

“A HOME FOR ALL”

BALTIMORE COUNTY TEN-YEAR PLAN TO PREVENT AND REDUCE HOMELESSNESS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Ten Year Plan to Prevent and Reduce Homelessness in Baltimore County (the Plan) was developed to bring the County’s homeless service system into alignment with best practices and regulatory changes in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s homeless assistance programs and goals. The Plan’s creation marks the beginning of a homeless services system change in Baltimore County and provides comprehensive strategies to move forward in the prevention and reduction of homelessness.

The Plan was created with input from a diverse group of stakeholders from the public and private sectors, technical Assistance from the Corporation for Supportive Housing and the National Alliance to End Homelessness, and funding from United Way of Central Maryland and Baltimore County Communities for the Homeless.

Baltimore County envisions a comprehensive housing crisis response system through which homelessness can be prevented, and when this is impossible, episodes of homelessness can be quickly ended.

THE STATE OF HOMELESSNESS IN BALTIMORE COUNTY

In 2013, 6,284 shelter requests were received. Of those callers, 1,618 were served in shelter and 5,367 were turned away (includes turned away due to a lack of shelter bed, inappropriate for shelter, or diverted to an alternative option).

A lack of shelter beds and housing is at the core of the issue. In 2013, Baltimore County’s total bed count for the homeless was 569, comprised of 338 shelter beds, 37 transitional beds, and 194 beds in permanent supportive housing. The County’s one-day Point in Time Street Count in 2013 identified 340 chronically homeless individuals living in homeless shelters and 178 homeless living on the street. Taking into account these numbers and with an average turn over rate of 7% per unit, it is anticipated that 469 units of permanent supportive housing is needed to meet the need.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

The following seven strategies are the result of the community planning process that produced the Plan. Also included is a brief description of programs and funding that are currently implementing these strategies.

Strategy One: Reconfigure the Crisis Response System: Expand on the current coordinated assessment system and retool the emergency shelter system.

Coordinated Assessment

This federally mandated process allows for “one door” into shelter. This system is operated by the Baltimore County Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) - Social Services Homeless Screening Unit which

receives calls for shelter placement requests from those experiencing homelessness, provides screening and assessment, and makes referrals to shelter or diverts callers to alternatives services.

Funding: State: \$430,000

Homeless Outreach

Prologue's Street Outreach program serves the County's most chronic and vulnerable homeless population (e.g. families or individuals living in cars, on the street, or in encampments; those with mental and/or substance abuse issues). Services provided include a drop-in center open twice weekly as well as street outreach. Both programs offer case management with a focus on linkages to mainstream resources and housing. In FY'14, Baltimore County increased funding by \$16,510 to enable the hiring of additional outreach staff and expansion of drop-in center hours. (More specifically, one additional full time and part time caseworker and an additional day open.)

Funding FY'15: County: \$66,040 Federal: \$422,620

Shelter

Baltimore County administers contracts with two non-profits for the three largest homeless shelters – Eastside Family Shelter (125 beds), Sarah's Hope at Hannah More (85 beds), and the Westside Men's Shelter (110 men). Shelter services include sleeping accommodations, meals, showers, linkages to case management, and early childhood programming.

Funding FY'15: County: \$2,205,506 State: \$54,017

Baltimore County also provides operational funds for five additional shelters across the county: Night of Peace Shelter Family shelter (28 beds), Family Crisis Center domestic violence shelter (48 beds), Churches for the Streets of Hope cold weather shelter (16 beds), Turn Around domestic violence transitional housing (11 beds), and INNTerim Housing transitional housing (27 beds)

Funding FY'15: County: \$120,585 State: \$101,596 Federal: \$229,909

Additional shelter support services funded by the County include HHS - Nursing Services for on-site triage and follow-up; day programming and case management by HHS -Social Services at Eastside Family Shelter; and private, non-profit providers - mental health counseling and parenting education/counseling at the Eastside Family shelter.

Funding FY'15: County: \$109,938 HHS County: \$625,000 Federal: \$39,102

New Shelter Construction

Baltimore County will replace the Westside Men's Shelter and the Eastside Family shelter with newly constructed buildings. Construction of the Westside Men's shelter is expected to begin in Summer 2014 and be completed in Summer 2015. The shelter will remain on the grounds of Spring Grove State Hospital and will serve 150 men. The Eastern Family Resource Center will be relocated and rebuilt on the MedStar Franklin Square Medical Center site. The new building will include an enhanced shelter for women and families, serving up to 250 persons. The facility will also include a new transitional shelter program for women and families, with a capacity of up to 38 persons, and a new shelter for men, with a capacity of up to 50 persons

Funding FY'14/15: County: Westside Men's Shelter \$4,000,000

Eastside Family Shelter County: \$14,000,000 State: \$5,000,000 MedStar: \$5,000,000

Strategy Two: Targeted Prevention Assistance: Focus prevention services on those most at risk of homelessness through careful selection and connection to mainstream resources.

Prevention

Baltimore County Department of Planning funds homeless prevention programs throughout the county offering financial assistance for evictions and utility arrearage.

Funding FY'15: County: \$188,880 State: \$90,932 Federal: \$73,124

Baltimore County Department of Health and Human Services offers prevention services through the Department's Social Services Flex Fund to assist with evictions and utility arrearage.

Funding FY'15: County HHS-DSS: \$320,000

Shelter Diversion

This is a pilot program to divert individuals and families seeking shelter to other housing alternatives. Key components of the program will include a coordinated intake/referral system (currently in place) as well as flexible funding and case management. A successful program will enable the County to use the shelter beds more effectively and reduce the impact of homelessness on individuals and families and the homeless service system

Funding FY'15: County: \$163,000

Strategy Three: Rapid Re-Housing: Create a housing first approach that places those experiencing homeless into housing quickly and allows for support to ensure sustainability.

Rapid Re-housing services are offered through various agencies and organizations across the county:

1. Flex funds to assist individuals and families in shelter to overcome obstacles to housing. These small grants of up to \$2,000 per household can be used to pay for housing and utility arrearages, security deposits and first month rent, and essential furnishings and other costs. In FY 14, the funding was increased by \$32,000 in the County's shelter contracts.
Funding FY'15: County: \$96,000
2. Rapid Re-housing through HHS - Social Services serving 27 families who are exiting shelter into permanent housing. Funds can be used for assistance with security deposits and up to two months' rent as well as on-going case management.
Funding FY 14/15: Federal: \$87,217
3. Continuation of Neighbor 2 Neighbor and St Vincent de Paul rapid re-housing programs that are working to quickly transition families from shelter and into permanent housing. Through these programs, families receive housing counseling, assistance in securing housing, time limited rental assistance, and case management in order to ensure housing stability. County funding replaced expired federal funding.
Funding FY'15: County: \$214,425

Strategy Four: Accessing Mainstream and Community Resources: Increase connections to mainstream resource in order to create a means for housing and self-sufficiency.

Funding of Maryland Food Bank to increase food assistance to needy Baltimore County families by increasing the number of mobile food pantry and school pantry sites throughout the County. In FY' 14, County funding was increased by \$75,000.

Funding FY'15: County: \$400,000

Case management of clients served by Shelter Plus Care permanent supportive housing. Funding allows for on-going case management which includes linkages to mainstream resources.

FundingFY'15: County: \$105,000

Strategy Five: Permanent and Supportive Housing: Create new permanent supportive housing units county-wide.

Funding of 151 units of permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless men and women. Funding includes housing and supportive services.

Funding FY'15: County: \$353,154 Federal: \$1,595,944

New Permanent Housing Projects

Funds awarded to Episcopal Housing Corporation for the purchase and renovation of the former Nehemiah House Men's Shelter for the creation of permanent supportive housing units for 12 chronically homeless men. It is proposed that 12 Housing Choice Vouchers will be linked to the project.

FundingFY'14/15: Federal: \$1,459,000

Funds awarded for the renovation of Union Bethel 8611Church Lane property in Randallstown for the housing of 8 chronically homeless women. Funds will allow for completion of renovations and construction.

FundingFY'16: Federal: \$79,000

Strategy Six: Improved Data and Outcome Measures: Build on existing performance measurement structure through the creation of system-wide data standards and reporting requirements.

Funding of the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Funding allows for staffing and administration of the program, user equipment and on-going user support. HMIS is a required data management program accessible by all homeless services grantees throughout the county.

Funding FY'15: Federal: \$168,914

Strategy Seven: Resource Allocation: Align funding sources around common outcomes including housing and supportive services.

Creation of a 2 year pilot Career Navigator position in the Department of Economic and Workforce Development to work primarily in the shelters and focus solely on employment. Renewal would be dependent upon outcomes and availability of federal Workforce Investment Act funds. The Navigator would assist residents seeking to obtain employment by working to assess employability skill levels, identifying and resolving barriers to employment, developing job leads, facilitating a job posting system, and working with residents to develop the skills needed to secure employment. Flex funds of \$15,000 are proposed to be used for transportation as needed (bus tokens, other), required uniforms and supplies, etc. The source of funding for this supplemental service is being investigated further.

FundingFY'15/16: Federal: \$55,086

FEDERAL CHANGES IMPACTING HOMELESS PROGRAMMING IN BALTIMORE COUNTY

Much of the planning that has taken place since 2010 directly correlates to changes in federal funding for homeless assistance programs. In 2009, Congress passed the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to

Housing (HEARTH) Act which was implemented through the Federal Notice of Funds Availability in the fall of 2012.

The HEARTH Act allows for more administrative funding. It sets a goal of reducing homeless episodes to no more than 30 days, emphasizes housing and rapid re-housing and focuses on outcomes such as reducing numbers served, length of homelessness, recidivism, and increasing jobs and income.

NEXT STEPS

A critical “next step” is to officially announce the Plan. Much effort has been put into the planning and now the stakeholders are anxious to publicly begin the implementation.

The Baltimore County Homeless Roundtable has developed committees, including Housing, Mainstream Resources, Coordinated Assessment, Outreach/Prevention and Data Management Committees, which are working to develop action plans, implementation timelines, and performance measures for each of the seven strategies.