

Virginia Coalition to End Homelessness (VCEH)

Forum on Homelessness

January 27, 2009

These notes were taken during by volunteers. The presenters are not responsible for the content of these notes. Please contact VCEH if there are inaccuracies that should be corrected.

Phyllis Gilberti Chamberlain – Welcome, Overview of VCEH, Introduction of Speakers, and Adjustments to Agenda

Introduced Lloyd Pendleton – Director, State of Utah Homeless Task Force.

Introduced Sharon McDonald – Senior Policy Analyst, National Alliance to End Homelessness expert on Family homelessness in the country

Building Political Will Using Local & State Ten Year Plans to End Homelessness

Lloyd Pendleton

(Refer to slides for additional information.)

The importance of partnering and collaborating with others – even those who do not share your views:

Successful planning and political will need to be inclusive of divergent views, and should work to garner the support and resources from a broad contingency. It is critical to find common ground, even with those with whom you do not agree. As you engage these individuals try to understand that they do care, but they might not care in the way you do or understand the problem in the same way.

The creation of the homeless trust fund, the State of Utah Homeless Coordinating Committee, and local committees:

The homeless trust fund is supported by state general funds at 1 million dollars per year. It is also supplemented through a voluntary check off on taxes and raises approximately \$100,000/year.

The State Homeless Coordinating Committee was staffed with policy people who were invested, but could not make change. So the governor was asked to require cabinet level representatives. The new structure was a policy committee broken into subcommittees & cabinet level committee is the oversight committee.

This new structure also required all communities to develop a Local Homeless Coordinating Committee. To ensure that the local plans have sufficient support, an elected official must chair them. It is also important at the local level to have a community champion, someone who is visible and can promote the work of the group.

It is important to have a state homeless coordinator. The coordinator has the ability to keep the process moving at the state a local level, to provide a traveling presence to all communities, and to promote pilots and activities that can produce results. Currently, the plan is for it to take 4 years to implement sustainable systems change.

The use of Pilot Programs to begin services and programs in communities:

One struggle was that the legislature was not seeing results from the funds that were being invested in the community. Statements like “they never told us what difference the money we gave them last year made”, were indicative of the concern about continuing to invest in homeless programs. Now we only support going to legislature on pilots and provide results back to them. Communities are asked to propose new projects and programs through their Local Homeless Coordinating Committee. It is less important what they select for the pilot, and more important to find where their passion was and their commitment to see it through.

Communities are typically provided \$25,000 for their pilot. They do not have to serve lots of people, but would be expected to produce results. You are more likely to succeed by starting with a little money to service small number of people and then expand it with more money AFTER you learn how to do it. For example, a rural county might have 8 chronically homeless – so they identified chronic consumers recidivism as the issues they wanted to address. These were individuals who had multiple interactions with police, ERs, housing programs, etc. (not def of chronically homeless, but “chronic consumers who are homeless”) – a locally tailored approach.

The importance of having a local “Champion”:

Having an effective and energetic champion can be more powerful than having a great plan. They have the ability to set the expectation for change and progress. They also can ensure that momentum is maintained.

Key characteristics of a champion are energy, a bias to act, outcome orientation, personal responsibility, belief in common good, inclined towards teamwork.

Implementing Housing First:

Housing First started with a small scattered site pilot to serve 17 individuals. In order to sustain the success of scattered site, one community holds an annual luncheon for landlords. They also offer participating landlords master lease arrangements, case management services, and a 24 hour number to call with any problems related to the housing first apartments. Master leases are when an agency leases the apartment and allows others to reside in them. Landlords benefit since their contract and guarantee is with the agency. The resident is benefitted by gaining access to an apartment when they would not have otherwise been eligible. Once the resident maintains stability in the apartment, the lease can be converted over to the resident. What was surprising is that instead of serving those that would succeed, the providers selected those who were the most chronic. The pilot was a huge success and 22 months later, the 100 unit Sunrise Metro housing project was opened. This program is showing great success. After one year, more than 24% are employed, more than half are on SSI, SSDI, or VA benefits, and the total annual benefit income value for the building is \$641,130.

Brief Q&A:

Q: Were there problems housing them together instead of scattered site?

A: No, some certainly prefer scattered site, so the project expanded SS to 30 to accommodate that preference. However, there were very few problems in the single site project buildings. Of

course there were those who stabilized and graduated to other housing options, but the new buildings only had 1 eviction each.

Q: Can you recommend anything to ensure that we are able to capture the numbers of chronically homeless in the point in time count?

A: Be strategic in the count methodology, don't depend on those who come in for homeless services that day or a street count. Make sure you count those served by hospitals, emergency rooms, jails, police, and other non-traditional homeless services that night.

Recommended Reading:

Good to Great and the Social Sectors by James C. Collins

For more information on Utah's plans, programs, and system:

<http://housing.utah.gov> and <http://housingworks.utah.gov>

Ending Homelessness among Families – Changing Models & Handling the Shift

Sharon McDonald

(Refer to slides for additional information.)

Understanding how Rapid Re-Housing & Housing First for families got started.

Some communities have a right to shelter public policy of local law. Hennepin County could not build shelters fast enough to meet the demand and had to find an alternative. They developed instead their capacity to move families out of shelter faster. The result is that they could shelter more families with the same number of shelter beds.

Outcomes – the shelter time is not conducive to getting treatment, getting jobs, addressing trauma histories – rules that are strict in shelter and TH, weeds out many times the families who most needed our help

Research – Dennis Culhane examined the patterns of family homeless. He found three distinct groups: 1. those that moved in and out of shelter rapidly (majority); 2. a subset of 20% that stayed about 1 year; and 3. a group of 5% who would keep coming back into shelter. Also, he assessed the different service needs – the 5% of those repeatedly returning to shelter had the most support services needs, they were more likely to have MH, or were losing children to foster care. The families staying for longer terms had the least concentration of service needs. Some service models that are well-designed and effective for a good portion of the families, let those most vulnerable families fall out of program. Other research determined that families that stayed long term in shelters were costing \$45k-\$50k per family per year. Some cities pay \$3,000 per family per month to pay for hotel accommodations. Some communities determined that investing some of these funds in to housing and support services, one program had a 85% rate of housing stability after one year.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 provides a proposal for Rapid Re-Housing programs funded through the ESG process. This is new ESG money that cannot be used for shelter. States and entitlement communities should be developing their implementation plans for this new program.

Developing Permanent Supportive Housing or affordable housing with support services (PSH):

Approximately 50% of new beds being developed for families are PSH. When you use a model that will attempt to serve all homeless families, that bottom 5% of families with the most needs will fall out. It is important to be strategic in your outreach to and planning for those that are the most vulnerable.

Service design is important to address. Providers will need to increase their level of comfort with new strategies. A program in San Francisco uses a Harm Reduction approach to serving working families. They provide accommodations to the mother's behaviors that would traditionally lead to termination, such as substance use. They focus on preventing homelessness again for the family and ensuring that the children are cared for and protected during this time. Serving vulnerable families requires changes in expectations as well as skills of the providers.

Transition-in-Place Models:

In Salt Lake City, they developed a service intensity model that allowed the families to transition in place. They noticed that 15-18 of the families they had been serving kept returning to shelter or homeless prevention services repeatedly. This model provided the same social worker to follow them in shelter, transitional housing, and permanent housing. This provided a more consistent relationship, higher level of trust, and better ability to intervene when problems began to appear. They also increased the home-based services from once a week to three times per week.

Preventing Housing Loss:

A New York group learned that a large number of families went into shelter and never asked for help. Many had housing vouchers, lost them, and never asked for help. Prevention services are not typically available to those families who do not have a primary lease, or are "doubled-up".

This understanding leads communities to rethink prevention strategies and services. Promoting the concept that prevention is less costly and damaging than shelter and re-housing services. Additionally prevention programs should assess their intake and eligibility processes. Are families who are most at risk able to access appointments and funds? As a benchmark, if a prevention program is utilizing all of their funds at the beginning of the month, this is an indicator that they might not be serving the most vulnerable, but those who are most able to apply for their services.

In Louisville, KY an eviction case of a family in the courts resulted in a plan to have a local non-profit work with families who were facing similar eviction court cases. This had so much success that the local housing authority expanded the program to their residents at risk.

Thoughtful Use of Transitional Housing:

Transitional Housing programs are by design service rich programs. However, TH programs tend to have high thresholds for entry. Programs are encouraged to rethink their use of TH and be more intentional to work towards reaching families who need the level of services they provide.

One example of a successful intentional use of TH is in Lancaster, PA. They took a former maternity group home (that had closed) and re-programmed its use for women exiting prison and women who had just finished substance abuse treatment. The length of stay is not pre-determined, but is individualized with the goal of the stay being as short as is appropriate. All services are voluntary. They also shifted their case management services to serve as “service brokers” instead of providing all of the services themselves. The result of this change was that residents gained skills in using the traditional community support services in the community so they would be able to navigate the services system on their own more effectively once they moved into independent housing. They also developed relationships with service providers in the community.

Q&A:

Q: What do you see as the difference in PSH for families and Rapid Re-housing?

A: In general, Rapid Re-Housing is a light touch model that is intended to be lower in intensity and shorter in duration. PSH works to identify as best and early as possible, which families will need intensive and ongoing support.

For more information:

Strategic Use of Transitional Housing – NAEH web cast available: www.endhomelessness.org/section/tools/multimedia

Rapid Re-Housing: www.endhomelessness.org/content/general/detail/2032

Testing a Typology of Family Homelessness Based on Patterns of Public Shelter Utilization in Four U.S. Jurisdictions: Implications for Policy and Program Planning. Authors: Dennis P. Culhane, Stephen Metraux, Jung Min Park, Maryanne Schretzman, and Jesse Valente
www.knowledgeplex.org/showdoc.html?id=486111

Targeted information related to ending family homelessness is available:
www.endhomelessness.org/section/policy/focusareas/families

Many other resources are available on the NAEH website:
www.endhomelessness.org