUCATING OPINION LEADERS

1518 K Street, NW, Suite 410 | Washington, DC 20005
Tel 202.638.1526 | Fax 202.638.4664

What is Housing First?
Revised November 9, 2006

Housing First is an approach that centers on providing homeless people with housing quickly and then providing services as needed. What differentiates a Housing First approach from other strategies is that there is an immediate and primary focus on helping individuals and families quickly access and sustain permanent housing. This approach has the benefit of being consistent with what most people experiencing homelessness want and seek help to achieve. Housing First programs share critical elements:

- There is a focus on helping individuals and families access and sustain rental housing *as quickly as possible* and the *housing is not time-limited*;
- A variety of services are delivered primarily *following* a housing placement to promote housing stability and individual well-being;
- Such services are time-limited or long-term depending upon individual need; and
- Housing is not contingent on compliance with services – instead, participants must comply with a standard lease agreement and are provided with the services and supports that are necessary to help them do so successfully.

A Housing First approach rests on the belief that helping people access and sustain permanent, affordable housing should be the central goal of our work with people experiencing homelessness. By providing housing assistance, case management and supportive services responsive to individual or family needs (time-limited or long-term) after an individual or family is housed, communities can significantly reduce the time people experience homelessness and prevent further episodes of homelessness. A central tenet of the Housing First approach is that social services to enhance individual and family well-being can be more effective when people are in their own home.

While there are a wide variety of program models, Housing First programs all typically include:

- Assessment-based targeting of Housing First services
- Assistance locating rental housing, relationship development with private market landlords, and lease negotiation
- Housing assistance – ranging from security deposit and one month's rent to provision of a long-term housing subsidy
- A housing placement that is not time-limited

- Case management to coordinate services (time-limited or long- term) that follow a housing placement

Housing First is an approach used for both homeless families and individuals and for people who are chronically homeless. Program models vary depending on the client population, availability of affordable rental housing and/or housing subsidies and services that can be provided. Housing First programs often reflect the needs and preferences of each community, further contributing to the diversity of models.

What are some examples of Housing First programs?

Beyond Shelter, Los Angeles, CA
Community Care Grant Program, Washington, DC
Direct Access to Housing, San Francisco, CA
Family Housing Collaborative, Columbus, OH
HomeStart, Boston, MA
Pathways to Housing, New York City, NY and Washington, DC
Project Coming Home, Contra Costa County, CA
Rapid Exit Program, Hennepin County, MN
Shelter to Independent Living, Lancaster, PA

What does a Housing First approach entail?

Assessment and Targeting
Individuals and families receive an in-depth, upfront assessment before being referred to or receiving services from a Housing First provider. This allows providers to ascertain whether the community's Housing First approach is feasible given the providers' capacity to provide housing assistance and services tailored to their clients' needs. The level of assistance programs are able to provide most often shapes who is targeted for Housing First services.

Families	Chronically Homeless Individuals
Some Housing First programs serving homeless families can only offer short-term rent assistance. As a result, these programs target families who can be expected to assume the rental payments in the short-term. However, some families with very minimal incomes can also be served because the delivered intensive case management services help families maximize their income through employment services and access to public benefits.	Some Housing First programs serving chronically homeless individuals are able to provide very rich, intensive wraparound services and supports to promote a successful housing outcome. Because of the level of services they are able to deliver, these providers typically prioritize those individuals who have failed to use or succeed in other program models – some intentionally identifying their community's "high system users" - those who have heavily relied on shelters, jails, and emergency rooms.

Evidence indicates Housing First is appropriate for most, if not all, homeless persons. The combination of housing linked to services can help a wide variety of people exit homelessness more rapidly. This is supported by research that demonstrates that most formerly homeless families, including those with significant challenges, will retain housing with the provision of a long term housing subsidy. It is also supported by evaluations of Housing First interventions with chronically homeless individuals that have found that many who have remained outside of housing for years can retain housing with a subsidy and provision of wraparound supports. In short, while most communities are targeting Housing First services to a subset of their homeless population, the approach can be tailored to end homelessness for many more.

Permanent Housing
There is substantial variation in how Housing First providers help meet the housing needs of the individuals and families they serve.

- Some Housing First programs provide only minimal financial assistance, for example assistance with security deposits and application fees. Other programs are able to rely on federal housing subsidies or move individuals/families into public or subsidized housing.

- Some Housing First programs rely solely on apartments in the private rental market. Others master-lease or develop multi-family units and then sublease those units to program participants. And still others seek out many different permanent housing options, in order to maximize the availability of permanent, affordable housing for the people they serve.

- Some Housing First programs hold the individual or family's lease while they are involved with the program; individuals and families then often take on the lease when the "program" services end (time-limited case management). In other program models, the family or individual holds a lease with a public or private landlord from the onset.

All Housing First providers focus on helping individuals and families move into permanent housing *as quickly as possible*, based on the premise that social service needs can best be addressed after they move in to their new home.

Assistance Locating & Sustaining Housing
Housing First programs all typically invest time and resources in helping homeless individuals and families overcome barriers to accessing permanent housing. This includes reaching out to landlord organizations, housing management companies, public housing authorities, civic organizations and congregations. Developing strong relationships helps improve Housing First providers' capacity to relocate individuals and families into permanent housing arrangements.

All Housing First programs are responsive to the concerns of landlords, housing operators and developers. Many Housing First programs develop strategies to overcome

concerns expressed by landlords. This is a critical investment to help facilitate access to housing and promote successful housing outcomes. As a result, these programs are able to find housing for individuals and families who have extensive housing barriers. Successful housing placements often result in landlords and management companies increasing the number of units they are willing to lease to individuals and families served by Housing First programs.

Chronically Homeless Individuals	Families
One Housing First operator provides additional deposits/reserve funds to developers of a multi-family building. He reports that the developers and owners he contracts with to house chronically homeless individuals have all insisted on the additional deposits and reserve funds as they anticipate the population will put significant wear and tear on the building. The Housing First program operator reports in every instance he has been able to recapture those funds during contract renewal as owners have been satisfied with the light wear on the building.	A Housing First program that serves high-risk families offers landlords an "eviction guarantee." If a family fails to comply with the terms of the lease, the program will assist the landlord and reimburse any costs he incurs. The program markets the services it provides to the families and its willingness to intervene with any problem behavior that arises. The Housing First program, landlords, and families are jointly committed to promoting a successful housing outcome. The program has greatly expanded the roster of landlords that it successfully works with. And, even if families lose their housing, the Housing First program continues to work with them to find and sustain suitable housing so they do not re-experience homelessness.

Low, Moderate or High Intensity Supportive Services
Housing First programs offer services with varying levels of intensity following a housing placement to ensure successful tenancy and promote the economic and social well-being of individuals and families. These services are typically offered for only as long as they are needed. In many instances, services are transitional to help stabilize the individual or family in housing. A focus of the transitional supports is to help the individual or family develop a support network that includes other local or community mainstream resources and/or social service agencies that can be responsive and attentive to the individual's or family's long term goals and any subsequent crisis. In other cases, on-going, intensive supports will be needed to ensure that the individual or family will be able to remain stably housed. The capacity of programs to provide supportive services following a housing placement is largely determined by, and determines, who is targeted for Housing First services.

Families	Chronically Homeless Individuals
Housing First programs serving homeless families typically provide transitional, case management services lasting 6-12 months, often intensive at the beginning. Most programs prioritize helping the families link up with community-based, mainstream social service	Housing First programs serving chronically homeless individuals typically provide intensive case management services coupled with providers in the community who are able to address individuals' substance abuse and

providers that are able to meet their long-term social support and service needs. Case management services for families tend to phase out as families stabilize in their housing and new networks of supportive services are in place.	mental health treatment needs over the long term. Programs serving chronically homeless individuals can typically provide very intensive services because case managers have small client-to-worker ratios.

Outcome Measures

Determining the effectiveness of Housing First programs relies on capturing outcome data. Among the primary outcomes that should be assessed in a Housing First program are individual or family housing outcomes. How rapidly are families being re-housed? Are individuals and families remaining housed? Do families or individuals re-enter shelter?

Programs may want to capture outcomes on family or individual well-being. Programs serving families may include employment and earning outcomes and school performance of children. Programs serving chronically homeless individuals might examine increases or decreases in hospital stays.

In communities where there is widespread implementation of a Housing First approach, one outcome measurement that should be captured is the average length of stay in homelessness of the target population. This outcome measurement allows communities to assess whether they are reducing the length of homeless episodes overall through their Housing First initiatives.

Examples of Client Level Performance Measures

Length of Stay in Shelters	Length of stay in shelter, outdoors or other homeless programs before accessing permanent housing
Housing Placement	Successful placements in permanent housing
Housing Stability	Retains permanent housing (typically measured at 6 months, 1 year, 18 months or 2 years)
Recidivism	Subsequent homeless episodes (typically measured by identifying re-entry into shelter system).
Housing Outcome	Type of housing individual/family moved into (permanent supportive housing, public housing, and private sector rental units with or without assisted through short term or long term housing subsidy) and whether placement was successful
Health and well-being	Changes in individual and family members' health and well-being
Increase economic well-being	Increased income from access to benefits and/or employment

Where can I learn more about Housing First?

We have developed resources on Housing First for homeless families and for chronically homeless individuals. As the Housing First approach continues to take hold, there may soon be resources for other populations – including homeless youth and single, non-disabled adults. Visit www.endhomelessness.org for more information.