

Homeless Outcomes Input Sessions
Regional Stakeholder Meeting
Thursday, July 15, 2010, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Roanoke Higher Education Center
Meeting Notes

I. Meeting Participation

Thirty-five 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 Roanoke Thursday, July 15, 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. Participant Expectations

When asked what they wanted to get from the session or would like to address, participants expressed interest in:

- Persons with severe and chronic mental illness, as well as physical disabilities and illness
- What we can do, at the local level to assist in obtaining additional resources in partnership with the State?
- Better participation by State agencies in local planning efforts and information sharing. Participants repeatedly stated that local State agency staff are often absent in local planning efforts.

IV. Large Group Discussion

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

Barriers identified

- Not enough attention to employment. Homeless individuals are denied employment benefits, and could use resume skill building, job skills, and job development. VEC has closed in rural areas, leaving no options for individuals. If it was not “swamped”, it could do something positive.
- Persons with disabilities. They do not receive automatic Medicaid even if they are receiving SSI benefits
- There is a federal disincentive to earn due to the decrease in the housing subsidy when people earn more. Could there be a state waiver? Families lose child care, food stamps, etc. and keeps them from becoming independent and getting permanent housing
- Insufficient rural services. In some areas, there are no shelters.
- Lack of a regional approach
- Lack of State Departmental representation and buy in. No visibility or sense of urgency of state staff at the local level
- Lack of a will to be innovative. State continues to fund the same thing

- Decrease in funding for substance abuse and mental health treatment, and for persons with intellectual disabilities. This has increased numbers looking for housing, and loss of housing
- Lack of accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Opportunities identified

- The State could offer technical assistance to help rural areas access grants
- The Governor could ask Mayors and City Managers to serve on planning committees to address homelessness.
- The Governor could require that localities' comprehensive plans address homelessness and affordable housing.
- The Governor could lift up the issue as one of major importance to State agencies and encourage more local buy in.
- The State could support innovation, like the Community Housing Resource Center.
- The State could issue an RFP for employment that requires a connection to the Continuums of Care
- Attach funding to Services
- HPRP – The stimulus funds are working. Could they be combined with HIP and extended when they run out in a year and a half?
- New York has a model, for welfare-to-work clients, where they do not get penalized for increasing their earnings. They receive free day care, insurance, etc., as an incentive to work.
- Increase outreach methods, particularly in the rural areas, to individuals so that they can enroll in Medicaid, Health care, Food Stamps
- Dedicate a percentage of HIP funds to increasing stability (DHCD Homeless Intervention Program funds)
- Use SOAR model and expand it in Virginia, get more people trained. It has really helped.
- Link funding to outcomes – the change in the SSG formula to focus on utilization (not number of beds) is a good idea
- Consider growing “Money follows the person”; it is very small
- The Governor could promote “universal design” so that those who are homeless with disabilities can access housing, or, for elders, leave a nursing home.

V. 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:

- Expand Permanent Support Housing
- Increase Flexibility of Funding
- Increase Accessibility of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment

The recommendations for more efficient use of resources were:

- Increase integrated case management
- Require HMIS for all
- Require collaboration and tie it to funding
- Better communication and engagement with State agencies
- Offer developers tax credits for land for affordable housing
- Reduce duplication of services

VI. 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
1.8	Expand Permanent Supportive Housing and Housing for Special Populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine Section 8 Guidelines to include less stringent criminal history rules, policies, guidelines, etc. • Give incentives for developers to set aside tax credits for those who set aside a percentage of units for the homeless. • Section 8 and other housing vouchers need to be expanded. Reduce credit and background checks. • For persons with disabilities, automatically approve affordable housing
2.4	Increase Flexibility of Funding to Prevent and Address Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand time frame before reducing services (Food Stamps, TANF, etc.) when recipient receives employment of 6 months or more. Allow clients a chance to readjust. • Need to have financial literacy if lowering TANF, FS, etc. • Develop a transition period from HPRP funds to HIP funds (DHCD) or other programs. Revamp current HIP guidelines. • Make participation in VIEW program open to all individuals, not only those who are receiving TANF • Shift funding to the harder to serve – more lucidity to transfer people out of situation they are in and increase income levels, increase transition period. • Combine funding and increase funding to rural areas.
2.8	Increase Accessibility of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include all medical situations • Allow Medicaid for prevention effort.
3.3	Improve Management of Data and Increase Performance-Based Funding and Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandate HMIS participation so that those abusing services will not get duplicate services. • Make financial decisions around efficiency
3.3	Improve Discharge Policies and Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop standardized statewide policy for discharge • Create a supportive funding system for people coming out of incarceration, including housing and resources.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS:	
	Redirect funds for indoor plumbing to services for the homeless and new accessible affordable housing. Combine weatherization with Indoor plumbing/rehabilitation and/or build a new more energy efficient unit.
	Section 8 and other housing voucher programs need to be expanded.
	Educate the community on what it is like to be homeless – don't put unreasonable expectations on a homeless client. They have no watch for appointments, no transportation, mental health issues, etc.
	Require local representatives of State agencies to be involved in local committees dedicated to addressing homelessness, and in RFPs, require participation in addressing homelessness by participating in funding collaborative of allied professionals at a community level. Push for more incentives for collaboration.
	Provide services to homeless persons, such as showers, haircuts, glasses, resume building to be able to have a sporting chance to gain employment.
	Provide stronger technical support.
	Provide affordable and safe housing. Get rid of all slum lords
	Provide an interdisciplinary paradigm for effective case management
	Support innovation and Housing First with Services