

Chicago's Strategies for Ending Homelessness Summary

ARCH – Funded through a collaboration of the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Veterans' Affairs, and that Dept. of Housing and Urban Development in 2004, the ARCH program (ACT Resources for Chronically Homeless) provides permanent housing and intensive case management for chronically homeless men and women with mental health, substance misuse or co-occurring disorders. ARCH employs a comprehensive case management model called Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) along with the Housing First approach. A professional team provides clinical, medical and support services to clients, and moves them rapidly into Shelter Plus Care subsidized housing units.

Chicago Homeless System Mapping Project – This internet-based map, created by the Partnership to End Homelessness, provides a visual picture of Chicago's homeless system. Its information includes the geographic placement of current homeless services, program information for the over 300 programs in Chicago's homeless system, and future plans for the entire homeless system. It also contains data never before captured, including a summary of unique features of programs, and the intake criteria for existing permanent housing. The Mapping Project allows for system-wide planning as well as for a comprehensive understanding of how Chicago's homeless system operates. In 2006, the Mapping Project will be updated, including providing new data, a search engine that will allow users to search by agency, and a new map that will illustrate how the various subpopulations of people who are homeless are served by Chicago's system. The Mapping Project can be accessed through the Partnership's website at www.pteh.org.

Chicago Housing for Health Partnership (CHHP) – this 3-year demonstration project, administered by the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, evaluates the cost benefits of a Housing First approach for chronically ill homeless individuals coming from area hospitals. The first of its kind in the country, CHHP is committed to the belief that homeless individuals with chronic medical conditions—including HIV, cancer, and diabetes—will have better health outcomes when housed. CHHP implements three main interventions—expedited hospital discharge, housing first, and specialized case management delivered through a Systems Integration Team (SIT). With its strong evaluation component, CHHP will provide best-practice models for cost-effective, interagency approaches to serving homeless people with chronic illnesses.

Chronic Homeless Initiative – Funded through a bonus of HUD funding in 2005, this initiative creates 204 units of permanent housing for chronically homeless individuals. Through this initiative, 15 homeless service agencies will engage disabled individuals who have been homeless for some time and are on the streets, in emergency shelters or in transitional housing and move them into permanent housing with wrap-around services. This project is administered by the Chicago Low-Income Housing Trust Fund and is scheduled to come on-line in July of 2006.

Consistency Review – Homeless service agencies that receive HUD funding are required to operate programs that are consistent with the 10-Year Plan. The Chicago Continuum of Care has developed the Program Models Chart--which outlines all programs that are consistent with the plan—and then conducts a yearly review to ensure that HUD-funded programs are consistent with the models chart. Agencies that operate programs that are not consistent can be given a waiver, which will allow them to receive HUD funding, if they are undergoing a process to make that program consistent.

Discharge Planning – Planning for the release of people from institutions—including prisons, hospitals and mental health facilities—can help ensure that they are not released to the streets or to homeless shelters. Prisoner re-entry is a topic where significant work is occurring, including federal legislation co-sponsored by Congressman Danny Davis and the recent release of a report by the Mayor’s Caucus on Re-Entry entitled “Rebuilding Lives. Restoring Hope. Strengthening Communities—Breaking the Cycle of Incarceration and Building Brighter Futures in Chicago.” In addition, the CHHP study (Chicago Housing for Health Partnership, see above) will document the success in preventing homelessness of a intensive case-management and housing approach for patients being released from area hospitals.

Eviction Prevention – Deborah’s Place designed this series of strategies to prevent residents of their permanent housing from being evicted, thereby preventing them from returning to homelessness. These strategies include creating the position of Homeless Prevention Specialist, who advocates for tenants at risk of eviction. When a resident becomes delinquent in rent or has multiple housekeeping notices, for instance, the Housing Prevention Specialist supplements the case management services that the tenant is already receiving. Other strategies include an Eviction Prevention Committee, which provides a hearing for the person at risk of being evicted before formal eviction procedures are implemented, so the tenant has the opportunity to take responsibility for correcting their behavior; and planning for instances of relapse or medication non-compliance.

Faith-Based Initiative – Announced by Mayor Daley in March 2005, the Faith-Based Initiative for the Plan to End Homelessness draws on the excellent reputation and tradition of Chicago’s faith community of responding quickly to our most vulnerable citizens. The City hopes to continue that tradition by collaborating with faith-based institutions on programs such as “Interfaith Homes,” a program of Interfaith Council for the Homeless that pairs communities of faith with homeless households to provide mentorship and time-limited financial assistance. Other opportunities include the Chicago Homeless Prevention Fund and the Home-to-Stay Furniture Drive program.

Harm Reduction – Both a philosophical approach and a service intervention for people using drugs, harm reduction employs a set of practical strategies that reduce the negative consequences of drug use, incorporating a spectrum of techniques that range from safer use to managed use to abstinence. While not widely in use within Chicago’s homeless system, efforts are underway to examine the strategies for their applicability. This includes the sponsoring of harm reduction workshops by Prince Charitable Trusts; and

educating the staff and board and becoming involved in the Midwest Harm Reduction Institute by the Polk Bros. Foundation.

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) – HMIS is the city-operated computerized case management system that will also collect data on the homeless system. Instituted in 2004, all agencies that receive city and HUD funding are required to participate in the system, which includes intake, assessment, case management, referrals and forwarding hard data on numbers in the system. The system, once fully operational, will provide information about how many people are in the system at any point in time, and provide aggregate data about how people are served, and a system-wide picture of outcomes.

“Housing Everyone” Program – A program of the Partnership to End Homelessness, “Housing Everyone” is designed to develop program models and policy recommendations to ensure that all people who are homeless find appropriate permanent housing. Many shelter providers experience a lack of fit between existing permanent housing and people in the shelters. “Housing Everyone” identifies the barriers for people not accessing housing (see the Chicago Barriers Chart); examines cutting-edge housing and service models for possible expansion; and pinpoints policies and procedures that can help ensure a full range of permanent housing.

Housing Locator Program – This new program is designed to facilitate housing placement of families in shelters and interim housing programs more quickly by identifying available private market rental units that are or can be made affordable to households exiting the homeless system. While the primary goal of the program is to secure housing for 600 households per year, it is also intended to build the expertise and capacity of Chicago’s homeless system in easing access to permanent housing units. The program started in spring 2005 and is administered by the Chicago Department of Housing.

Housing Retention Supports – Supportive services specifically tailored to ensuring that residents of permanent housing successfully retain their housing. This set of supports views service delivery with a slightly different lens—what does this person need to help him or her stay in permanent housing? Examples include: employment supports, recovery services, budgeting and “active” bill paying, coaching on how to be a good neighbor.

Permanent Housing with Short-Term Support – One of the permanent housing models in the Program Models Chart (which outlines all programs that are consistent with the 10-Year Plan), this model is also called “Rolling Stock” Housing. Permanent Housing with Short-Term Support combines up to two years of rental support with wrap-around support services that decrease over time. After two years, the client assumes the lease for the unit and the subsidy transitions to a new client.

Prevention Call Center – People at risk of homelessness are provided centralized access to homeless prevention services through this call-in system. Callers dial the city’s

helpline (311) and are then linked to trained Call Center Representatives who have a comprehensive database of all available services, including financial assistance, short-term rent support and legal services. The Prevention Call Center, scheduled to come on-line at the end of 2006, is a partnership between Catholic Charities, the Emergency Fund, Heartland Alliance and the City of Chicago.

Prevention Funds – Prevention Funds are available for people at immediate risk of losing their housing for such things as rent, utility costs and the purchase of uniforms and equipment to get back into the workforce. In Chicago, there are four sources for Prevention Funds – federal funding through FEMA grants (over \$1.8 million), state funding through the Homeless Prevention Program (\$3.3 million, an increase of \$2 million from last year, thanks to great advocacy work), city funding through the Chicago Homeless Prevention Fund (\$125,000), and private funding from foundations, corporations and individuals (\$1.3 million) administered by the Emergency Fund. Prevention funding continues to grow, as evidenced by the fact that between 2002 and 2005, there was a 50% increase in the number of Chicago households that received prevention assistance. In 2005, 5,775 Chicago households received prevention funding.

Rental Housing Support Program – The Rental Housing Support Program, signed into law in June 2005, will provide 5,500 rental subsidies throughout Illinois. The program is funded through a \$10 charge on real estate recordings. Through this program the Chicago Low-Income Housing Trust Fund will receive \$10 million for an estimated 2,000 rental subsidies. The Commissioner of the Department of Housing has pledged that, of the 2,000 subsidies coming to Chicago, 1,000 will be earmarked for people currently in Chicago's homeless system.

Street-To-Home Initiative – Funded through a special earmark made available by the city of Chicago from the sale of the Chicago Skyway, this five-year project provides permanent supportive housing for up to 100 homeless individuals who live in public spaces. Under this initiative, four partner agencies that have expertise working with this population conduct outreach to unsheltered homeless individuals, place them in permanent housing, and provide the necessary services to help the clients maintain their housing.

Supportive Housing Initiative – This is a five-year initiative of the Chicago Dept. of Housing to develop 788 units of new permanent supportive housing for singles and families. 12 housing projects are being funded under SHI, combining housing development dollars with HUD homeless funding for a total investment of over \$85 million. These new housing developments began coming on-line in 2005, with the final project expected to open in 2008.