



How Communities
Prevent Homelessness:

LESSONS FOR HOWARD COUNTY

PROCEEDINGS

*An educational forum presented by the Howard County Board to Promote
Self-Sufficiency's Committee to End Homelessness*

OCTOBER 28, 2010 | LOYOLA UNIVERSITY, COLUMBIA, MD.



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Sponsored by:

**Bridges to Housing Stability
Columbia Foundation
Elm Street Development
Enterprise Community Partners
Howard Bank
Legal Aid Bureau
The Horizon Foundation
United Way of Central Maryland**

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WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Julie Keough

CHAIR, BOARD TO PROMOTE SELF-SUFFICIENCY

The Committee to End Homelessness (CEH), as the first committee created by Howard County's Board to Promote Self-Sufficiency, signals the importance of addressing homelessness. There are many issues on the way to promoting self-sufficiency for all. Homelessness is the worst outcome of a lack of self-sufficiency (in the words of Plan to End Homelessness coordinator Joe Willmott). The idea that we can prevent it and eventually end it is great news for Howard County. Today we will begin to glimpse how that is possible.

There are two reasons that we are holding this forum. The first is to learn about exciting changes in other communities that are reducing homelessness through prevention. The second is to widen the circle of those who are interested, enthusiastic about and want to be engaged in the possibility of reducing homelessness in our community. Those who have organized this event are a passionate group. They want to share that passion and bring others on board.

We are grateful to the businesses and organizations that stepped up to sponsor this event: Bridges to Housing Stability; the Columbia Foundation; Elm Street Development; Enterprise Community Partners; The Horizon Foundation; Howard Bank; the Legal Aid Bureau; and United Way of Central Maryland.

Coming together today for a forum entitled, "How Communities Prevent Homelessness: Lessons for Howard County," we have a fairly clear sense of our agenda. We will be hearing from our speakers about the Howard County government and community commitment to its citizens including its homeless citizens. We will be painted a picture of the status of homelessness in Howard County and hear, first-hand, the impact of homelessness on families.

In 2009, the Board to Promote Self Sufficiency charged its Committee to End Homelessness to develop a Plan to End Homelessness and we will hear how today's topic relates to the Plan.

After we have a view of Howard County, we will look outside Howard County and learn how three communities developed their own plans to end homelessness and the successes they are achieving.

Today's forum is a critical step in development of Howard County's Plan to End Homelessness. The presentations, discussions and feedback that you provide will serve as a resource as our community develops the policies, systems and services that will help stabilize families in affordable housing.

Beverley Francis-Gibson

PRESIDENT & CEO, THE COLUMBIA FOUNDATION

In the October 20 NEW YORK TIMES there were several articles on the surge of shantytowns or tent cities across the country due to the recession and the increasing number of homeless families. As a result, more people are losing jobs, their homes and more importantly their sense of security. Let me take a quick poll: How many of you wanted to be homeless when you were growing up? No one grows up and says I want to be homeless one day.

As we listen today, we should keep in the back of our minds that being homeless is preventable and is a fixable condition. We want Howard County to be one of the counties across the country that sets the standard that no one here is homeless. To do this, we will need to be bold and take proactive, costly steps to eradicate a problem that is a blight on our community. We hope that as the numbers of homeless families increases, policy makers hearing the stories will not consider more cuts to homeless prevention programs.

"Homelessness is preventable and is a fixable condition."

We don't have answers yet, but we know there are answers that are changing other communities. We want to learn from those that are having success. We want to listen and then put in place services and reforms that will prevent homelessness in Howard County. To quote Mother Theresa of Calcutta, "We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty." We must start in our own Howard County homes to remedy this kind of poverty.



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COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Citizen Services’ Response to Homelessness in Howard County

Lois Mikkila

DIRECTOR, HC DEPARTMENT OF CITIZEN SERVICES

The Department of Citizen Services (DCS) has a long-time role in homeless services including: serving as lead agency for the County’s Continuum of Care; managing federal and state grants supporting HC homeless services; maintaining HC Homeless Management Information System; managing the Supportive Housing Program, which serves people who have a mental illness and/or are chronically homeless. In addition, while not specific to homelessness, we manage the County’s funding to non-profit service agencies through the Community Service Partnerships program. CSP funding has increased significantly under County Executive Ken Ulman. In recent years, we have increasingly focused that funding on meeting basic needs and promoting self-sufficiency--critical support for the homeless.

“We have increasingly focused funding on meeting basic needs and promoting self-sufficiency--critical support for the homeless.”

We realized through our work with the community on the Human Services Master Plan that the overarching human services issues in the County--housing, homelessness and transportation--have an economic component. With that realization, the Department worked closely with the County Executive’s office to create the Board to Promote Self-Sufficiency (BPSS). The purpose of the BPSS is to reduce the incidence of poverty and to promote economic stability of individuals and families in our community. As stated in the Human Services Master Plan, “No one sector of our community can address [such] complex issues alone--it must be done

in a partnership of the community, the government and the human services delivery system.” The BPSS is comprised of representatives of government, the nonprofit, faith and business communities.

We know that homelessness is the extreme consequence of poverty and the lack of economic stability. One of the BPSS’s first actions was to create the Committee to End Homelessness (CEH), which incorporated members of the former Local Homelessness Board and gave the group “official” status within the County. The CEH was charged with developing a Plan to End Homelessness. The CEH has reached out to include many different people, conducted research and drafted a thoughtful plan.

“How do we, as a community, use our resources to both serve those who are homeless while providing the resources to keep others from becoming homeless?”

The Committee’s work has initiated a local paradigm shift in how the County addresses homelessness--moving our community toward prevention of homelessness rather than waiting until someone is homeless to provide services. We have seen the shift at the federal level, through the Department of Housing and Urban Development. There is a huge challenge in this. The need is still present for crisis services such as emergency shelter, medical care and support services. How do we, as a community, use our resources to both serve those who are homeless while providing the resources to keep others from becoming homeless? None of us can do this work alone--it will take all sectors of the community, working together to end homelessness. Citizen Services will continue to be a strong supporter of homeless services--and ending homelessness--in our County. With our myriad roles, and the range of our community partners, I look forward to identifying strategies for how we can aid in the implementation of the Plan to End Homelessness.

The State of Homelessness in Howard County

Bitu Dayhoff

PRESIDENT, COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL

We have heard it said--often--that Howard County is one of the wealthiest counties in the US. In fact, it is. HC ranks number three in the nation in median household income of slightly over \$101,000 and first in Maryland. Additionally, we have received national recognition and accolades for what makes us wonderful...our school and library systems, parks and much more. Despite this level of affluence and quality of life, the county still has its share of population in need.

We have over 12,000 people living below the poverty line, 462 homeless students in our schools and over 12 percent of students in our schools in the free and reduced meal program. (Figure 1) But probably the most devastating effect of poverty in the county is homelessness. As we work to solve this problem, we must first have an understanding of its scope. A Point in Time survey conducted by the Committee to End Homelessness on January 27, 2010, counted 221 persons homeless throughout the county. That is a 12 percent increase over the survey conducted one year earlier. Of the 221,106 were living in county shelters, but 88 had resorted to cars and tents. (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Howard County Economic Indicators

- **Over 12,000 individuals live in Poverty.**
- **12% of students in the school system receive Free and Reduced Meals.**
- **Almost 1,000 eligible students do not apply.**

Figure 2: Point-in-Time Survey Results, 1/27/2010

- **221 Homeless persons in Howard County**
- **106 persons were in temporary housing**
- **88 Unsheltered**
- **4200 (duplicated) turnaways (2009) by Grassroots and Bridges to Housing Stability**

The County's homeless population comprises a diverse group of individuals and families. They are individual adults (mostly male); females, generally female heads of households with children under age 5 and low income; working families that do not earn enough money to cover increasing costs of living; fragile families; victims of domestic violence; and unaccompanied youth. And within this population there are a vast number of reasons they became or remain homeless (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Some Causes of Homelessness

- **Loss of Income and/or Loss of Job**
- **Foreclosure**
- **Addiction**
- **Mental Illness or Physical Disability**
- **Medical Crisis**
- **Domestic Dispute**
- **Overwhelming Debt**
- **Transitioning from hospital, mental health care, detention, nursing home, aging out of foster care.**

Howard County demonstrates an excellent commitment in responding to the needs of the homeless through a great partnership among government, the faith community, nonprofit agencies as well as the private sector. Federal and state governments provide grant funding either directly or indirectly and establish the regulations and guidelines by which the funding must be distributed. In addition to its funding and regulatory role, DCS provides permanent supportive housing for 15 families and 24 individuals with disabilities and the Mental Health Authority operates supportive housing for ten individuals. The Department of Housing and Community Development manages the Housing Choice Voucher program and affordable housing programs.

As President Obama said this past year, "No matter how much money we invest or how sensibly we design our policies, the change that Americans are looking for will not come from government alone...". Often nonprofits are asked to take on an increasing share of society's most important and difficult work. And every day, despite great challenges, Howard County's faith-based (Figure 4) and non-profit organizations--including, but certainly not limited to Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center (Figure 5), Bridges to Housing Stability (Figure 6) and Domestic Violence Center (Figure 7)--deliver on that call to action in service to the homeless in our community.

Figure 4. Faith Community Services

- Cold Weather Shelter
- Day Resource Center
- St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church

Figure 5. Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center Services

- Shelter: 51 beds for individuals and families
- Motel: 6 families
- Cold Weather Shelter: 25/day
- Day Resource Center: 60/day
- Financial assistance and case management

Figure 6. Bridges to Housing Stability Services

- Provides housing and case management for 18 families
- Homeless Prevention Program case management for families at risk of homelessness
 - o assessment and stabilization services
 - o money management coaching
 - o tenant landlord mediation
 - o referral for financial assistance and legal aide

Figure 7. Domestic Violence Center Services

- Operates four houses for up to 28 persons
- Counseling
- Outreach and community education
- Legal representation
- In FY 2010 – Served 108 persons in emergency shelter

Community Action Council assistance for people at risk of losing their homes includes eviction prevention, first month's rent, security deposits and one month rent programs and the supportive services of case management, financial counseling and energy assistance. Since 2008, the demand for housing services has continuously increased, with the highest increase (48 percent) occurring during this past year. (Figures 8 and 9)

Figure 8. CAC Eviction and Rent Cases, FY 2008, FY 2009, FY 2010

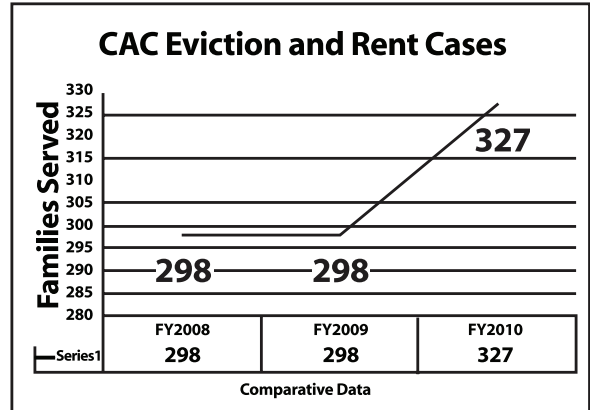
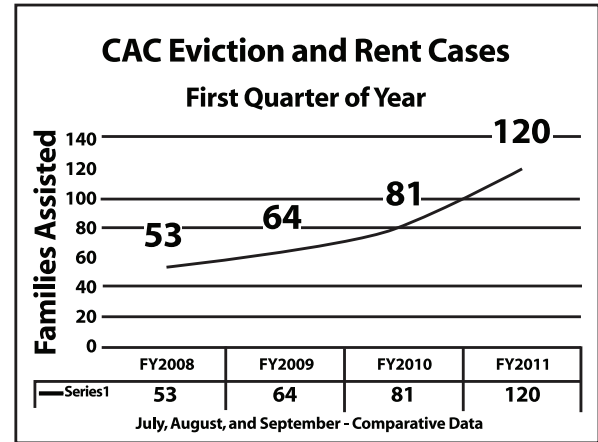


Figure 9. CAC Eviction and Rent Cases, First Quarter Comparative date, FY 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011



Each of us, I am sure, accepts the proposition that in this wonderful country no one should have to be homeless. It is heartwarming to know that in Howard County there are people, agencies and government officials committed to alleviating the pain of homelessness.

Prevention and the Plan to End Homelessness

Jane O’Leary

CHAIRPERSON, COMMITTEE TO END HOMELESSNESS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BRIDGES TO HOUSING STABILITY

Forty or fifty years ago, communities did not have the kind of homelessness which we’re familiar with today. Then major waves of social change occurred -- the closing of mental institutions, the return of traumatized Vietnam vets, the reduction in public housing. This brought about conditions that evolved to make homelessness a common reality in virtually every community in America, part of the landscape within which most every person here grew up.

By the mid to late eighties, the public policy that came in response to this social change enabled communities to provide relief to homeless people, helping people to survive the loss of housing, recover and find new housing. We came to expect that there will be homeless people, and as they are identified, we should shelter them, and help them get back on their feet. And when those people recover, there will be more homeless people to take their place. Over these years, homelessness has become institutionalized and the cost has been huge.

Within the past decade, however, people have turned homelessness on its head. The National Alliance to End Homelessness and other visionaries started to ask good questions, such as *“Why do we wait until people are homeless before assisting them?; Why do we put homeless people in temporary housing when their need for housing is permanent?; Why do we spend huge amounts helping people recover from homelessness when it is cheaper to prevent them from losing their housing in the first place?; and Is homelessness really inevitable?”* (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Shifting the Paradigm

- **Old approach = manage homelessness**
Take care of people who became homeless and help them get housing.
- **New approach = prevent homelessness**
Help people manage crisis that otherwise can result in loss of housing.

Once these smart people started asking these smart questions, they developed a framework for communities to envision something different. They challenged every community in the nation to develop and implement its

own 10-year Plan to End Homelessness. So far, over 300 communities have done so. Hopefully before the end of this year, Howard County will join this group as we release the Howard County Plan to End Homelessness. Other communities’ plans can be found at www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/2993.

Development of our Plan to End Homelessness began in 2007. It gained momentum in 2009 when the newly formed Board to Promote Self-Sufficiency charged its Committee to End Homelessness with development of the Howard County Plan. Most of us on that committee originally came to this work in the era of institutionalized homelessness, when we expected it would always be with us. Gradually the Committee moved beyond its focus on managing homelessness, to a new central focus, a Plan that will end it. We have come to believe that homelessness is not inevitable, and this is a whole different mindset from which to work. And we have come to know that the whole community must have this mindset, if we want to be a community without homelessness.

Well, if that’s what Howard County wants, we have a Plan that will show us the way. The Plan is currently under review by the Board to Promote Self-Sufficiency. If approved, we can begin the long road to implementing it. It will take a great commitment, and we hope all of you will be on that road with us.

Our Plan is wider in scope than our discussion here today. There are two main strategies in the Plan: (1) House people who are homeless; and (2) Prevent others from becoming homeless. (Figure 11) Of the 200 people who are homeless in Howard County on any given day, many are chronically homeless, and unsheltered. The Plan suggests some specialized housing approaches that have proven successful in getting these people indoors and supporting strategies to help them remain stable in housing. The community will be hearing a lot more about these initiatives.

Figure 11. Plan to End Homelessness – Strategies

- **House people who are homeless.**
- **Prevent people from losing their housing.**

The Plan also reflects that there are far more people at risk of becoming homeless than there are homeless people. These are people who have housing and may be on the brink of losing it. People, whom we call “Everyday Folks,” who may become situationally homeless because of some combination of economic crisis, disability or family disruption.

To develop the prevention side of the Plan, a lot of study has taken place. For almost two years now, the Prevention Task Group has been learning from our own community and from other communities. In addition to that research, the Task Group has studied the experiences of near-homeless people in Howard County – through a survey of 270 customers of the North Laurel Multi-Service Center, through conversations with landlords, court officials, frontline service providers including school system Pupil Personnel Workers. Most recently, the Task Group began to hold focus groups of people who have been homeless or near-homeless. They are helping us to understand the fragile balance of managing with low incomes in a high cost community, their experience when they asked for help in our community, and what we can do better. (Figure 12)

**Figure 12. Plan to End Homelessness
Listening To Our Community Focus Group Findings**

- **It’s difficult to know how to find and qualify for assistance programs.**
- **Rules are hard to understand and often prevent people from getting the help they need.**
- **Agencies should offer evening and weekend hours so working people can get help without losing pay and angering bosses.**
- **It’s emotionally difficult dealing with service providers and staff often seems unfeeling.**

For starters, we know that we can build on the separate efforts we already have, such as the Community Action Council’s Eviction Prevention program, the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP) led by Grassroots that is offering financial assistance and case management, the Bridges Prevention Program that is piloting a partnership with Community Homes to keep their tenants in housing. The primary strategy of the prevention side of the Plan to End Homelessness is that we work to blend these separate efforts into a single, comprehensive, coordinated system that keeps people housed. (Figure 13)

**Figure 13. Plan to End Homelessness
Prevention Strategy**

- **A single, comprehensive, coordinated system that keeps people housed.**

With all that we have learned so far, we have outlined a plan for prevention. We look forward to hearing from more experienced people today to help us fill in the blanks and find the way to the important goal of preventing family homelessness. But here is something we already know to be a key. Homelessness is a preventable community condition. We no longer believe it is inevitable. We believe it is a choice. Some communities have chosen not to allow it to persist. What will this community choose? Why prevent homelessness in Howard County? Because we are that good; because we can.

Formerly Homeless Families Speak

Bob Buchmeier
BOARD MEMBER,
BRIDGES TO HOUSING STABILITY

There are great humanitarian stories in this video that we are about to see. These are stories about how crises led these families down into a hole; stories about how providing help has led to the beginnings of recovery; stories that elicit the question, *“How could effective interventions have prevented their homelessness?”*.

Fran and Susan were both clients and with their families engaged with the Bridges’ housing program. One is still in Bridges’ housing; one is in permanent housing now, still receiving some support. They both had spent most of a year in shelter, then spent two years in Bridges. Connie lived for a year and a half in Grassroots’ shelter, and now is in permanent housing.

These programs to address the homelessness of each of these families cost our community about \$70,000, and they caused considerable suffering for every member of these families. And these are the lucky families; most families heading toward homelessness do not receive these services because the programs are always full.

We will learn in the next segment of our program ways that other communities are reducing the cost to both community and the families, by helping people to stay in their homes, or move rapidly to permanent housing if staying in their homes is not possible. And with those savings, we can help so many more at-risk families. This is not merely an issue of inadequate resources. It is much more about reorienting resources toward prevention. And to do that we have to have a plan for how we can make such a change. So let’s get about that change.



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BEST PRACTICES

Penny Anderson

BOARD MEMBER,
BRIDGES TO HOUSING STABILITY

Bridges' Stabilization Services Task Force selected best practice communities with similar demographics to Howard County, relevant strategies to prevent homelessness, and a track record of success. Interviews were conducted with key people in Sacramento, CA; Boston, MA; Montgomery County, MD; Dayton, OH; Columbus, OH; Lancaster County, PA; Hennepin County, MN; and Fairfax County, VA.

Key components which successful communities had in common were: community commitment (including support from leaders and community partners working together in a single system); case management; relationships with landlords; and use of a holistic approach (working with underlying family problems) as well as a housing-centered approach.

Other important factors in common in these communities included assessment at intake; intensive case management; a "Housing First" approach to stabilize living conditions while working on other issues; mediation and other attempts to smooth landlord/tenant relationships; legal assistance (including eviction prevention); flexible financial assistance; and timely and supportive referrals to community-based services.

Barriers which need to be overcome for success include: need to get community buy-in; need to engage all relevant services, not just housing; limited funds; staffing limitations (in both number and expertise); lack of affordable housing; severity of poverty; number of families needing assistance; limitations and inflexibility of funding criteria and rules; and mistrust and turf issues among agencies.

Best practice plans all integrated measurement and evaluation strategies and funding mechanisms. (Figures 14 and 15)

Figure 14. Best Practice – Measurement & Evaluation

- **Significant variability**
- **Rate of return for assistance within "x" (often 12) months**
- **Period of time housing is maintained**
- **Comprehensive system of data collection and analysis is important; HMIS used by some**

Figure 15. Best Practices–Funding

- **Multiple resources with as much flexibility as possible**
- **Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP)**
- **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**
- **Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)**
- **State and local government funds**
- **Local tax revenue (recordation tax, property tax levy, human service levy)**
- **Private sector (foundations, United Way, churches, corporations and businesses)**
- **State Trust Fund**
- **Grants**

Panel of Prevention Communities

OVERVIEW

Samantha Batko

CAPACITY BUILDING ASSOCIATE,
CENTER FOR CAPACITY BUILDING
NATIONAL ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS

There is a national movement toward more efforts at prevention, rather than waiting to deal with homelessness after it happens. (Figure 16) This is driven in part by planning efforts in communities and in part by new federal legislation. The Homelessness Prevention and Repaid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) generated funds for prevention. And the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act (HEARTH Act) continues HPRP grants in a new form, and sets performance measures for communities including a decrease in the number of people entering homelessness.

Figure 16. Prevention – A National Movement

- Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP)
- Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act (HEARTH Act)
 - o Important performance measure: decrease the number

Success is pushing the prevention movement forward. For example, a New York City program, Home Base, estimated that neighborhoods with targeted prevention programs reported a 20% decrease in shelter placements.

An important consideration is targeting prevention efforts to those for whom they will do the most help. Not every family needs maximum intervention; better targeting means better use of resources. Communities are doing this by comparing the characteristics of the shelter population and the prevention population. The goal is “the right resource to the right people at the right time.”

Figure 17. National Alliance to End Homelessness

- Nonpartisan, nonprofit that works to end homelessness through improving policy, building capacity, and educating opinion leaders.
- Promotes pragmatic and evidence based models and best practices.
- National Center for Capacity Building helps communities replicate and customize best practices that can be brought to scale.

How Did You Mobilize the Community?

Kay Moshier McDivitt

COMMUNITY HOMELESS ADVISOR, LANCASTER COUNTY COALITION TO END HOMELESSNESS

Before developing its ten-year plan to end homelessness, Lancaster County had a “fragmented” system lacking an overall strategy, with service providers representing “many silos,” resources dedicated to sheltering, and a limited management information system. That’s been replaced by a new model, with political and community leaders stepping up, producing better coordination and an increased emphasis on prevention.

Three critical factors in the change are: champions with the trust of the community, serving as messengers; political leadership; and community leadership. (Figure 18) A business leader, who developed an understanding and appreciation for the plan, was the key to winning the commitment of elected officials. With leadership in place, it was important to develop shared principles and a clear communication strategy built around an “elevator speech” – a quick explanation of goals and means.

Figure 18. Identifying the Right Champions

- We are talking “to each other” instead of about each other
- Shift to “front end” approach as a system
- Central intake system for prevention
- Partnering with shelter providers
- Support of Board of Commissioners keeps the issue on the front lines

Results of the change include providers who are “talking *to* each other, not *about* each other,” a shift to a front-end approach stressing prevention and rapid re-housing, a centralized intake system, and support of the county’s Board of Supervisors. In the new system, a county office functions as the lead agency, the data system is vastly improved, and providers are collaborating with the county in decision-making. (Figure 19)

Figure 19. The New System – The Benefits

- **Established a county office as the “lead agency”**
- **HMIS now overseen by the county’s lead office**
 - o data vastly improved
- **Providers sitting at the same table creating system wide prevention strategies and tools**
- **Resolutions passed**
 - o all proposed affordable housing projects seeking funding must set aside 10% of units
 - o all strategies and funded services must align with HEARTH Act goals and Open Doors Plan

Over the past year, the county showed a 2% decrease in overall homelessness and a 7% decrease in family homelessness, despite a 3% increase in unemployment. The number of families in shelters dropped from 101 to 58. (Figure 20)

Figure 20. The New System –The Results

- **2% decrease overall**
- **7% decrease in family homelessness**
- **FIRST overall decrease since beginning the count**
- **Achieved in spite of 3% increase in unemployment**

Source: 2010 Point-in-Time Count

How Does the Program Work?

Sharan London

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
MONTGOMERY COUNTY COALITION
FOR THE HOMELESS

Sara Black

ADMINISTRATOR,
HOUSING STABILIZATION SERVICES,
MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The county’s ten-year plan to end homelessness uses a “house analogy” – a foundation of services, an effort to close the front door through prevention, and opening the back door through rapid re-housing. Prevention efforts have included working with the sheriff’s office to include contact information with eviction notices; and working with hospitals, the jail, and other institutions on transitions.

Key prevention strategies are case management and crisis intervention grants. Utility assistance is also part of prevention; housing can be condemned or vouchers lost if utilities are shut off. Grants can include help with arrearages and first-month’s rent. The county uses a centralized intake system, although community partnerships provide alternative ways to enter the system. On entering the system, clients are assessed and, if housing can be preserved, offered an assistance package.

In addition to emergency grants, some ongoing rental assistance is available to the low income (less than 50% of the county median income) and elderly. Case managers coordinate and help with enrollment in other assistance programs (such as TANF and Medicaid); staff is cross-trained in eligibility for various programs. Clients are offered financial planning and employment training as needed.

Funding comes from state energy programs, TANF, state and federal prevention grants. Also, the county has two dedicated funding streams: housing trust funds from a percentage of real estate taxes, and the recordation tax. While dedicated funding is attractive, in difficult economic times, revenue from these sources declines.

How Do You Know It's Working?

Joe Meyer

DEPUTY DIRECTOR, SHELTER HOUSE,
FALLS CHURCH (FAIRFAX COUNTY), VIRGINIA

Fairfax County measures its progress on homelessness in several ways. First, its ten-year plan was completed and approved. In terms of outcomes, the homeless count decreased 11 percent in the latest point-in-time survey. Third, the average length of stay in shelters is down. And the county is continuing to reassess and target its efforts. (Figure 21) It has developed a targeting tool, based on housing, education, and health, allowing the program to direct assistance where it will do the most good. So far, the county believes it has achieved an 87% success rate of keeping people in their housing or moving them to other permanent housing. In all, it provided HPRP prevention funds to 867 people in 345 households. Although not as directly measurable, the county has also established more accountability and increased collaboration and unity among service providers. (Figure 22)

Figure 21. How Do We Know It Is Working?

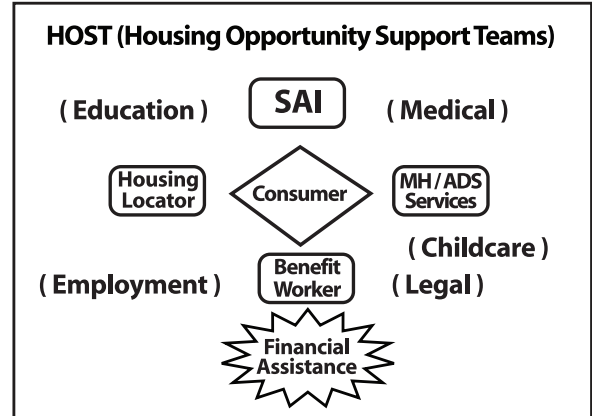
- A plan for affordable housing has been approved.
- Homeless count has decreased by 11%
- Average length of stays in shelters and decreased.
- 87% success rate in stabilizing households! (either stayed or moved to other permanent housing)

Figure 22. The Benefits for Fairfax County

- Within 1 year, prevented 867 people (345 households) from becoming homeless
- Increased collaboration and unity within homeless services
- Established accountability measures
- Enabled cost comparisons

This has been achieved through the use of HPRP funds to hire four case managers and a housing locator coordinator. It has built Housing Opportunity Support Teams (HOST), with a case manager who is accountable for the case, the housing locator, a benefits worker and mental health and substance abuse service providers. (Figure 23)

Figure 23. Fairfax County Prevention Strategy



Important has been the buy-in of key stakeholders, including the board of supervisors and county government, as well as non-profits.

Figure 24. Shelter House Programs

- 2 Fairfax County family shelters
- 1 Domestic Violence Center
- 12-24 month scattered transitional housing program—3 units
- Non-time limited transitional housing—5 units
- Permanent Supportive Housing—7 units
- Community Case Management Program (Prevention—25 households)



How Communities Prevent Homelessness:
LESSONS FOR HOWARD COUNTY

WHAT HAVE WE HEARD?

Columbia Foundation President Beverley Francis-Gibson closed the forum program with her perspective of the most important messages she heard across the presentations. She reflected that Howard County needs to move from managing homelessness to preventing homelessness. Federal changes are going to mandate local changes, anyway. Ms. Francis-Gibson continued, “The full community must buy in to make this happen. It is important that our message is consistent, that all of us are talking the same language.” In regard to Howard County’s service delivery system, she noted that “many services are offered between 8 am and 5 pm. Our people are already in crisis. We need evening and weekend services so people don’t have to miss work.”

Noting that each person has a right to decent housing, regardless of their income and their family situation, Ms. Francis-Gibson challenged forum attendees with the question---“What are you willing to do?”.

At the end of the forum presentations, attendees were asked to complete a “What do YOU think?” survey. While only 32 of 88 (36 percent) of attendees completed the survey, these responses help provide some insight into what knowledge, perspectives and opinions the Howard County community has about the homeless, homelessness and the potential to reduce homelessness in the County. Figure 25 reflects survey results.

Figure 25. “What Do YOU Think?” Survey Results

Ranking	Statement	Percentage of Agreement with Statement
1	Ending homelessness requires a community-wide response.	98.9
2	Funds should be allocated to programs that effectively prevent homelessness’	96.0
3	Families who work in Howard County should be able to live in Howard County.	95.0
4	Shelter is not housing.	94.5
5	No one should have to be homeless.	94.4
6	Homelessness costs more than housing.	93.8
7	Appropriate housing must be available for all regardless of income or health status.	93.3
8	The prevention of homelessness is an important goal for Howard County	93.1
9	Howard County government should lead with major funds to prevent homelessness.	90.0
10	Ending homelessness is attainable.	89.0
11	Providing services without housing does not end homelessness.	86.9
12	All people deserve safe, decent, affordable housing.	85.6
13	Homelessness costs more than housing.	82.0
14	Some folks choose to be homeless.	64.4
15	Howard County will embrace the goal of preventing homelessness.	57.0

Feedback Highlights

Attendees also were asked to respond to the following questions:

- What are two new significant ideas that you learned today?
- What ideas did you hear that might be transferable to Howard County?
- What ideas do you have for preventing homelessness that you did not hear today?
- What barriers or attitudes do we need to overcome to implement homelessness prevention in Howard County?

Responses included excellent insights and ideas that will be considered by the Committee to End Homelessness' Prevention Task Force as it continues its work. From those specific responses a set of overarching themes emerged, suggesting that successful implementation of the Plan to End Homelessness will require:

- shifting Howard County's current managing homelessness paradigm to one of preventing homelessness.
- political will, leadership and community champions of the Plan to End Homelessness.
- coordination across the broad community of government, non-profit agencies, businesses and faith organizations.

- a centralized management and intake system.
- an accessible, preferably one-stop, service delivery system.
- a coordinated housing strategy that addresses the need for low income housing and housing supports.
- one or more dedicated funding streams.
- education of the at-risk population and the public.
- data to define the problem, support the system and track progress toward Plan goals.
- employment training and opportunities for low income wage earners.
- continuing to learn from other jurisdictions and exploring how their tools and/or systems might be applicable to Howard County.

NOTE TO READERS...All attendee responses to each of the feedback opportunities are provided in Appendix II.

APPENDIX I: Attendee List & Contact Information

Homelessness Prevention Forum, Oct. 28, 2010: Attendees

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APPENDIX I: Attendee List & Contact Information

Homelessness Prevention Forum, Oct. 28, 2010: Attendees

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APPENDIX II: Forum Feedback Compilation

A goal of the Planning Committee was to ensure that the ideas, perspectives and questions of all Forum attendees were captured, knowing that they would provide invaluable input to further development of the Plan to End Homelessness. During the forum, attendees had three opportunities to share their thoughts:

- A. **“What do YOU think?”--a survey about homelessness and associated issues.**
- B. **“Feedback”--the forum evaluation**
- C. **“What can our community do to prevent homelessness?”--Forum attendees were asked to write their thoughts within the walls of a large house image posted on the wall of the meeting room.**

Immediately after the forum, co-chairs Dale Jackson and Jane O’Leary asked members of the Forum Planning Committee and Prevention Task Force to respond to the statement--“What I heard that Howard County should pay attention to.” A compilation of email responses to that query follows in “D.”

A. “What do YOU think?”

The summary results of this exercise are available on page 14 of these proceedings.

B. Feedback evaluation

1. What are two new significant ideas you learned today?

- Agencies should work together to help individuals avoid homelessness.
- Engage community resources as point of entry to centralized system
- County council participation in prevention effort
- Combo of one stop/no wrong door centralized intake/assessment
- Need for political and community leadership
- Citizen Services will be a major partner in preventing homelessness
- Federal prevention money will serve 30% of AMI
- Prevention of homelessness versus managing it
- Plan to End Homelessness
- Paradigm Shift - Shelter Prevention
- Communication/collaboration of key stakeholders
- HEARTH Act
- Neighborhood Access Points – would be very beneficial to Columbia with village structure and community centers
- Building strong communities
- Reframing mindset – mental illness and substance abuse are barriers vs cause of homelessness
- Homelessness is a housing crisis
- I’m familiar with best practices from across the U.S. already but it was helpful to get more information on homelessness in Howard County. Even further data would be helpful.
- Prevention is key to dealing with homelessness
- Howard County has the resources to end homelessness
- We need to think about transportation needs differently – instead of just focusing on public transportation, we need a solution for car payments, purchases, and repairs.
- Need for more case managers in the community
- Extensive range of housing locator role
- System wide tracking
- We can end homelessness
- Core host team idea – entire spectrum of services provided by a team
- Coalitions
- One stop centers to serve people in their own zip code, one case manager to help

APPENDIX II: Forum Feedback Compilation

- TANF funds were given to prevent homelessness but not in MD
- Match the prevention population with the shelter population demographics and use as an evaluation/assessment tool
- Recommendation that a county agency be the lead agency for prevention
- Citizen Services Referral Program? Knowing they work with the mentally challenged homeless was eye opening – but how do they get referrals?
- National prevention trends and statistics
- That it is a good idea to target money to families who can most benefit at that time

2. What idea did you hear that might be transferable to Howard County?

- Website resource guide
- More local funding for shelters and homelessness prevention
- Case management
- Involve community organizations – schools, sheriff’s office, banks
- Everything Montgomery County and Lancaster County has to offer
- Provide financial literacy training
- Provide daycare assistance to enable parents to work
- Provide job training/retraining to increase household incomes
- Increase number of available housing subsidies
- Too many to list!
- Montgomery County’s coordinated entry and hybrid model
- Fairfax County’s model with the case manager being lead with family
- Utilizing 2-1-1 and look at the Emergency Fund of Chicago for possible implementation is good
- Shelter providers – cold weather shelter – talk with those who use services and survey – find out why they are there
- “Ownership Team” for guiding program – community satellite office neighborhood access points
- I am from Frederick County – have not even started on a 10 year plan
- Political willpower and community solutions
- Centralized intake vs turf battles
- Need to identify ways to find people before the last emergency that changes their housing status
- Tax levy
- Compare who is entering homelessness and how funds are being used to serve, right services to the right people at the right time
- Rethinking the way we do service delivery is key
- Making housing applications and access to resources easier helps those who need it (various sites for applications) and online applications to help homeless stay on their jobs
- Provide information about supportive services with eviction notices
- Centralized intake process
- Need for more data collection
- Housing tool from Fairfax – could also help with the whole county tracking system (2)
- Percentage of tax dollars goes towards ending homelessness like in Montgomery County
- Get political officials to join our cause
- Applaud looking beyond the usual suspects to solve the issue
- Dedicated funding sources
- Virtual prevention teams that visit clients in their homes – not in a county office. In other words, decentralized outreach rather than centralized intake
- Host website from Fairfax, VA
- Hennepin’s look at their demographic within their shelters and who they are serving was good – we should use this model
- Central intake
- Not just using HUD funding for rental assistance looking at other corporate grants, foundations, and charities
- More transitional housing
- More support to those in danger of losing housing
- How to mobilize the county
- Cooperative play not parallel play

APPENDIX II: Forum Feedback Compilation

3. What ideas do YOU have for preventing homelessness that you did not hear today?

- More affordable housing
- Did not hear much about help for hard core addicts, people with mental health problems, and teenagers who have been kicked out of their home.
- Connected to financial literacy, educate people so they are better able to adopt new attitudes toward financial responsibility and personal responsibility.
- Encourage people to build their own natural support system
- Howard County residents need to be educated about the issue of homelessness in our county. The majority of residents would be surprised at the data. For example, 59 out of our 70 HCPSS currently have homeless students enrolled.
- Work closely with schools to identify at risk families
- Work closely with apartment manager to identify
- Engage Columbia's village managers as a source to be involved in the prevention process
- Neighborhood Access Points
- Job coaches/shadowing to let chronic homeless see what life can be like and partners for employment
- Comprehensive Housing Strategy to create affordable housing opportunities
- Pool all prevention funds together into one administration
- What role can Medicaid expansion play (starting in 2014) in preventing/ending homelessness?
- Have a plan "live somewhere"- something tangible, a place to drive traffic and educate about the plan and provide opportunities to financially support or volunteer – a website. Examples: www.denverroadhome.org or www.endinten.org
- We need to keep focused on transportation – we have to tap into different ideas for getting people to work
- Dovetail efforts with no wrong door approach
- Uniform application for ALL benefits
- Workgroup efforts – streamlined, timely, and responsive approach to getting people enrolled and continued receipt of public benefits, DSS cannot be the only point for these benefits
- Increase awareness in the community. Howard County residents and workforce do not understand that we could all be homeless at anytime. Prevention is a win-win for everyone.
- Video and other comments noting that most homeless families are single moms raised the question in my mind. Where are the dads?
- Work with school system to identify those families in danger of becoming homeless
- Should employers be invited to be part of the effort? An employee may not approach their employer about getting housing help but the employer may be in a good position (or want to be) to help.
- More advertisement for homeless programs
- Use the internet to allow anonymous inquiries into homeless/support programs
- Use other resources to identify/locate homeless in the community such as fire and police
- Work with adjoining counties
- Making sure the Howard County Housing Commission is taking advantage of all HUD grants and funding
- Write for more supportive housing vouchers and move independent/successful SHP clients on to regular section 8 freeing up the SHP for shelter clients. When Section 8 Vouchers become available more need to be set aside for SHP clients and the homeless who have the potential for success and may not need case management.
- Use HPRP for staff. The criteria for using money is too tight. Case managers can do credit counseling benefit linkage, explore more affordable housing in our of county and assist with crisis.
- Reach out to sororities, fraternities, and other community organizations such as Continental for added support
- Makes resources known, available and easily accessible

4. What barriers or attitudes do we need to overcome to implement homelessness prevention in Howard County?

- The attitude that it does not exist here
- The lack of finding because of Howard County's wealthy status
- Agencies need to work together

APPENDIX II: Forum Feedback Compilation

- A single point of entry to access/intake homeless prevention services
- Employment services/assistance seems a critical component to ending homelessness
- That it is someone else's job to do it
- Getting organized
- Support at a political level
- Many people do not understand that most homeless people do not look "homeless". Homeless individuals can look just like you and I except in extreme situations. The face of homelessness has changed drastically with the economic downturn.
- People do not want to admit their situations publically and are often embarrassed /ashamed to ask for assistance/help
- Do not want to admit they are at-risk
- NIMBYism
- It's everyone's problem!
- Educate the community that homelessness exists –PSAs, billboard, community papers – in other communities, awareness and buy-in are key for support of such a plan
- Lack of community awareness
- Lack of political ownership
- Lack of addiction services
- Integration of services – one entry point
- Howard County residents, school personnel, etc have negative attitudes about homelessness that can be changed with awareness and true civility
- Need collaboration with all agencies and government to get all on board to work together
- The target population (the precariously housed) does not think of themselves as being at-risk of homelessness.
- Housing locations – causes concerns in the communities they are placed – use apartments more?
- Community does not see homelessness – so it does not exist. Use video in forum as a tool.
- Get rid of "elite" attitude
- Ensure safety
- Too much money for too few people
- We don't fund other important services adequately either
- Need to show typical "faces" of homelessness so that community can identify them
- How much money does Howard County spend on homelessness now and what will be needed to end homelessness?

Additional Comments:

- Many helpful and informative PowerPoint presentations this morning! Can these be shared electronically?
- I don't think that Howard County residents realize that we have a significant homeless population. Once people are made aware and educated on how to help, residents will embrace the goal. Data is key.
- Excellent information and inspiring. Gives me great hope for Frederick County.
- This was a great session! Very thought provoking. I hope it doesn't end here – keep going!
- Being able to ask questions during 1st part would have been helpful – it is a difficult waiting until the end – relevancy, etc.
- Would like a list of the attendees.
- For some, homelessness is a choice but for many it is not. Educate the residents of Howard County.
- We need to make sure the housing commission is fully committed to doing all they can and are an equal partner.
- Because funds are limited, screening clients is very important. I have worked with numerous clients that are provided housing and resources and still end up homeless. We need to address the issues that keep these families and individuals from staying housed.
- Would have liked to have heard in Howard County what the actual ranking of what the top reason/issue for homelessness is when what...getting a general list isn't enough
- Great panel – examples of working models, needs to get the champions in place – having some potential ones here today would have been good.
- I don't know if the community as whole thinks housing is a right.

APPENDIX II: Forum Feedback Compilation

C. What can our community do to prevent homelessness?

- Garner support for prevention from the entire community
- Pump up the paradigm shift!
- Change how services are delivered to the client – ONE STOP!
- Create a comprehensive affordable housing strategy to create affordable housing options
- Make social services easier to access!
- Promote financial literacy
- Minimize, better treat substance abuse
- Improve the quality of care and services to low and moderate income families
- More low cost housing – living wages for low end jobs
- Move from managing to preventing homelessness
- Training for the front end workers
- Landlord outreach tied to annual licensing inspection
- Make a conscious effort to be aware that there is homelessness in Howard County and be proactive and supportive
- Make homelessness unacceptable
- Get educated about “reality” – cost, impact
- Make all shelters accessible
- Agencies need to work together better
- One stop shopping for clients

D. What I heard that Howard County should pay attention to.

LEADERSHIP

- Need champions.
- Old system was fragmented and lacked leadership buy-in.
- Need political leadership.
- Key stakeholders must buy in.
- Need for community education and leadership.
- Need to have elected officials on board.
- Mobilize the type of elected-leader champions that seemed important to success elsewhere.
This needs to be considered as part of the roll-out of the plan.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- Developed Housing Targeting Tool. Fairfaxhousinglocators.com has 11 member organizations.
- Sue (video Sue) recommended that we should work on getting affordable day care. Didn't hear much about that specific service from the speakers.
- Getting business involved (“the cashiers at the grocery store”)
- No specific mention of involving employers in prevention (the problem is viewed by government and ngo's as a public problem not a private problem).
- Working with landlords
- Getting help from NAEH

SERVICE DELIVERY

- Housing Opportunity Support Team takes the “shop” to the consumer.
- NAEH HEARTH Academy offers online and community training.
- Different case management models and how to encourage people to take advantage of case management
- Consistent assessment process.
- Take the intake process into the community using agencies as satellite offices.
- Basic task of programs is to raise income and reduce expenses for each individual
- Centralized Intake (Montgomery County, business hours, government facilities) versus Decentralized virtual team outreach (PW County, evenings and weekends, client homes). Cross-county screening tools
- Working HMIS is important
- Universal application form

APPENDIX II: Forum Feedback Compilation

COORDINATION

- Involve the entire community.
- Prevention requires a single, coordinated, comprehensive system that keeps people housed.
- Central intake, hybrid “no wrong door” approach
- Lots of collaboration and communication among agencies.
- School and Emergency Room staff often know who is or at risk of homelessness.
- Centralized intake is critical
- Housing Opportunity Support Team- HOST/MOU’s/Collaboration

HOUSING

- Lancaster County passed legislation mandating 10% of new development be priced for low income families (Howard County’s MIHU is for moderate income families) and PW County built new affordable housing as part of their effort.
- Availability of housing options is key.
- Housing locator(s) are a key part of successful programs.
- Availability of Housing option

FUNDING

- Be bold; it will cost money
- HEARTH and Emergency Solutions Grants will change how must plan, evaluate, report.
- The path to additional government funding involves a champion, a convincing cost savings consultant study and, a political leader.
- Creative funding.
- Data collection important
- Dedicated local government funds for prevention

PARADIGM SHIFT/THE PLAN

- Homelessness is a housing crisis...not a condition.
- The two primary components of the new paradigm are Prevention and Housing First
- Most people suffering from mental illness and substance abuse do not become homeless, but these conditions present more barriers to housing. Easier to treat them if they are housed.
- How do we continue to serve homeless and move to prevention paradigm? How to allocate resources?
- The shelter/supportive population should match the prevention population demographics and, if they don’t, your prevention program is failing and should be adjusted.
- Diversion is a primary intervention in Montgomery Co. (as it is here)
- Hennepin County study showed that prevention efforts were not targeting the conditions that caused people to become homeless.
- Prevention is really the key
- The main difference between poverty/housed and poverty/homeless populations is their support network.
- There is a strong link between and among data and money and program effectiveness.
- While we’ve been thinking of intervening earlier (when the client is further from the metaphorical cliff), others have found that, carried too far, such a strategy can dilute effectiveness by helping too many people who would have resolved their issues anyway. (For example, we have something like 1,400 landlord-tenant filings in court but only a couple of hundred evictions; many of those folks get it together on their own.) It’s not that we’re going in the wrong direction, but we have to take care not to go too far in that direction.
- Plan will change continually and that is ok.
- I knew the plan wasn’t the end, that would have to be follow-through. But it’s now clear to me that the plan which comes out in a few weeks isn’t even the end of the planning process. We need to think about how to implement the concepts we’ve embedded in the plan, such as coordinated intake.

APPENDIX III: Forum Background Materials

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150 North Queen St., Suite 610,
Lancaster PA 17603
717-735-8485, KMcDivitt@co.lancaster.pa.us

Jane O'Leary EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**Bridges to Housing Stability, Inc.**

9520 Berger Rd., Suite 311, Columbia, MD 21046
Phone: 410-312-5760, Ext. 100
jane@Bridges2HS.org

APPENDIX III: Forum Background Materials

PANEL BIOGRAPHIES



Sharan London EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless
600-B East Gude Drive, Rockville, MD 20850
301-217-0314, sharan@mcch.net, www.mcch.net

Since 1996, Sharan London has served as the Executive Director of the Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless (MCCH) where she has overseen the expansion of the Men's Emergency Shelter and directed the establishment of the Home First, Cordell Place, Partnership for Permanent Housing, Safe Haven and Seneca Heights Apartments programs. Ms. London is also responsible for the creation of MCCH's affiliate, Coalition Homes, Inc. She is known not only as a local advocate for homeless men, women and children, but as a nationally-recognized speaker on issues related to homelessness and affordable housing.



Joe Meyer DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Shelter House
3080 Patrick Henry Drive, Fall Church, VA 22044
703-538-7072, Joe.meyer@shelterhouse.org, www.shelterhouse.org

After his first year at Shelter House, Joe Meyer was promoted to the position of Deputy Director. In 2007, he led the effort to apply for and to acquire the Katherine K. Hanley Family Shelter in Centreville, Virginia. Mr. Meyer serves on the Education and Advocacy Committee of the Fairfax County Community Forum on Homelessness. He also serves on the Transitional Housing Conversion Task Force with leaders from the Department of Family Services and the community.



Kay Moshier McDivitt COMMUNITY HOMELESS ADVISOR

Lancaster County Coalition to End Homelessness
150 North Queen Street, Suite 610, Lancaster, PA 17603
717-735-8485, KMcVivitt@co.lancaster.pa.us, www.co.lancaster.pa.us

In January 2009, the Lancaster County Board of Commissioners, in partnership with the United Way, created the position Ms. McDivitt now holds. In her role, Ms. McDivitt provides leadership and oversight for the County's Continuum of Care planning process and the ten year plan to end homelessness. She also serves as the co-chair for the Continuum of Care and Advocacy Subcommittee of the Coalition.



Samantha Batko CAPACITY BUILDING ASSOCIATE

National Alliance to End Homelessness
1518 K Street, NW, Suite 410, Washington, DC 20005
202-638-1526, sbatko@naeh.org, www.endhomelessness.org

As a staff member of this national organization, Samantha Batko has provided direct technical assistance to communities on the implementation of their ten year plans, the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program, and the HEARTH Act. She is publishing a series of best practices on serving survivors of domestic violence through the Rapid Re-Housing model.

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Howard County Plan to End Homelessness TALKING POINTS

- Every person has a right to decent housing, regardless of income and health status.
- There are citizens of Howard County who are homeless and more who are near-homeless:
 - Approximately 140 live in shelter or transitional programs.
 - Approximately 75 live outdoors in various areas of the county.
 - In 2009, there were 1,353 foreclosures and 17,000 eviction filings in Howard County.
 - In the 2009-2010 school year, 462 homeless children were identified in Howard County public schools, a 27% increase from the previous year.
 - It’s difficult to estimate how many people are precariously housed: doubled up, living in motels, being evicted, paying high rents they can’t afford.
 - About 11 times a day, everyday people inquire about shelter and are turned away because all programs remain full. More people are unsheltered or at risk of losing housing than are in the homeless shelter system.
 - Risk factors for becoming homeless include:
 - Chronically homeless: addictions, past trauma, mental illness
 - Everyday folks: unaffordable rent, low income, loss of income, medical crisis, domestic dispute, poor credit, poor money management.
- This situation has been the same for some time. Adding more shelter capacity does not end homelessness. People need permanent, not temporary, homes.
- Other communities have reduced homelessness using a two-part strategy:
 - Housing First – Housing people who are homeless so they can deal with their issues.
 - Prevention – Helping people who are at-risk to maintain their housing.
- In 2009, Howard County Board to Promote Self-Sufficiency charged its Committee to End Homelessness to develop a Howard County Plan to End Homelessness.
- Study groups have researched the situation in Howard County and best practices in other communities. These groups are studying:
 - Housing and services to bring chronically homeless people indoors.
 - How to help people who are precariously housed and at-risk of losing their housing.
 - How to prevent people from being homeless when they’re discharged from jail, substance abuse treatment, psychiatric hospitals, foster care, etc.
- As we learn, the community is responding. The new Day Resource Center has served over 400 homeless people in the past year, largely through the efforts of volunteers from 44 churches. Some economic stimulus funds are expanding a local program that prevents homelessness. But we need to do more, more quickly. This is a “can-do” county.
- Over 50 people are already engaged in developing the Plan to End Homelessness. Many more are needed. Interested people should contact:
 - Joe Willmott, Coordinator of Plan to End Homelessness – jwillmott@verizon.net
 - Jane O’Leary, Chair of the Committee to End Homelessness – jane@bridges2hs.org

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Howard County Stories

James

If he had served in Iraq his behavior probably would have been diagnosed as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and treated appropriately. But in the Vietnam era his sudden rages and the drinking to relieve the pain led to a dishonorable discharge from the Marine Corps. For more than 30 years he lived on the margin, unable to hold a job for long, estranged from friends and family, and ineligible to receive help from the VA. He spiraled downward to living in a makeshift shelter in the woods, panhandling during the day and drinking at night. His health deteriorated; respiratory and digestive ailments sent him to the emergency room on occasion. When inebriated, his behavior sometimes attracted the attention of the police and he would spend days or months in jail.

He was turned away from the Day Resource Center several times for being drunk until one day he showed up sober and shaky. With the encouragement of volunteers, he began to recognize that he had the capacity to change his life. He cut his drinking sharply but life in the woods made it difficult to maintain sobriety.

James is committed to staying sober and separating from his former environment but there is no place in Howard County to get the inpatient treatment he needs. Some church volunteers are providing moral support and a room he can afford from his panhandling money. He is currently sober and struggling to stay that way.

The Youngs

A family with three young children was getting along comfortably with income from the father's self-employment, a home improvement business. Then, the mother was diagnosed with cancer and underwent treatment that necessitated dialysis. As the stress built, dad had a heart attack, and the resulting congestive heart failure prevented him from working. They are now barely avoiding eviction each month by the grace of the mom's part-time, minimum wage job (between three dialysis treatments per week) and loans from family.

As relatives' resources dwindle, eviction becomes unavoidable. These young parents face sending their children to different family members to stay for several months, while trying to find a place for the father to recover sufficiently to resume work.

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Opening Doors

Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness :: 2010

Preventing Homelessness

THE VISION

No one should experience homelessness—no one should be without a safe, stable place to call home.

THE PROBLEM

It isn't enough to move people out of homelessness; we must keep people from falling into homelessness. The threat of homelessness most often occurs when a household has insufficient resources to cover housing costs. Unemployment, a health crisis, or the breakup of a family are the most common causes. The households most vulnerable to homelessness are those with no income or those earning significantly less than the federal poverty level. Households living in high cost housing markets are particularly at risk of homelessness as the cost of housing is significantly more than a working class job pays. Rural areas have a rate of unsheltered persons in families almost double that of urban areas. Persons living on a fixed income, particularly adults disabled by mental illness, are especially vulnerable to homelessness.

THE PLAN

Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness acknowledges that prevention is critical to ending homelessness and recognizes that every episode of homelessness that can be averted spares men, women, and children the trauma of homelessness itself. To concentrate on strategies that have proven successful, prevention strategies focus on five key areas:

1. Increased Leadership, Collaboration, and Civic Engagement

Opening Doors is a call to action for the federal government and for the nation. Public comment called for federal agencies to “break down the silos” and organize federal resources together with local and state resources. Enhanced collaboration will lead to a better understanding at all levels in both the public and private sectors of the causes and consequences of homelessness and the interventions that are most effective in preventing homelessness.

2. Increased Access to Stable and Affordable Housing

To prevent homelessness, the most vulnerable population—including families with children with the lowest incomes, unaccompanied youth, people with disabling conditions, and frail elders—must have access to affordable housing and support services that address health and employment needs.

3. Increased Economic Security

The best protection against homelessness is a meaningful and sustainable job that pays enough to afford a safe, decent place to live. Helping those most at risk for homelessness to access existing work support programs as well health care and income support services to which they are entitled are key prevention strategies.

4. Improved Health and Stability

Housing integrated with health care has been shown to be an effective and cost-saving intervention for homeless and unstably housed persons with serious health problems. Partnerships between housing providers and health and behavioral health care providers can advance the goal of preventing homelessness. Programs focusing on youth aging out of foster care and juvenile justice as well as adults who have frequent contact with hospitals and criminal justice are also critical to success.

5. Transformed Homeless Crisis Response System

Communities must evolve their homeless service systems to include proven solutions focused on prevention for all vulnerable populations. As a result, people will be better able to get connected to help before losing their homes.

We know targeted comprehensive solutions are far more effective and cost-efficient than temporary fixes. Funding prevention strategies today will save the economic and social costs that we as a country will pay if we fail to take action.

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WEB RESOURCES

Howard County

- **Board to Promote Self-Sufficiency** http://www.co.ho.md.us/CitizenServices/Partnerships/CommAdvBrds_TheBoardtoPromoteSelfSufficiency.htm
- **Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center** <http://www.grassrootscrisis.org>
- **Bridges to Housing Stability** <http://www.bridges2hs.org>
- **Domestic Violence Center** <http://www.dvcenter.org>
- **Community Action Council** <http://cac-hc.org/>
- **Mental Health Authority** <http://hcmha.org>
- **Department of Citizen Services** <http://www.howardcountymd.gov/CitizenServices>
- **Department of Housing and Community Development** http://www.co.ho.md.us/DH/DH_HomePage.htm
- **Department of Social Services** <http://www.dhr.maryland.gov/county/howard/index.php>

State

- **Maryland 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness** <http://dhr.maryland.gov/transit/pdf/ich-plan.pdf>

National

- **United States Interagency Council on Homelessness** <http://www.ich.gov/>
 - Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness http://www.ich.gov/PDF/OpeningDoors_2010_FSPPPreventEndHomeless.pdf
 - Fact Sheet on Prevention <http://www.ich.gov/PDF/FactSheetPrevention.pdf>
- **National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH)** www.endhomelessness.org
 - Database of ten-year plans to end homelessness www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/2993

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FORUM PLANNING COMMITTEE

Bita Dayhoff, PRESIDENT, COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL

Jackie Eng, BOARD OF DIRECTORS, BRIDGES TO HOUSING STABILITY

Andrea Ingram, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GRASSROOTS CRISIS INTERVENTION CENTER

Dale Jackson, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CITIZEN SERVICES, *FORUM CO-CHAIR*

Denise McCain, DIRECTOR OF PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT, LEGAL AID BUREAU

Grace Morris, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COLUMBIA HOUSING CORPORATION

Jane O'Leary, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BRIDGES TO HOUSING STABILITY, *FORUM CO-CHAIR*

Judy Pittman, PROGRAM COMMITTEE, BRIDGES TO HOUSING STABILITY

Bill Salganik, PROGRAM COMMITTEE, BRIDGES TO HOUSING STABILITY

Linda Zumbun, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES, HOWARD COUNTY



How Communities
Prevent Homelessness:
LESSONS FOR HOWARD COUNTY

Howard County Board to Promote Self-Sufficiency Committee to End Homelessness
Department of Citizen Services
6751 Columbia Gateway Drive, Room 300
Columbia, MD 21046
410-313-6400

The report is also available at the following websites:
www.howardcountymd.gov/CitizenServices/CS_HomePage.htm
www.bridges2hs.org/news.php



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