

Destination: Home--a Ten-Year Journey to End Homelessness in Evansville and Vanderburgh County

Progress Report - November 2008

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In December of 2004, *Destination: Home* was launched and implementation began in 2005, including the formation of the city-county Commission on Homelessness. Progress in the initial four years has been slow and steady, with much necessary groundwork and relationship-building being done. Many strategies are underway.

A. PLAN FOR OUTCOMES -- WORKING TOGETHER TO END HOMELESSNESS

1. Establish Evansville-Vanderburgh Co. participation in the Hoosier Management Information System (HMIS)
 - 12 area homeless service providers use HMIS to collect data on our local homeless population for 25 programs.
 - A part-time regional coordinator for HMIS continues to serve the region.
2. Monitor information that will provide an effective measure of the ten-year plan's outcomes
 - The Homeless Services Council of Southwest Indiana (HSCSI) assists with data monitoring and collection.



B. CLOSE THE FRONT DOOR TO HOMELESSNESS - PREVENTION

1. Develop a homeless prevention system to identify and assist people most likely to become homeless
 - The Prevention Committee has created a Housing Risk Assessment tool that will be used among area service providers who serve clients with low-incomes in order to identify households at risk of homelessness and connect them to services available in order to stabilize housing. The tool will be tested by ten agencies early 2009.
2. Develop a year-round utility subsidy program for the 30% Area Median Income (AMI) population
 - Vectren was able to extend and enhance the Universal Service Program to assist customers with utilities through May 2009. They are willing to permanently incorporate the program but the program needs approval from the Utility Regulatory Board.
3. Create a community discharge plan to prevent homelessness upon release from a publicly funded institution.
 - The Discharge Planning Coalition hired a Coordinator in May and the Coalition has been launched to address issues related to preventing homelessness among those released from health care, corrections and foster care.

C. OPEN THE BACK DOOR TO LEAVE HOMELESSNESS

1. Develop a "Housing First" program for those in emergency shelter that includes subsidy and transitional case management for up to 250 households
 - A scattered site supportive housing project for 20 families with disabilities will start Dec. 1, 2008. This is a partnership of Aurora and ECHO Housing Corporation with funding through the HUD Supportive Housing Program.
 - Application has been submitted to HUD for 2009 funding for scattered site supportive housing for 10 families/singles with a disability.
2. Develop an active mentoring program through local churches to tie formerly homeless persons into the community
 - *Compassionate Connections* was launched in 2008 with a pilot project between Aurora's "Emergency Housing Program" (providing six months of case management and rental/utility assistance) and a local congregation (providing a trained support network, partial program funding, in-kind donations).

BUILD THE INFRASTRUCTURE

D. HOUSING

1. Develop 500 units of supportive Single Room Occupancy (SRO) housing
 - Initial planning for a 60-75-unit project is in the development stages.
 - A scattered site supportive housing project for ten individuals with disabilities began in October 2008. Aurora is the Program Administrator, partnering with AIDS Resource Group and Southwestern Behavioral Healthcare. HUD Supportive Housing Program funding is provided through Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority.
2. Develop a program to move 1000 currently low-income renters into homeownership through assessment, training & down-payment assistance
 - "Home4Good" is a partnership between Aurora and Habitat for Humanity of Evansville and has the goal of moving ten homeless families into Habitat homeownership each year beginning in 2009.
3. Develop incentives to encourage housing development for the extremely low-income (30% AMI)
 - Housing Committee is researching best practices in incentive programs.
4. Develop 1500 additional units of rent-subsidized housing by facilitating the full utilization of existing units and construction of new units where needed
 - Housing Committee is researching best practices of short-term rental subsidy programs.
 - Application submitted to HUD for 2009 funding for a scattered site short-term rental assistance program to house 75 families with minimal housing barriers over a three year term (25 families per yr.)

E. RAISING INCOMES and INCREASING ASSETS

1. Improve coordination of employment services
 - The Raising Incomes Committee, formed in 2008, is working to coordinate tasks related to the plan's strategies.
2. Establish training & employment options
 - The Raising Incomes Committee is researching best practices in career planning, assessment and training programs, pipeline supply programs, social entrepreneurship, and work supports.

3. Establish a living wage
 - A subcommittee of Raising Incomes Committee is researching and addressing this issue.
4. Address the employment needs of offenders, youth & currently “unemployable”
 - The Raising Incomes Committee, Discharge Planning Coalition and Homeless Youth Coalition are working on various aspects related to the populations of concern.
5. Increasing family wealth and assets
 - Financial Stability Partnership sponsored two VITA sites (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) over 12 weeks in 2008 assisting 400 households in filing returns totaling \$375,000, which came back to the community.

F. SERVICES

1. Improve/develop transportation options for low-income individuals
 - Partners in Caring continues to address and raise awareness of public transportation needs.
 - Veterans Networking Group has given more than 189 bicycles to homeless veterans and others in need of transportation for access to employment.
 - Patchwork Central has given out 175 bikes to homeless adults and neighborhood children since 2006.
2. Develop improved access to information about sources of assistance
 - Indiana 2-1-1, operated by United Way, continues to operate and expand in Southwestern Indiana.
3. Improve access and coordination of services for specialized populations--youth, veterans
 - Six of seven sites for PlaySpaces have been equipped; partnerships continue to be developed for hiring a coordinator to recruit, train, and schedule volunteers and to equip parents with learning-through-play skills.
 - A potential funder has been identified to assume program funding for PlaySpaces beginning in 2009.
 - The Homeless Youth Coalition is researching the development of a youth Drop-In Center.
 - In April 2008, Governor Daniels signed into law the ability for shelters to provide services to youth (16-17 years old) without parental consent for 72 hours. The Homeless Youth Coalition helped influence this legislation.
4. Provide training for community service providers
 - *Bridges* project has trained and/or exposed over 1,800 persons in the area to *Bridges Out of Poverty* principles. The Bridges group has expanded outreach to employers of lower-wage workers. A Business Users Group is meeting to develop plans to incorporate Bridges training and philosophy to increase employee retention rates.
 - The Homeless Services Council of Southwest Indiana has continued to offer training for shelter staff quarterly.

G. PUBLIC AWARENESS

1. Dispel the misconceptions
 - Ongoing awareness/education activities continue to convey the realities, struggles, needs and long-term solutions of homelessness in our community.
2. Promote *Destination: Home--a Ten-Year Journey to End Homelessness*
 - Web site continues to be updated as strategies and working groups progress: www.destination-home.info
 - *Be a Key* to ending homelessness campaign emerging, incorporating “*Housing Matters!*” and adding an emphasis on personal and group involvement, including logo, shirts, activities during presentations, radio ad slogans, etc.
 - Use of *Housing Matters!* homeless simulation activities for community awareness presentations are underway; Adaptations have been made to focus on youth homelessness as well.
 - Booth at the Tri-State Home Show in April 2007 and 2008 with six to nine different service providers and six community volunteers participating; Booth space has been donated again for 2009.
 - Total endorsements (84 organizational, 56 individual, and elected officials--2 federal; 3 state; 9 local) equal 154.
 - Individualized presentations average 20 per year.
 - Bi-monthly progress reports are made available/sent out regularly to interested persons.
 - 30-second ads on five radio stations will have run during the first full week of eight months in 2008.
3. Discourage community support of panhandling
 - A Panhandling Observation Project was conducted by community partners to note area hot spots for panhandling activity, other demographic data related to the practice, and research in best practices for redirecting community support to more long-term outcomes.
4. Establish Commission on Homelessness--the oversight body charged to keep the *Destination: Home* strategies moving forward.
 - Began in June 2005 with monthly meetings and chairmanship alternating between the Mayor and Commissioners.
 - Has created five working groups: Discharge Planning Coalition, Homeless Youth Coalition, Housing Committee, Prevention Committee, Raising Incomes Committee
 - Planning underway for first Project Homeless Connect event: “Vanderburgh Homeless Connect” will be held March 12, 2009 from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm at the Veterans Memorial Coliseum.

2009 Strategies - Assigned Group(s)

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish Travelers Aid Program - <i>Prevention Committee</i> • Develop transitional housing for youth and domestic violence victims--<i>Homeless Youth Coalition, Housing Committee</i> • Strengthen domestic violence prevention services - <i>To be assigned</i> |
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