Engaging Experienced Adults in Systems Change
Gerontology Conference
Grand Valley State University
February 2010

Grand Rapids Area Coalition to End Homelessness

Why end homelessness?
• Homeless did not always exist as a system
• Began developing on a larger scale in the 1980’s with the de-institutionalization of mental health facilities and post-war veterans; the face has changed since then…
  – Rise in the number of families that are homeless (over 51%) including 33% that are children
• Services were developed as a crisis response and have mushroomed into a system
• It is more expensive to manage it than to end it
• Because it’s the right thing to do!

The Coalition & the Vision to End Homelessness

Coalition to End Homelessness
• Subcommittee of the Kent County Essential Needs Task Force (ENTF), Comprised of over 200+ people. Charged with coordinating the implementation of the Vision To End Homelessness, our community’s 10-Year Plan

Vision Goals
• Prevent homelessness by helping people maintain housing or directly access housing upon discharge from other institutional systems
• Re-house those in crisis, helping people exit homelessness quickly with the resources they need to stay housed
• Transform the system for long-term change by expanding the supply of affordable, quality, permanent housing
• Shift from management of homelessness to one that focuses on housing

Systems Thinking “Iceberg”

- Events
- Partnerships
- Systems & Structures
- Beliefs & Values

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A Paradigm Shift

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<td>Housing First Focus</td>
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<td>Tertiary focused on clinic-based housing</td>
<td>Resources focused on prevention and permanent housing</td>
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<td>System-wide data collection</td>
<td>Data collection fragmented, focused on counting beds</td>
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<td>Integrated/Coordinated services focusing on institutional release and support in the extra community</td>
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<td>Coordinated, cross-sector funding</td>
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<td>Data collection fragmented, focused on counting beds</td>
<td>System-wide data collection designed to measure outcomes and inform strategies</td>
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National Data on Homelessness & Affordable Housing

- 1 out of 10 poor persons in the U.S. face homelessness at some point during an average year (Burt, 2001)
- 17.7 million households estimated paying more than 50% of their income towards housing (Joint Center for Housing Studies, Harvard University, 2008)
- 80% of households in housing with a lease are spending more than 60% of their income on housing (HAP, 2009)
- 94% of the 6,679 households that were assessed at central intake in 2009, had incomes at or below 40% AMI (Area Median Income). For a family of three that translates to $22,720 or less per year (HAP, 2009)
- In the 1970s, a surplus of 300,000 affordable housing units existed whereas today there is a shortfall of 1.7 million affordable housing units (Daskal, 1998 & NLIHC, 2007)
- In Michigan, the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment is $747. In order to afford this level of rent, without paying more than 30% of income on housing, a household must earn $2,489 monthly or $29,864 annually. Assuming a 40-hour work week, $2,489 translates into a Housing Wage of $14.36 (NLIHC, 2009)

Funding for Homelessness

- Federal spending on homelessness has increased by 30% since 2001
- Federal spending on housing assistance programs for low-income households has declined by 10% since 1995
- More than $31 million goes into supporting our local homeless system:
  - 53% of funds go to support Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing & Missions
  - 11% of funds go to support housing (homeless prevention/rapid re-housing)
- Average cost for a 3 person household to be in shelter for one month = $3,000

Grand Rapids Homeless Data

Data derived from Grand Rapids Area Homeless Management Information System

- 2008 Data
  - 6,022 persons
    - 33% children
    - 50% families/50% single adults
    - 4,067 total households
    - 40% “first-time” homeless
    - 58% served only one time
- Two Year Data (2007 & 2008)
  - 8,719 persons
    - 5,483 adults
    - 3,236 children
    - 57% families/43% single adults
    - 5,740 total households
    - 41% “first-time” homeless
    - 50% served only one time
Old System

Our System has Shifted From...

ST A R T

- Central intake
- Homeless Assistance Program (HAP)

> Identify placement by household type
  - (o) Family, (m) Single, (f) Female

ST A R T

- Single
- women
- and children

> Focus on housing is up to the case management at each shelter or mission (if available)

ST A R T

If space is available...
- Shelter
- Mission
- Other?

System Change Goals

- Increase the number of persons that are prevented from becoming homeless due to prevention or rental assistance
- Reduce the length of homelessness for households in the system (i.e., those in safety net, emergency shelter, transitional housing or those with a housing crisis)
- Increase the number of households exiting homelessness into affordable, quality, permanent housing
- Increase the number of households that exit homelessness into affordable, quality, permanent housing and maintain housing for a minimum of 12 months
- Reduce the number of households that re-enter the homeless system (using measures of within 12 months, 24 months and 36 months)
Centralized Intake Data 2009

- 4,579 households completed assessments
  - 84% were in a housing crisis
    - 40% of households were homeless
    - 60% of households were cases of prevention
  - 54% were children
- Referrals from HAP go out to the community resources (when available)
  - To: rent assistance, prevention, re-housing
  - 47% decrease in shelter usage

Better Investment of Resources

- Case Examples:
  - A household of six assisted with $1400.00 to move into housing
  - A household threatened with eviction assisted with $1085.00 — remained in permanent housing, avoiding eviction & court costs and trauma of uprooting their family
- Old Response:
  - Placement in emergency shelter costing an average of $2500-$3000 for one month stay (not including first month’s rent/security deposit costs)
  - Exacerbating the crisis and intervening with an emergency-orientated approach
- New Response:
  - Diversion from emergency shelter whenever possible
  - Conversation centered around HOUSING not shelter
  - Targeting of limited resources leads to better use of resources

Changes to the Local System

- Enhanced Central Intake: Expanded and enhanced services (with a 230% increase in the number of persons seeking housing-related services)
- Reduction of Emergency Shelter beds: 53 emergency shelter beds were taken offline
- New Supportive Services Model: Developed and launched community-based Housing Resource Specialist model
- New Resources: Addition of $1,224,601 new or re-aligned funding to support systems change PLUS more than $3.4 million in stimulus funding over two years
- CEP: Investment of more than $800,000 in funding to find systemic solutions to engaging experienced adults at a system level to assist in the effort to end homelessness.
- Research: Comprehensive data sets on housing affordability for the West Michigan region.
- CPP: Six new congregations engaged in CPP, and 17 households served during 2009.
- Communications: Work completed to launch campaign in early 2010, which will raise awareness about the Coalition’s work and continue to lay the groundwork for system-wide changes

Questions

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