

THE STATE OF UTAH:

A Centrally Led But Locally Developed System for Preventing and Ending Homelessness

An Interview with Lloyd Pendleton

Lloyd Pendleton *Director, Homeless Task Force, State of Utah*

Lloyd Pendleton is presently employed by the State of Utah in the Division of Housing and Community Development, Department of Community and Culture. He was a loaned executive from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints to the State of Utah in 2004 and 2005 to take the lead in writing the State's Ten-Year Plan for ending chronic homelessness. Upon retiring from Church employment in early 2006, he was employed by the State of Utah to continue the implementation of the organization and systems to end chronic homelessness and reduce overall homelessness by 2014.

Mr. Pendleton graduated from Brigham Young University with a Bachelor's degree in Political Science and a Masters in Business Administration. Following graduation he worked in finance for Ford Motor Company in the Detroit area for 14 years. Following his work at Ford Motor Company, he worked for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in the Welfare Department for 25 years where he was the controller of the Bishop's storehouses and canneries and managed several operational units. He was also involved in developing and implementing a worldwide humanitarian program for the LDS Church.

Q: Have you seen reductions in homelessness?

Yes we have. Utah's chronically homeless population fell 15% this year, according to our January 31, 2008 point-in-time count. However, Utah's overall homeless population increased by 16%. We believe that much of this is due to the recent housing market crash and ensuing credit crunch. We expect the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness to continue to decrease, because we will have an additional 400 housing units by the end of 2009 bringing us to over 25% of the 2,000 needed by 2014.

Q: What has been your experience with permanent housing for those individuals who experience chronic homelessness?

Our first new housing project of 100 units opened March 2007. One year later, 28 of the formerly chronically homeless individuals had jobs, and 69 were receiving income from VA Pensions or Social Security. Our Department of Workforce Services is partnering with us and recently dedicated a full time coordinator to work exclusively with tenants to prepare them for employment and link them with jobs. Our goal is not just to house homeless persons, but to get them employed. At our annual Homeless Summit in October 2008, we launched a media campaign with the logo "HousingWorks" with the tag line "Housing and Employing Homeless Utahns." We have over 35,000 open jobs in Utah, and we are working with employers in identifying employees who were formerly homeless that are now housed and stable.

Q: What is your State's Vision and Mission?

Our State vision is: "Everyone has access to safe, decent, affordable housing with the needed resources and supports for self-sufficiency and well being." We are working on increasing the overall affordable housing stock and the present mission is on providing a housing opportunity for the 2,000 chronically homeless individuals in Utah by 2014. We get some pushback on why are we not focusing on housing homeless families. Our response is that we are. We can build political will by focusing on the chronically homeless individuals who are costing our communities about \$20,000 a year in emergency services and showing we can house them for about \$12,000. When they are housed and stabilized, most will receive some type of income from disability insurance or employment.

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In addition, by moving chronically homeless individuals who are high users of our emergency shelters into housing, more bed space is freed up for the temporarily homeless, most of whom are families. As we continue to demonstrate that we can end homelessness for this high cost population, a greater buy-in will be created for additional investments for everyone experiencing homelessness.

Q: What does your statewide system look like?

We have a State Homeless Coordinating Committee (what other states might refer to as an Interagency Council on Homelessness) that was created in 1988 by legislators. When the ten-year planning process was under taken, the State Homeless Coordinating Committee was restructured with the Lieutenant Governor as chair. High level state agency representatives, business leaders, representatives from each Continuum of Care, philanthropic institutions and other key leaders were added as members. The purpose of the State Homeless Coordinating Committee is to develop, implement, and track the results of the State's ten-year plan and the 12 local (and regional) ten-year plans. A statewide Homeless Management Information System has been implemented that generates management reports for tracking results.

Q: How have you organized what you call your Local Homeless Coordinating Committees?

Based on several years of doing volunteer work with homeless services providers across Utah, I learned that change only occurs when there is political support. Therefore, when we started this process, it was a requirement that each Local Homeless Coordinating Committee be chaired by an elected official. We have been successful with this approach. Also, anyone in that geographical area who is affected by homelessness is invited to be on the committee. This includes schools, law enforcement, businesses, service providers, housing authorities, Native American tribes, state employers, etc. My regular attendance at the meetings of these 12 Local Homeless Coordinating Committees shows that there is state support and it provides me the opportunity to mentor each committee as they develop and implement pilot projects.

Q: I have heard you mention pilots before, how has that worked for you?

When we began this process, we carved \$250,000 out of existing homeless funds for implementing small pilots focused on housing homeless persons. These funds engaged

each Local Homeless Coordinating Committee in making something happen. Our first pilot was implemented August 2005 when we placed 17 individuals who had been homeless 20 years plus into a "housing first" scattered site approach. This was important because most of the people involved with this had heard and read about the "housing first" concept, but had no real experience with it. This was an experiment to see if the theory worked in Utah. It was a smashing success. It was a major shift from the approach that was being used. The experience of others who had used this model found that 85% stayed in housing 12 months later. For us, all 17 were still in housing 22 months later.

The 12 pilots we have underway have engaged the various committee members, and has also created the necessary systems to implement these pilots on a larger scale. We are using the results to enroll more support and funding from local and state leaders.

Q: How have you coordinated the local ten-year plans with the State plan?

After developing the State's ten-year plan, we used a standard format and had each Local Homeless Coordinating Committee fill in the sections unique to their needs for homeless housing and services. Based on our point-in-time homeless counts, we had determined for each area how many housing units were needed for their chronically homeless individuals. Each Committee then identified the year they would bring on the needed housing and tasked an organization with the responsibility for making it happen.

Q: What elements are essential in preventing and ending homelessness?

From my perspective key elements are to have:

1. A champion who has the commitment, ability, and responsibility for making this happen;
2. An organization that provides centralized leadership with input from the implementers;
3. An effective tracking system that reflects progress; and
4. Pilot programs to create action, engagement, and the identification of the process that will bring about the desired result.

The Virginia Coalition to End Homelessness' "Lessons Learned Series" highlights valuable information from leaders in the field of ending homelessness in Virginia and across the nation. The series illustrates best practice strategies and provides tools to help communities in Virginia prevent and end homelessness.

ABOUT VCEH The Virginia Coalition to End Homelessness is a statewide organization dedicated to bringing people together to advocate, educate and develop resources to end homelessness in the Commonwealth of Virginia.