

STATE OF GEORGIA

HOMELESS ACTION PLAN

Homeless persons have increased their independence and been restored to the mainstream of society because State and local resources have ensured optimal opportunities through the creation of an integrated and seamless system of quality services. As a result of these actions, the State of Georgia will have the resources to prevent homelessness, to transition homeless families back to self sufficiency and to end chronic homelessness within ten years.

*To accomplish this vision,
the State of Georgia Interagency Homeless Coordination Council (GIHCC) offers the following six goals and accompanying activities as a Plan of Action.*

Goal One

Expand access to and use of the Federal mainstream housing and support service programs by homeless families and chronically homeless individuals. HUD-identified mainstream service programs include Medicaid, TANF, SSI, CHIP, Workforce Investment Act, Food Stamps, Adult Literacy, Vocational Rehabilitation and Veterans Benefits. Mainstream housing programs include the affordable and supportive rental and homeownership programs administered by HUD, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and local agencies.

Outcome: Intake needs assessments will include mainstream eligibility screening procedures and protocols to ensure that appropriate referrals and enrollments procedures result in individuals and families receiving or maximizing their opportunity to receive the mainstream housing and/or services to which they are entitled or can benefit.

Action Step 1.1

Develop guidelines for the proper assessment of individuals and families seeking assistance to determine which of the mainstream service programs are appropriate to meet the unique and specific needs of each individual.

DCA and the Department of Human Resources (DHR) will be responsible for leadership. Other GIHCC partners will assist. The target date for completion is July 2005.

Action Step 1.2

The Department of Labor (DOL) will lead in an effort to utilize their Disability Adjudication Services to work with communities to streamline and expedite the application process for Social Security Disability Benefits.

DOL will take the lead in this effort assisted by the GCEH. Three communities will be identified and technical assistance efforts initiated by July 2005.

Action Step 1.3

Review existing protocols for determination of benefits through existing mainstream housing and service programs and develop universal, easy-to-use, web-based accessible, eligibility determination programs for intake workers.

- Review Federal and State guidelines on access to mainstream housing and services for applicability to the State of Georgia.
- Assign to the Georgia Technology Authority Agency Head Advisory Council the responsibility to determine the feasibility of developing an easy-to-use, web-based eligibility program.
- Review the Pathways Compass Management Information System to establish the feasibility of adding mainstream housing and service eligibility factors as a basic component of intake.

DCA and the Department of Human Resources (DHR) will be responsible for leadership. The Georgia Technology Authority (GTA) and other GIHCC partners will assist. Preliminary planning with feasibility, costs, etc. identified will be complete by July 2005. The target date for completion is July 2006.

Action Step 1.4

Recommend measures to improve access to mainstream housing and service programs by individuals and families.

- Develop education and training program for providers to facilitate more effective referrals through a better understanding of the benefits provided through each program and the basic eligibility requirements.

Conduct a critical pathway study to outline access to these basic services:

1. Mental health crisis treatment center.
2. Alcohol or drug abuse treatment center.
3. Community or public health programs.
4. Medicaid and PeachCare Programs.
5. Social Security Administration disability benefits.
6. Workforce development service programs.
7. Food Stamp and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families programs.
8. Emergency homeless shelter facility.
9. Transitional or permanent supportive housing program.
10. Public housing program.

DCA and the Department of Human Resources (DHR) will be responsible for leadership. Other GIHCC partners will assist. The target date for completion is January 2006.

Goal Two

Provide supportive housing for chronically homeless individuals and families that is both affordable and appropriate for the delivery of supportive services.

Outcome: There will be an increased number of new supportive housing units added annually.

Action Step 2.1

Execute a Memorandum of Agreement between key State agencies (DHR/DCH/DCA/DOL/DOC) that: 1) identifies common policies and principles; 2) establishes an annual production goal for creation of permanent supportive housing units with support services appropriate to the needs of consumers targeted; and 3) assigns evaluation responsibilities to the Office of Planning and Budget (OPB).

- Prepare a draft Memorandum of Agreement outlining responsibilities and annual production goals.
- Establish a standard template outlining the costs of development, operation and delivery of supportive services for the proposed supportive housing units.
- Facilitate access for all consumers to services with the goal that each person achieves his or her highest workforce potential.

DHR, DCH, DCA, DOC and the Governor's Office will take the lead. DOL and others will assist. The target date for completion is July 2005.

Action Step 2.2

Establish a contractual coordination obligation between the networks of DCA funded transitional housing and emergency homeless shelter programs with other State- and Federally-funded homeless supportive service programs. Examples include Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Teams, drug courts and community courts.

- Review existing directory of transitional housing providers and emergency shelter providers funded by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and the Board of Pardons and Paroles.

- Establish protocols and formal contractual agreements for the appropriate referral of consumers of public services at State-funded institutions (including public hospitals, prisons and regional mental health facilities) and State-funded nonprofit organizations providing shelter and services for homeless individuals.
- Establish and provide training programs for staff and volunteers at transitional housing programs, and for emergency shelter providers, that will work with individuals enrolled in community supportive service programs.

DCA will lead in this action step. The Georgia Coalition to End Homelessness will assist. The target date for completion is July 2005.

Goal Three

Develop and adopt state policies to end the discharge of institutionalized individuals (to include discharge from correction facilities, public health or mental hospitals, treatment facilities, foster care, or juvenile justice programs) directly to homeless facilities which are unprepared and unable to meet the supportive service needs of the individual.

Outcome: Adoption of discharge policies by Governor's Executive Order and Agency Board Resolutions.

Action Step 3.1

Establish State policies that require affected agencies to assure appropriate housing and community treatment for individuals with disabilities discharged from institutional settings.

- Assign OPB the responsibility to oversee the development of appropriate discharge planning guidelines by affected state agencies.
- Assign the relevant state agencies the task of enumerating both the existing census of institutionalized residents that should be offered services in community settings and the number of individuals "at-risk" of institutionalization due to inadequate or an insufficient inventory of community supportive housing.
- Require that OPB and the Georgia Interagency Homeless Coordination Council oversee the State's efforts to address institutional discharge policies and training, and address the availability of community supportive housing in their oversight.
- Enhance the capacity of existing community housing resources to appropriately serve persons with institutional histories.

The Office of the Governor (and others identified who are associated with the "Re-entry Policy Team"), DHR, DOC, the Board of Pardons and Parole and DCA will lead on this step. The target date for completion is January 2006.

Action Step 3.2

Develop recuperative centers for post-hospitalization discharge of homeless individuals with immediate primary care health needs.

- Assign the Department of Community Health the responsibility to prepare a report that identifies the estimated need for post-hospitalization homeless facilities by community and the potential savings to the State that recuperative centers would provide.
- Require that Indigent Care Hospital Plan participants address the need for homeless post-hospitalization facilities and the use of funds to support homeless health care initiatives in the Indigent Care Trust Fund Plans submitted to the Department of Community Health.

DCH will lead. Participating agencies include the Georgia Association for Primary Health Care, DCA, DHR (Division of Public Health and others) and GCEH. Planning will be complete by July 2005.

Action Step 3.3

Develop a model on collaborative discharge policies and procedures for persons released from Federal, State and local correction facilities.

The Department of Corrections and the Board of Pardons and Parole will lead. Support will be provided by the Office of the Governor, Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC), DCA and DHR. The target date for completion is January 2006.

Goal Four

Develop replicable local community planning model(s) to exemplify the process for integrated housing and service delivery strategies to be implemented at the local level for homeless persons. This model will include Guiding Principles in areas of collaboration, governance, authority and finances.

Outcome: Local housing and service collaboratives will adopt guiding principles as a prerequisite to State-supported funding.

Action Step 4.1

Prepare a model outline for the creation of a community collaborative based on existing best models including the identification of critical long-term partners. Typical partners will include representatives from: nonprofit shelter and transitional housing providers, community Indigent Care Trust Fund hospitals, DHR Programs, community treatment courts, local housing authorities, Department of Labor, Department of Education, Department of Corrections, Board of Pardons and Paroles, and local public and private mental health and substance abuse treatment providers.

GCEH and DCA will lead on this action step and will be assisted by the entities named above. The target date for completion is January 2006.

Action Step 4.2

Prepare a model outline of outcome based measurements for program evaluation. Outcome measurements could include: (a) tracking the reduction incidents of admissions to hospitals, jails, and crisis treatment facilities; (b) measuring the decrease in the length of stay at these facilities; (c) monitoring the decrease in the period of homelessness by individuals receiving services through a collaborative model program; (d) monitoring workforce development and the number of clients hired, the type of employment, the pay rates, and respective retention; and (e) assessing the lengths of stay in stable housing.

DCA and OPB will take the lead in this step. Assistance may be provided by the Governor's "Re-Entry Policy Team" and others. The target date for completion is January 2006.

Action Step 4.3

Develop and conduct training workshops for other communities to promote the replication of community integrated homeless supportive service programs with supportive housing programs.

DCA and GCEH will lead. A training strategy will be complete by July 2006.

Action Step 4.4

Develop a recognition process to reward communities with priority funding for successfully implementing a local collaborative planning process.

DCA, DCH, DHR, DOL and GCEH will develop a recognition strategy by July 2006.

Goal Five

Engagement of the State leadership (Department Heads, Legislature and Governor's Office) in the adoption of strategies, allocation of resources and the implementation of these and future recommendations of the Council.

Outcome: Adoption of the Georgia Homeless Action Plan by the Office of the Governor and presentation of the Annual Council Report at Agency Board / Commission meetings.

Action Step 5.1

Present implementation strategy recommendations of the Georgia Interagency Homeless Coordination Council to the Governor's Office for adoption.

- Preview the recommendations of the Georgia Interagency Homeless Coordination Council with the Commissioner of the Department of Human Resources, the Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs, the Commissioner of the Department of Community Health, the Commissioner of the Department of Labor, the Commissioner of the Department of Corrections, the Commissioner of the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Superintendent of the Department of Education, and the Chairman of the Board of Pardons and Paroles.
- Develop an implementation support strategy that would identify the expected public and private support for the adoption of the recommendations by the Governor.

Commissioners Walker and Beatty (council co-chairs) will lead on this action step. The Georgia Homeless Action Plan will be submitted to the Governor's Office by November 2004.

Action Step 5.2

Reaffirm and define the long-term responsibilities of the Georgia Interagency Homeless Coordination Council.

- Develop a specific Mission Statement and Vision Statement that articulates clear commitment to ending homelessness and establishes a framework for the development of measures of success.
- Prepare a summary abstract which draws upon existing community homeless action plans and homeless counts to provide a profile and demographic of the homeless sub-populations throughout Georgia.

The Council will complete this action step by July 2005.

Action Step 5.3

Develop a comprehensive, statewide, homeless data collection and analysis reporting capacity.

- Conduct an analysis on the existing methodologies that are used to report on housing and services provided to homeless individuals. The review should include database systems maintained through the homeless Pathways Community, Inc. network, the local and state homeless Continuum of Care Plans, the U.S. Veterans Administration, the Georgia Department of Corrections, and the various systems within the Georgia Department of Human Resources.
- Prepare a model for the aggregation of all the available homeless data reports.

DCA will take the lead on this step. This effort will be assisted by GTA, GCEH, Pathways Community Network, local entities (providers, NPO's, local governments, etc.) and State agency partners.

A preliminary report on this action step will be made by January 2006.

Action Step 5.4

Assign the Georgia Interagency Homeless Coordination Council the responsibility to issue an Annual Georgia Homeless Status Report and Action Plan.

OPB will lead on this step. Assistance will come from all Council members. The target date is January 2006.

Goal Six

Take the necessary actions to fully utilize and maximize the available Federal, State, public and private funds available to address the needs of the homeless and to meet the goal of ending chronic homelessness in ten years.

Outcome: Georgia continues to secure 100% of the annual HUD Continuum of Care pro rata share funding and other Federal funding with identified match provided through State, local and private funding.

- Issue a Governor's challenge to the State agency members of the Council to significantly increase capacity in affordable housing, human services, workforce development, education, and public health and well-being.
- Issue a Governor's challenge to the faith-based community to be supportive of the existing network of homeless service providers, to examine and then fill the gaps in local homeless delivery systems and to offer spiritual hope and guidance to the individuals and families seeking a way of ending their own homelessness.
- Issue a Governor's challenge to the private business community to take the lead in calculating the "cost of homelessness" to a community and then to champion investments in public and nonprofit programs that possess a proven track record of ending homelessness and promoting community revitalization.
- Issue a Governor's Challenge to provider networks and the leaders of the State and local Homeless Continuums of Care to develop plans and funding applications that will leverage the existing resources with new Federal funding that supports the effort to end homelessness throughout the State.
- Issue a Governor's Challenge to local and State public housing authorities to award project based Section 8 Rental Assistance to developments providing supportive housing units in the State.
- Issue a Governor's Challenge to local United Ways, the business and philanthropic community, and other private organizations, to not only support but to commit to the challenge of ending homelessness in Georgia.