

COORDINATE

Coordinate housing and services by developing a well-structured, strengths-based case management approach that is responsive to individuals and overcomes the fragmentation of these resources.

A strengths-based approach is one that provides services that build upon homeless persons' strengths. All case management will provide assertive and persistent outreach; linkage with available, more integrated, community services; advocacy for needed services; and provision of direct services when existing services are lacking. Case management will also engage individuals in vocational, social, and recreational activities that support and build on their skills and interests and assist them to develop support networks and to manage crises.

Three categories:

Long-term Intensive for people who are homeless due to chronic illness or disability, or who have other permanent barriers to self-sufficiency. These people likely will need frequent contact and permanent support services to remain housed in the community.

Brief intensive for homeless people who have temporary barriers to self-sufficiency and can live independently in community housing following a brief period of intensive services.

Preventive for people who are precariously housed and need brief support services to achieve housing stability.

Additional Recommendations:

Identify a flexible funding pool accessible to case managers so they may assist their clients in overcoming barriers to success.

Develop a team approach to increase coordination, collaboration and integration among service providers in delivering case management services.

Increase the use of volunteers and mentors to strengthen the support network for homeless families and individuals. Provide training for former homeless people who want to serve as mentors.

Provide education and training for former homeless people to serve as case managers and case management aides.

Appoint an entity or entities to coordinate case management.

Homeless and near-homeless people may not get the help they need if they are not efficiently referred to sources of assistance. Despite a number of information and referral resources many needs go unmet.⁴⁴ This Blueprint calls for several initiatives to improve the ability of homeless and near homeless people to access information that will lead them toward needed housing and services.

Recommendations include:

Improve access to information about housing availability by hiring and coordinating the work of "housing specialists" with information and referral systems.

Work with a 211 Partnership, Information and Referral Network, and other key stakeholders to implement 24-hour access to information on homeless and housing services using 2-1-1 as the number for information about available social services. A 211 operator would conduct a brief assessment and patch callers to the most

appropriate services such as outreach, shelter, and the Domestic Violence Navigation Hub. Develop, with the Information and Referral Network, a database on housing available and affordable to homeless and near-homeless people. This database will be regularly updated and made available to service providers.

Utilize HMIS to produce information on real-time emergency shelter bed availability and referral.

Outreach services need to adopt the goal, successfully used in other communities, of moving people into shelter for their own safety. In focus groups, homeless people voiced support for additional training for outreach workers. Training among law enforcement personnel is particularly needed because homeless people indicated that law enforcement involvement in outreach would not be helpful. However, the experience of other communities is that police involvement is essential to help move homeless people off the street for their own safety, particularly when the weather is dangerously cold.

Provides services to certain geographical zones not served by the traditional bus system.

Work with shelters and transitional living programs to further assess transportation needs of residents and expand availability of resources.

Coordinating prompt responses to "hotline" calls received by the information and referral system regarding homeless people living on the street and establishing protocols for responding to these calls around the clock and on weekends.

Coordinating with shelters to ensure that homeless people identified at night and on weekends can be admitted.

Working with the courts to utilize involuntary commitments when needed to protect clients' safety, and with the police to facilitate effective outreach.

Assessing the number of people on the street and their treatment needs with the assistance of outreach teams. Ensuring that mental health professionals are involved in outreach.

Determining the types and amount of temporary shelter needed to house people living on the streets during the winter.

Providing information to Downtown businesses, neighborhood associations, public health nurses, food pantries, and others about the need to move homeless people off the street for their own safety, and engaging these stakeholders in developing solutions.

Making recommendations for training programs for outreach teams, the police, and referral programs that serve homeless people.

Create a shelter for people who are publicly intoxicated that provides prompt access to substance abuse treatment.

Assist individuals with accessing housing, employment, and other needed services by expanding available transportation options.

Transportation is a complex community issue that has long posed barriers for homeless people and others with limited incomes. To access housing, employment, and services such as medical appointments and childcare, homeless and near homeless people need reliable, flexible, and cost effective transportation options. Action steps include:

Promote and expand transportation to certain geo zones not served by the traditional bus system.

Work with shelters and transitional living programs to further assess transportation needs of residents and expand availability of resources.

Develop local and statewide strategies for helping homeless people access subsidized childcare.

The high cost of child care is a huge barrier to maintaining employment. For a single mother with two children earning an income just above poverty, child care expenses can exhaust up to 75% of her salary.

Recommendations:

Identify ways to increase the availability of childcare subsidies by exploring strategies that have proved successful in other states. Strategies to be examined include: a voluntary income tax check-off to make contributions to a childcare fund (used in Colorado), a motor vehicle registration child care account (Kentucky), and funds made available from lotteries (Missouri).

Work with "Business Partnership Specialists" to support childcare for their employees. Strategies could include setting up tax-free deductions for childcare expenses or subsidizing childcare expenses.

Expand the availability of before- and after-school childcare options for homeless and near-homeless, school-age children whose parents are working or participating in services. Work with the Public Schools to consider policies that will allow school buses to transport children to designated after-school sites. Assistance should be available at neighborhood-based homelessness prevention sites.

Investigate ways to provide care for children in shelters while their parents are working or participating in services. Possible options include expanded partnerships with faith-based agencies, community childcare, and expansion of Head Start sites.

Improve information access to housing and services for people who do not speak English or who face other barriers to obtaining their assistance.

Recommendations include:

Develop an advocacy agenda that outlines strategies for immigration reform and increased eligibility for services regardless of residency status.

Enhance the cultural competency of program administrators, staff, and the community to help newcomers access safe, affordable housing and support services.

Eliminate exploitation in areas such as housing, employment, legal services, tax preparation, and credit issues by educating homeless people and service providers about potential forms of exploitation. Work with neighborhood groups, employers, landlords, and local businesses to reduce this problem.

Create a mechanism for individuals who are undocumented to report exploitation without the threat - real or imagined - of deportation.

Enhance collaborative efforts among agencies that serve homeless and near-homeless persons and those that serve people who speak English as a new language.

Increase the trust of individuals seeking services by offering culturally competent education and resource materials that seek to reduce myths regarding institutionalized services.

Provide training to all providers regarding the appropriate use of translators. Special emphasis should be placed on not using children to translate complex subjects for their parents and family members and on providing interpreters who are fully fluent.

MAINSTREAM RESOURCES

STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING SERVICES

Ensure a continuum of employment services to support single adults, youths, and families in reaching their potential.

To achieve the greatest possible independence, homeless people must have adequate opportunities for meaningful work.

Many homeless people are currently working, or are actively seeking work. However, criminal records, mental illness, or addictions can make it difficult for people to work in mainstream employment settings. A shortfall exists in specialized work opportunities, such as supported employment and vocational rehabilitation services - programs that have proved successful in employing and serving people with multiple needs.

Recommendations:

Increase Work Opportunities for People with Multiple Barriers

*Expand the availability of supported employment and vocational rehabilitation programs, and train service providers to connect people to these programs. *

Expand and integrate employment services that use a transitional employment model to help individuals develop job skills and build upon a scattered work history. Examples include a job club to move people from in-house work to supported employment, and mission-based business ventures that employ individuals in a supportive, service-enriched environment.

Improve Coordination and Integration of Housing, Case Management, and Other Services with Employment Services

Work with funders, Partnerships, and Councils to strengthen housing and case management coordination requirements for proposals that target employment services to persons with multiple needs. Work toward overcoming the fragmentation of resources by requiring providers of employment services to demonstrate strong links to housing and support services as a condition of receiving service funding.

Coordinate employment-based case managers with case management teams. Work with the case management coordinating entity and local stakeholders. Promote low case manager-to-client ratios to maximize individualized attention, especially for people with multiple needs.

Coordinate regular meetings and joint trainings with employers, providers of employment services, and providers of other services to homeless people to determine how these people, and persons vulnerable to becoming homeless, can be more immediately linked to employment and skills training programs, as well as necessary support services.

Integrating educational and skills training programs for people seeking to attain higher skilled and better-paying jobs.

Explore partnerships with local colleges to help individuals work toward degree and training programs that match their interests.

Explore development of supported education programs (similar in approach to supported employment) with educational institutions.

Enhance services for homeless people with mental illness and addictions.

Mental health problems affect many homeless people. Local agencies and national estimates suggest that perhaps 40 percent of homeless adults suffer from mental illness or addiction. While some local homeless people receive treatment for these problems, others do not. These treatment services are often fragmented. In general, homeless people need quicker access to integrated care for mental illness and substance abuse, as well as an improved array of services.

Recommendations include:

Designate a Care Management Organization, an entity skilled in coordinating services for persons with multiple needs. The CMO would ensure that people are able to access supportive housing and receive appropriate care.

Build on existing programs that divert mentally ill people from entering the criminal justice system and establish a similar program for people with addictions as a primary diagnosis.

Enhance relationships with providers of treatment for mental illness and addictions through the creation of clear memoranda of understanding or through similar steps to ensure that the needs of homeless people are met. While a number of providers offer these services, there is little overall coordination of care.

Work with the County Mental Health Department and local treatment providers to develop a plan for assembling a crisis response team. This team would respond quickly when those who are mentally ill or addicted experience an acute crisis. It would work closely with the case management team to assure that individuals who are housed maintain their housing and are linked to appropriate services, such as the residential stabilization program described below. The crisis response team would be staffed with individuals who have expertise in mental illness and addictions.

Expand residential stabilization programs for people in acute psychiatric crisis.

Explore ways to make treatment more readily available by designating a single point of entry into the service system or creating a special carve out to make a distinct funding pool available to meet the needs of homeless persons.

Assist shelters and day service centers in strategically addressing the immediate needs of homeless people.

Recommendations include:

Identify a housing specialist or specialists to work with case managers, landlords, shelters and day centers to seek out existing affordable housing units, including those accessible to people with disabilities, and to match them with homeless people and people likely to become homeless. This specialist also will:

Provide training to agencies and programs that work directly with homeless and near-homeless people aimed at helping them access affordable housing.

Work with the Information and Referral Network to develop a database of housing available and affordable to homeless and near-homeless persons and make this information available to service providers.

As additional affordable and supportive housing is developed, work with shelters and other stakeholders to establish agreed-upon benchmarks for reducing the number of shelter beds.

Convene a working group of representatives from family shelters, men's missions and day centers to discuss strategies for providing appropriate temporary shelter, with support services, to all who need that assistance during the winter months, and for families throughout the year.

Improve educational services to homeless children and youths.

Homeless children and youths face many barriers to attaining a sound education. Challenges faced by homeless children include family mobility, transportation problems, poor health, lack of adequate food and clothing, and an inability to purchase books or other school supplies.

Recommendations Include:

Convene a group of stakeholders by to consider providing homeless children and youths with improved access to transportation, educational materials at no cost, and other needed services, as well as training school personnel to identify students who are homeless.

Working with the Department of Education and Public Schools to consider adoption of a "one child, one school, one year" policy to minimize disruption in the education of homeless children and youths.

Providing supplemental educational support through programs that work with children and youths in shelters and transitional living programs to assist them with their homework. Coordinate these efforts with parents, providers of services to homeless people, and educators.

Connecting the IPS schools' Homeless Outreach Coordinator with the HMIS data collection system by to help track and serve homeless children and youths.

Enhance Legal Services.

Recommendations:

Expand the current system's capacity to respond to the full range of civil legal issues affecting people who are homeless or vulnerable to becoming homeless.

Expand the availability of legal services to homeless and near-homeless people with aggressive outreach activities and collaborative efforts with case managers and other service providers.

Provide in-service training and ongoing updates to social service providers regarding issues such as landlord-tenant and housing laws, consumer rights, child custody, bankruptcy, public benefit determination, and employment.

Strategies for Coordinating Services for Special Populations

Coordinate Service Systems to Promote Family Stability

Implementation of strategies will promote family stability by improving coordination of housing with employment and support services. Currently, many low-income families receive support through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF). This mainstream public aid program seeks to stabilize families through food stamps, Medicaid, employment training programs, case management, and cash assistance that does not exceed \$288 a month for a three-member family. Despite this assistance, many of the city's most

vulnerable families lack affordable housing, thereby undermining the effectiveness of services. As the fastest growing group of homeless people, families must be connected with affordable housing and support programs.

Recommendations:

Coordinate service systems to promote family stability.

Consider using TANF funds to provide housing subsidies to families. Work with the Family and Social Services Administration and other key partners to explore best practices and develop a plan for better coordinating TANF assistance with housing.

Work with the Family and Social Services Administration and other key stakeholders to better serve families by coordinating and strengthening case management, identifying housing needs, and connecting families with neighborhood-based homelessness prevention assistance.

Coordinate efforts with future working groups to establish improved coordination of systems that connect homeless families with shelter and move them to housing as soon as possible .

Coordinate homelessness prevention initiatives with other services that have direct impact on family stability, including the development of Family Investment Centers.

Coordinate Housing and Service Delivery for Veterans

Recommendations:

Identify a principal coordinator for services which would take referrals from other organizations, complete an assessment of veterans' needs, and mobilize action for delivering housing and services.

Collect information about veteran status when service workers contact homeless people. Include a question on common intake forms to identify whether prospective clients are veterans. Link to appropriate services through principal coordinator.

Obtain support from state courts, Department of Corrections, Department of Veterans Affairs, and veterans service organizations to identify veterans in prisons and jails in an effort to prevent homelessness and recidivism.

Coordinate housing, shelter, and services for survivors of domestic violence.

Recommendations:

Organize training sessions for providers of services to homeless people so they may better understand, and respond to, the special needs of family violence survivors.

This training would address assessment for domestic violence, safety planning with battered women, the importance of confidentiality, and the increased level of violence and danger women face once they separate from their batterers.

Assist the Networks to establish an emergency shelter bed overflow plan so survivors can have immediate access to a safe environment when shelters are full. Explore the feasibility of using HMIS to locate emergency shelter spaces for survivors and family members.

Coordinate services for youths and young adults.

Recommendations:

Many homeless youths have run away, been forced to leave their homes, or been abandoned by their parents. Helping such youth access housing and services remains a challenge since most homelessness related services, especially housing options, target adults.

To be effective in moving youths toward independence, housing must be made available and must be connected to youth-centered transition services.

Identify an agency to act as a home-school liaison. This liaison will communicate with County schools and youth-serving agencies and disseminate up-to-date information about initiatives or services available for homeless minors.

Work with the Employment Task Force to identify and replicate successful employment programs for youths.

COLLABORATE/COMMUNICATE

Strategies for Implementing and Ensuring Effectiveness

DESIGNATE A LEAD ENTITY

To ensure progress toward the goal of ending homelessness in our community, a "lead entity" will coordinate implementation of the plan and be accountable to the community. This entity should include representation from a wide range of agencies and programs involved in ending homelessness such as state and local government, businesses, public housing officials, health officials, educators, intermediaries for employment and social services, veterans, formerly homeless people, and others.

Some of the characteristics of a lead entity are:

Credibility and visibility in the community.

A proven track record of staff quality, advocacy, fundraising and institutional accountability.

Established relationships with service providers, funders, elected officials, law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders.

A nonprofit - rather than governmental - entity to ensure that realization of the plan's ambitious goals transcends electoral cycles.

Strong board leadership, along with that board's willingness to expand its membership and to be accountable for the plan's implementation.

The functions of the lead entity will include:

Promoting awareness among a wide variety of potential stakeholders about the plan and issues related to homelessness. The lead entity will convene regular forums for community groups to exchange information and ideas for implementing recommendations.

Developing "Good Neighbor" agreements and appointing a community liaison. Supportive housing units created to serve homeless people must be assets to neighborhoods so that policy makers and the public understand the benefits of supportive housing. To facilitate these goals, the lead entity will develop written "good neighbor" agreements that specify the ways in which supportive housing units and their residents will be "good neighbors." The lead entity also will appoint a community liaison that can meet with neighborhood groups to promote awareness and answer questions about the needs of homeless and near-homeless people.

Promoting greater effectiveness by assisting service providers to conduct assessments of their current capacity to assist homeless people, as well as their needs for additional resources and for training and technical assistance. The lead entity also will assist service providers to increase their capacities to serve homeless and near homeless people by providing information on forging partnerships, strengthening boards of directors, and conducting in-service trainings for staff, among other activities. The lead entity also will hold workshops on

"best practices" and model programs, promote uniform standards of care, and help service providers to set reasonable benchmarks of success.

Serving as a research and planning group for issues related to homelessness. The lead entity will help providers and policy makers by conducting periodic needs assessments to identify emerging trends and gaps in services, conduct community planning and project development as needed, and produce updates on the plan's progress toward ending homelessness.

Advocating on behalf of homeless and near homeless people and the organizations that serve them. The lead entity will identify public policies and organizational practices that impede progress in ending homelessness and work toward changing them.

Developing and managing a Homeless Management Information System. Clients cannot be efficiently served, and the effectiveness of services assessed, without the collection and analysis of meaningful data. The lead entity will help service providers to better coordinate and communicate by linking them to the Homeless Management Information System and work with the HMIS Consortium to help agencies increase their capacities to implement that system.

The lead entity also will produce periodic reports that show the aggregate number of people served and the results achieved. These data will help with community-wide planning efforts. Assisting in identifying and obtaining additional public and private resources. The lead entity will help mobilize the community to contribute more funds toward ending homelessness based on this plan's recommendations. In addition, it will consult with philanthropies and local government about gaps in services and funding priorities.

Assisting in recruiting volunteers for agencies that serve homeless people.

Fostering greater coordination among agencies that provide housing and support services.

Assessing the need for updating this plan and making recommendations for doing so to the Housing Task Force.

The lead entity will also quickly respond to requests from appropriate public and private bodies for updates on the plan's progress.

Assessing other needs. The lead entity could investigate other strategies for alleviating homelessness. These might include:

Including the need for providing adequate housing and employment services to homeless and near-homeless people in neighborhood and regional development plans.

Investigating how the issue of elder abuse relates to housing and homelessness.

Providing regular progress reports to the community regarding implementation of the plan. The lead entity also will quickly respond to requests from appropriate public and private bodies for updates on the plan's progress.

Measuring Community Success

The lead entity, in cooperation with providers of services to homeless people, will collect and analyze data useful for determining the city's progress in meeting its goals for ending homelessness. These analyses might measure:

Progress on moving currently homeless people into housing.

The numbers of formerly homeless people who were prevented from again becoming homeless.

Progress in reducing the costs of emergency medical care or other crisis care for homeless persons.

Funders' Collaborative

The lead entity will provide staff support to a collaborative of public and private funders that will meet periodically to consider funding needs related to this plan. The Funders' Collaborative will be one vehicle for making decisions from a more collective vision and within the larger context of the plan.

This Funders' Collaborative must take a proactive approach to the strategy by issuing requests for proposals that identify both the process objectives and desired outcomes to be attained by partnerships of providers. The lead entity can assist in developing the RFPs and in helping to evaluate proposals.

Building the Infrastructure: Preliminary Timeline

	Qrt. 1	Qrt. 2	Qrt. 3	Qrt. 4	Qrt. 1	Qrt. 2	Qrt. 3
Designate Lead Entity Reconfigure and build capacity to implement plan. Form key partnerships for oversight and technical assistance.							
Implement Management and Information System Train case managers and other staff to use HMIS. Connect remaining sites. Identify measures for community progress. Develop standard reports. Collect aggregate information.							
Establish Funders' Collaborative Establish policies and procedures for collaborative. Recruit participation in collaborative.							
Identify and Secure Funding. Identify sources of housing assistance and service Submit proposals to Funders' Collaborative.							
Establish Housing Implementation Group. Establish policies and procedures for implementation group. Identify key stakeholders and housing experts.							
Identify Coordinating Entity(ies) for Case Management. Identify key stakeholders. Develop process for centralizing case management. Release Request for Proposals to designate coordinating entity(ies).							
Mobilize Community Support. Promote benefits of plan. Develop advocacy agenda. Meet with mainstream providers. Meet with faith community. Hire Community Liaison.							

Prevention and Housing Activities: Preliminary 5-Year Timeline

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<p>Prevention-Neighborhood Sites Refine prevention strategy Work with stakeholders and city. Hold community forums in high risk neighborhoods. Release RFP to manage sites. Implement homelessness prevention sites and issue rent assistance vouchers. Develop and implement service plan for families in affordable units.</p>						
<p>Prevention- Teens Leaving Foster Care Coordinate housing and transition services plan. Finalize and implement housing plan for young people leaving foster care. Train care providers.</p>						
<p>Prevention- Persons Leaving Prison Explore replication of effective programs. Develop plan for service and housing implementation. Education community about reintegration challenges.</p>						
<p>Affordable Housing-Currently Homeless Convene housing implementation group. Promote improved neighborhood relations. Implement case management entity to coordinate services to persons in units. Produce affordable units.</p>						