

HOMELESSNESS UPDATE A SUMMARY OF OUR WORK

UNITED WAY REGIONAL COMMISSION ON HOMELESSNESS • JULY 2009 • UNITEDWAYATLANTA.ORG/HOMELESS

Shelter to Home, Street to Home

In 2007, the United Way Regional Commission on Homelessness implemented two innovative programs, Shelter to Home and Street to Home. The programs are based on the housing first approach, a national best practice from New York and one of our most effective tactics in ending a person's homelessness.

The **Shelter to Home** program identifies and assists those who have lived in shelters for more than one year. Once in housing, case managers work intensely with these clients to address their barriers and basic needs with wrap-around case management services.

The **Street to Home** program is supported by the commission's award-winning outreach collaboration team. Every month, the outreach team engages in street, airport and beltline outreach. During the early mornings and late evenings, the outreach team goes directly to places where the most vulnerable homeless people dwell to offer them housing. These outreach efforts are effective in getting the most resistant and fragile homeless people to leave the streets and enter supportive housing.



Tony Stone (right) and a HOPE Team police officer talk with a chronically homeless man during outreach.

SHELTER TO HOME AND STREET TO HOME RESULTS

467 clients have participated in the program, of which:

- **80 percent** have remained in supportive housing and off the streets
- **27 percent** have graduated to independent housing or have been reunited with family and other support networks

Client demographics:

- **22.1 percent** of clients are senior citizens
- **18.1 percent** of clients receive SSD/SSI benefits
- **291 clients** were living in two downtown Atlanta emergency shelters.

— Results based on May 2009 scorecard given to stakeholders.

The supportive housing is provided by partners like Atlanta Outreach Inc., Travelers Aid of Metropolitan Atlanta and Quest 35. Through our partner-

ships, Atlanta's chronically homeless population have access to community resources that help them succeed and achieve self-sufficiency.

SUCCESS STORY: BILL CHANABERRY



Bill Chanaberry is a disabled veteran who lived at a shelter for more than five years. He lost his veteran's pension, used a walker, could not shave or cut his hair, and could not see because he lost his glasses. He also suffered from dementia caused by years of alcohol abuse.

His life finally changed when the outreach collabora-

tion team took him to Positive Outlook Foundation Inc. Here, he confronted and overcame his alcohol addiction. Case managers at Positive Outlook provided him with the resources he needed—a new pair of glasses, physical therapy, personal transportation and a reinstated veteran's pension—and placed him in a permanent

personal care home in Decatur.

Bill's life is now much more stable. Living in a personal care home helps him take care of the things he needs like meals, laundry, house cleaning and transportation to his doctor appointments. This assistance allows him to live a more self-sufficient life without having to worry about basic needs.

Case managers: The key to self-sufficiency

During the past six years, the commission has discovered that with the steady guidance of a skilled case manager, the chances of ending a person's homelessness increases dramatically. Therefore, to help build case managers' capacity and ability to end homelessness, the commission created and implemented a comprehensive centralized case management system. This centralized approach enables uniform delivery of quality services to the homeless population without gaps or duplication of services.

One of the components of the case management system is the Case Management Training Academy, which are training workshops with curricula specific to case managers who work with homeless individuals on a daily basis. The trainings enable case managers to acquire the skills and resources needed to work effectively with their clients and produce excellent results. Another aspect of the academy is the Case Management Network, which gives case managers a chance to share resources during brown bag lunch sessions.

The other component is a group of centralized case managers who work with different agencies. This has resulted in better coordination among case managers. This effort has now evolved into the incentive-based system where case managers are rewarded for outstanding results.



Shirley Criscillis (center) works with two case managers during a training session at Sheltering Arms Early Education and Family Center.

“The Track II Case Management Training has given me the tools, the knowledge and the audacity to actually believe that I have the power to change my life and the lives of those I touch.”

— **Hylida L. Jackson**, case manager

CASE MANAGEMENT FACTS

- During the past 18 months, the commission has provided over 30 workshops and Brown Bag Lunch sessions facilitated by 30 peer and professional speakers through our Case Management Training Academy.
- More than 180 case managers, representing over 65 agencies from the metro Atlanta area, participated in the workshops and sessions.
- 13 case managers have been hired through the centralized case management system and have worked at seven partner agency locations.
- Our case managers have assisted more than 400 homeless people in ending their homelessness.

Recuperative Care Unit: A new place to heal

Instead of recovering in a warm bed, a homeless person recuperating from surgery would normally have to sleep on the ground or in a noisy shelter. Without proper aftercare, many of these patients relapse very quickly. According to *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Grady Memorial Hospital spent \$211 million in indigent and charity care in 2007. However, many of the patients released had nowhere to go to recover.

To address this issue, St. Josephs Mercy Care partnered with the 24/7 Gateway Homeless Services Center to create a 19-bed recuperative care unit.

This pilot program serves homeless males who no longer require hospitalization, but are still too ill to return to the streets.

The Recuperative Care program is based on a 9-year program by the Union Mission in Savannah, which saved area hospitals \$26.9 million in 2007. The Atlanta pilot program is expected to save Grady about \$1 million a year.

The program includes a team of four medical workers, a nurse and a caseworker to assess patient needs, and to assist the patient during recovery by refrigerating medications and coordinating follow-up appointments.

Improving the benefits assistance program

Every year up to \$41 million in social security entitlements go unclaimed by homeless Georgians with mental illness (Georgia DHR, 2007). For a homeless person with a disability, Social Security Disability benefits may be their only hope for income. When access to these funds is delayed, these men and women are unable to become self-sufficient, contributing members of society.

With leadership from First Step Staffing and the Department of Human Resources, the commission is working to provide homeless men and women with benefits assistance. The focus on improving the system has been successful:

- Clients wait approximately 88 days to receive SSI/SSDI benefits, compared with a previous average of two years.
- 75 percent of homeless people are approved for benefits assistance, compared with a previous approval rate of 21 percent.
- Last year, First Step was successful in getting 126 applications approved, compared with 83 approved applications in all of Georgia the year before.

Providing housing for women and children

One of the fastest growing populations of homeless people in metro Atlanta is women and children. More than 35.2 percent of people living in poverty are children (2005 US Census Bureau). In the current economic recession, women and children are disproportionately vulnerable to homelessness. Through a unique partnership between the City of Atlanta, Fulton County and City of Refuge, the commission and its partners have made a concerted effort to increase the community's capacity to serve homeless women and children.

The commission created 210 supportive housing units for homeless women and children during the past year, and is

looking at other ways to expand services for women and children.

With leadership from the Women and Children's Council chaired by Nancy Boxill, the commission has developed more than 700 new beds for women and children during the past five years. Debi Starnes and Bonni Ware have led the community's efforts to eliminate redundant shuffling of women and children between agencies and to create programs that, within 120 days, report a 75 percent success rate.

Last year, Fulton County increased its support of case management for projects such as Travelers Aid of Metropolitan Atlanta, Eden Village at City of Refuge and others in the community.

Emory Partnership: Outreach psychiatrist

As a result of a grant from the Cousins Foundation Inc., the commission has partnered with the Emory University School of Medicine's Fellowship in Community Psychiatry and Public Health to employ a psychiatrist who will work on the street with its outreach team.

Dr. Liz Frye, an Emory

psychiatry resident, has made homeless outreach and assertive community treatment her focus during her studies and training.

Dr. Frye will work with the commission for two years to assist the homeless mentally ill with psychiatric care, prescriptions and supportive services.

Reunification: Finding a way home

Research has found that having a social network is one of the biggest keys to success for a homeless individual.

Through Travelers Aid of Metropolitan Atlanta, a homeless individual can find the resources and means to reunite with a loved one.

During the last year, Travelers Aid helped 2,096 individuals graduate from homelessness by reuniting them with family, and helped more than 10,000 individuals in the last four years.



Sibley honored for leadership

In July 2008, the National Alliance to End Homelessness honored retired King & Spalding partner and commission Chair Horace Sibley with the John W. Macy award for outstanding, individual leadership in the fight to end homelessness. This award is reserved for individuals who have made a significant contribution to ending homelessness.

OTHER RECOGNITION

- In 2008, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs awarded the commission's outreach collaboration team with the Magnolia Award for creative partnerships.
- In November 2008, the Street to Home program was featured on CNN's Real Cause, Real Effect program in a piece titled, "A Home of Their Own."
- During the last fiscal year, the commission received more than 300 media hits for its work with homelessness in publications such as *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, the *Atlanta Business Chronicle*, *Creative Loafing*, the *Star Tribune*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and others.

Jack Hardin leads Gateway Center to new era

- The 24/7 Gateway Homeless Services Center is now an independent organization with Jack Hardin, senior partner at Rogers & Hardin, LLP, serving as chair of the new board of directors.
- Jack Hardin was featured on CBS Atlanta's Good Deeds program for his leadership with the Gateway Center.
- The Gateway Center has more than 300 program beds and serves 6,000 homeless people annually.
- In the past year, the Gateway Center has served as a leader in addressing the overflow needs for homeless women and children. The Gateway Center worked with the community to reduce this overflow to zero in early July.

During the past five years...

- More than 2,000 supportive housing units are available for the chronically homeless
- Another 600 housing units are available specifically for women and children
- More than 1,500 homeless people have found employment
- More than 10,000 people have reunited with family or loved ones
- Approval of a 300-plus housing facility for homeless people at Ft. McPherson
- Hired a 2-1-1 call center specialist to handle homeless-related calls

Volunteers: Celebrating Success and Mentoring to Success

When a homeless person achieves self-sufficiency, it is an incredible success.

Through the **Celebrating Success** Program, our volunteers strive to tell these people's stories through words, photography and film. By telling their stories accurately, the public can see the progress the commission is making in its effort to end homelessness in Atlanta.

Once a formerly homeless person is in permanent housing, they need support

and encouragement to remain on the right track. Through the **Mentor to Success** program, formerly homeless people can rebuild their social network through a trusting relationship with a volunteer mentor.

Talking, finding resources and sharing fun activities together, make a huge difference in someone's new life.

Contact Protip Biswas at 404.527.7237 to volunteer or for more information.

THANK YOU

During the past year, the commission's work has been generously supported by:

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Regional Commission on Homelessness

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