



- GAP:** There are a significant number of residents who do not have the skills or the opportunity to obtain and maintain living wage positions.
- GOAL:** Increase opportunities for low-wage/low-skill workers to obtain the necessary skills and employment to earn a living wage.
- OUTCOME:** Vanderburgh County residents will have improved access to community services, education and training leading to employment resulting in self-sufficiency.

The following strategies are the targets Raising Incomes Committee, a committee of the city-county Commission on Homelessness. The Commission oversees the implementation of *Destination: Home*, the ten-year plan to end and prevent homelessness in Evansville and Vanderburgh County.

### **STRATEGY 1:**

#### Improve Coordination of Employment Services

As previously identified in this report, the importance of improving access to mainstream services for the homeless and those at high risk of becoming homeless cannot be over-stated. Evansville and Vanderburgh County have many resources in employment through local and state agencies such as Career Choices, Inc., WorkOne, Goodwill, the Workforce Investment Board, and others.

In order to better assist our clients in utilizing these types of services, we propose to expand and enhance the community service referral system through better communication and coordination. This would include developing a flow chart on the referral process and the current community services. We will then provide training to staff on maximizing the referral process, thus creating a safety net around individuals to ensure they are not "lost" in the process.

We will encourage community employment services to collaborate with homeless outreach programs to enhance service delivery to homeless and formerly homeless individuals.

The previously discussed HMIS system can be a tremendous asset to this process by establishing an interface with the existing One-Stop employment and training management information system. This will enable homeless outreach organizations to improve the coordination and integration of housing, case management, and other services with employment services.

We will encourage the local Workforce Investment Board to increase linkages with homeless providers, including representation on the board.

### **STRATEGY 2:**

#### Establish Training and Employment Options

In order for individuals and families to become self-sufficient and remain housed, they need to secure and maintain employment. We acknowledge that this is not an easy process. Many of our clients have limited job skills and patchy work histories. We recognize that they need to incrementally gain experience and build a solid history of work, enabling them to make the transition to self-sufficiency.

As well, the lack of housing in and of itself is a significant barrier to obtaining training or employment. Often, however, homeless individuals have other barriers to employment, such as substance abuse, illiteracy, etc. As they address and overcome these barriers, we propose that employment and training programs be introduced to them.

In order to establish effective training and employment options for our clients, it must first be determined how homeless individuals currently access the workforce development system. This

information will enable service providers to recognize the facets of service that are working and to identify barriers to access for the homeless. With that information, we will determine how we can improve access to local employment and training programs (i.e. non-traditional hours of service, going on-site to housing complexes, etc).

Recognizing that employable individuals have skills required by area employers, we will assess which area industries currently need workers in order to tailor training programs to community needs.

We further recommend that housing programs require individuals who are not yet self-sufficient and are entering or already reside in them to develop an Individual Employment Plan and/or Self-Sufficiency Plan. These plans can provide a blueprint for independence and long-term stability for the formerly homeless and those at risk for homelessness.

**STRATEGY 4:**

Address the Employment Needs of Offenders, Youth and the Currently "Unemployable."

The Community Discharge Plan referred to earlier in this report should address not only housing needs, but the means to maintain permanent housing – steady employment. We propose to coordinate employment with the Community Discharge Plan by seeking alternative funding sources for offender programs that establish a "lower bar" for employment success. This does not imply that we support lower standards for employees once they are hired and trained. We will work to create a climate in which employers who offer individuals an opportunity to succeed receive adequate funding and support for their efforts.

We recognize that the set of skills required to obtain and keep a job extend beyond vocational skills. To help close the front door to homelessness for at-risk youth, we support the development of on-site independent living programs at area youth homes. These programs will equip young individuals with the daily living skills and attitudes they will need to remain employed and develop ongoing job skills.

According to the Vanderburgh County Sheriff's Office, the Vanderburgh County Community Corrections (VCCC) program currently maintains a listing of employers that is updated weekly. While over 75% of their participants come into the program unemployed, only 10 % of those who can hold down jobs leave without employment. (e-mail, Williams, 21 June 2004)

The VCCC utilizes the resources of Goodwill Industries and WorkOne in job training and employment services. In addition to job training programs, the program offers a series of classes in life skills, self-esteem, grooming, and other facets of instruction individuals need in order to secure and maintain employment.

The Task Force to End Homelessness learned of a new approach to establishing employment history of ex-offenders, youth and the unemployable, known as "Transitional Jobs." We will investigate this program further for effectiveness and compatibility with existing services in Evansville and Vanderburgh County, with an eye toward possible development of a similar program.

The other strategy in this segment of *Destination: Home* falls under the Self-Sufficiency Subcommittee, which is part of the larger Raising Incomes Committee.

**STRATEGY 3:** Establish a Living Wage

See [www.destination-home.info/raisingincomes.htm](http://www.destination-home.info/raisingincomes.htm) for more details

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**Homelessness**

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