

Homeless Outcomes Input Sessions
Regional Stakeholder Meeting
Tuesday, July 20, 2010, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Northern Virginia Community College Annandale Campus
Meeting Notes

I. Meeting Participation

Forty-three individuals attended the stakeholder input session. Saphira Baker, Communitas Consulting, facilitated. Shea Hollifield and Kathy Robertson, DHCD, also attended.

II. Overview

In July 2010, the Department of Housing and Community Development convened four meetings for stakeholders to provide input and top priorities to the Homeless Outcomes Advisory Committee members as they develop a plan to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of State resources for individuals and families who are at risk of homelessness or homeless. This document details the meeting held in Annandale, Tuesday, July 20, 2010. Participants were given the background on the committee, homelessness in Virginia, and provided with a summary of the State agency inventory results and the opportunities and constraints facing the Committee. Handouts included a copy of the PowerPoint presentation and a synopsis of the eight Ten-Year Plans in Virginia.

III. Large Group Discussion

Participants were asked to identify barriers and opportunities for improving effectiveness and coordination of State services.

Barriers identified

- Clients can't save for home ownership and establish custodial accounts. VIDA has been great, but case managers need to get a waiver to allow people to save more than \$2,000.
- State RFPs are very narrow. They need to encourage flexibility and innovation.
- We need to be prepared for affordable rental housing beyond permanent supportive housing – once residents do not need the support services anymore (are recovered) and are ready to move on.
- We need to stay focused on getting people off the street first. More SROs. Shelters are temporary and not effective. We need to move toward getting people into rentals with support and emphasize education and employment.
- Grant writing and capacity building from the State to increase effective programs.
- Lack of discounted public transportation to services
- Targeting resources to most needy. Currently, the federal Housing Choice Voucher Program is for those with greater incomes than 30% below the median. We need to have localities set priorities for the very low income. The State could strongly recommend the low-income focus.
- There has been a decrease in funds to public housing. We need more resources and poverty is increasing.
- Lack of dignified shelters, not asking people to leave at 7 am.
- Loss of general relief
- No funding for immigrants for five years. Permanent Supportive Housing guidelines are too strict for immigrants.
- Illiteracy of persons who are homeless
- Folks with multiple misdemeanors are barred, just as those with felonies.
- Scattered site services make access difficult – need on-site case management and one stop shop for services

Opportunities identified

- In Loudon County, we have Housing First and PATH/CSB funds. This keeps people housed. Partner with CSB (for treatment) and provide supplemental private funds for permanent supportive housing (we do this in Loudon)
- In Fredericksburg, we have scattered site housing for domestic violence victims, supported by the Federal government for families. We cover the first month's rent and subsidies. This is integrated with the shelters, but provides more permanent housing.
- HPRP – we need more focus on Rapid Rehousing vs. 10-12 months of shelter.
- Shelters are a valuable starting point for healing and support. They need to be part of a continuum.
- We need to provide a continuum of the least restrictive environments first and then move to Rapid Rehousing.
- VIDA accounts work
- We can subsidize families to take in persons who are homeless.
- We can target the purchase of houses with persons who have mental illnesses (use of SPARC funds for 100% financing) where we provide maintenance of housing.
- We need to educate people on the JLARC Veteran's study. Virginia is leaving federal money on the table through lack of use of programs such as VASH and the VA per Diem program.
- Job Component in partnership with Domestic Violence scattered sites, as well as coordination of benefits, such as the DMV, Visas, and Credit history.
- State psychiatric institutions have had money to discharge to supportive housing through DBHDS
- An increase in linking SSG and ESG funds to performance outcomes
- Revisit the two-year time limit of HUD support

IV. Small Group Discussions

Participants were given worksheets with the five top recommendations identified earlier by the Homeless Outcomes Advisory Committee. As individuals they were asked to rank them from one to five with one being the most critical. The work groups were then tasked with answering the following questions:

- *The best two ways for the State to improve the effectiveness and coordination of services are to _____.*
- *What are your top two specific recommendations for more efficient use of resources at the state and local levels?*

The participants reconvened as a large group and the small groups reported out. The top priorities to improve effectiveness and coordination identified were:

Group 1:

- Expand Permanent Supportive Housing
- Increase Flexibility of Funding

Group 2:

- Expand safe permanent supportive housing
- Increase flexibility of funds and relax restrictions

Group 3:

- Expand permanent supportive housing and housing for special populations
- Improve the management of data and increase allocation tied to performance-based outcomes. Reward high performers.

Group 4:

- Prioritize Section 8 for special populations and lower the income requirements
- Expand SOAR

Group 5:

- Increase SPARC loans
- Shared Database for clients and their benefits

It was also suggested that supporting self-sufficiency for individuals and make it easier to access supports and employment be added as a theme.

The recommendations for more efficient use of resources were:

Group 1:

- Subsidize partnerships so that homeowners could house the homeless.
- Increase workforce development staff to help with job training, placement and case management. The staff now is too busy.

Group 2:

- Job training
- Maintain a variety of housing

Group 3:

- Statewide HMIS system for all localities so that we can understand issues facing persons who are homeless. State should provide training and support with data collection, and connect localities.
- Flexible funding for good outcomes, such as Housing First and Permanent Supportive Housing

Group 4:

- Increase the flexibility of CSB regional funds to reassign to populations
- Loosen CSB requirements to receive services.

Group 5:

- Consider decreasing funding for scattered site housing and having one-stop resource for case management, children care, training and services
- Custodial accounts
- Encourage/Require state agency collaboration with the locals

V. Wrap-Up and Next Steps

Participants were asked to turn in their individual work sheets identifying their rankings of the top recommendations, suggested strategies and additional recommendations. The table on the following pages reflects the compiled results.

RANKING	RECOMMENDATION	SUGGESTED STRATEGIES
1.65	Expand Permanent Supportive Housing and Housing for Special Populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for Veteran’s Administration Grant and Per Diem program to provide transitional housing and VASH vouchers for permanent housing. • Provide technical assistance in applying for VAI and DOL grants • Increase funding which has been flat for 20 years • Greater partnership with Housing Department. Housing has too much power in setting subsidies, etc. • Increase funding to develop rehab properties • More shelter for clients with mental health and substance abuse issues, large and extended families. • Provide incentives for housing development, such as tax incentives • Increase flexibility of SSG/ESG funding to include permanent supportive housing. • Mandate that each locality provide PSH – target to extremely low income and chronic homeless. • Access resources, such as federal funding from the VA and DOL
2.13	Increase Flexibility of Funding to Prevent and Address Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support self-sufficiency programs • Increase flexibility of State d/c funds, i.e. NGRI restricted funds underutilized. • Innovative project replication • Increase accessibility to programs, easing requirements. • Easing the flexibility to obtain existing housing benefits. Include felons and veterans, and those with honorable discharge, with others. • Ease restrictions on those who can access housing. • Medium rent aid needed (like HPRP). Encourage development of local time limited rentals. • If not honorable discharge, veterans are excluded from many benefits. • Ease requirements that exclude participants from programs. Increase access to housing for immigrant populations. • HPRP funds – local decisions to make fewer/different criteria

2.35	Increase Accessibility of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate these services into every step of the continuum. • Consider levels of care – DLA20 instrument is a valuable starting point. • Prioritize services to the homeless – homeless move to the top of the wait list for the service. • With the increase in treatment, there will be more opportunities to reduce homelessness.
3.13	Improve Management of Data and Increase Performance-Based Funding and Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target funds to better outcome measures. We are missing those who are doubled up. • Look for what is working and fund that. • Reward best practices • Emergency shelters – better outcomes are needed to insure that staff provides quality case management and support to persons in shelter. • Work on developing more hard data • Create ways for databases to work together though HMIS so staff can monitor outcomes more efficiently • Implement outcome based requirements in contracts • Greater State involvement in HMIS collection/training.
3.17	Improve Discharge Policies and Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have more for people leaving jail • Increase after care connections through mentoring • Coordinate the discharging from hospitals and jails to a program and not the streets. • More housing or “half way” housing must be available to accomplish this.
	OTHER NEW TOP RANKED AREAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support self-sufficiency programs. For example, provide custodial accounts for a longer time in transitional housing; more funds for client education, etc., and partnership with employment. • Improve assistance to individuals and heads of families with criminal backgrounds • Relax felony conviction piece • Require partnerships to ensure services for particular populations

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS:	
	Address education and employment. If you cannot read, you cannot work.
	Address barriers for felons to find work.
	Have scattered sites for single room occupancy
	Have foster families for persons with mental health issues.
	Evaluate success of the HPRP regarding rates of recidivism vs. temporary housing and shelter clients. Increase access to public transportation
	Increase support to SROs. Stop shelters that make residents leave at 7 a.m. and comeback at 7 p.m.
	Reconvene State Coordinating Council for Homelessness
	Pursue Recommendations from JLARC Study on Homeless Veterans.
	Drop police records. Don't use, for example.
	Consider immigrant population.
	Expand emergency shelters to 365 days a year.
	Offer a variety of living accommodations (shelters, SRO, SIL, Group Homes, etc.)
	Affordable housing for individuals receiving SSI benefits. Many are spending more than 50% of their social security on housing.
	Promote self-sufficiency – require effort from clients.
	Job Training Programs
	Housing for singles, ages 18-25 (runaways, throw aways)
	Volunteerism. Supported fully by agencies equipping.
	Require representation of key government, stakeholders on Ten Year Plan development committees – e.g., housing, corrections, and mental health.
	Expand emergency shelter care (too many turn aways, full, etc.). Families can't get in all over the state.
	Increase partnerships with faith-based organizations having housing options or funding to help.
	Increase staff at shelters to assist with employment, transportation, etc.
	Encourage continued HPRP funding.
	Have a more consistent understanding of what the grants want.