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**Interagency Homeless Coordination Council  
Annual Progress Report  
State Fiscal Year 2010**

**Introduction and Background**

Over the past several years, there has been a national movement to increase interagency collaboration at the state and local levels to address the needs of people who are homeless. Federal, state, and local resources working together can mobilize resources and foster creativity. The members of the Georgia Interagency Homeless Coordination Council (GIHCC) work together to coordinate resources and find cooperative solutions to the challenge of homelessness. GIHCC is an approach that fits perfectly with the Governor's TEAM Georgia concept, aimed at making Georgia the nation's best managed state — in this case, a better managed state government in the service of Georgia's neediest citizens.

In November 2001, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development announced a series of Policy Academies designed to help State and local policymakers improve access to mainstream services for people who are homeless. Georgia applied for and was accepted to participate in the April 2002 Academy on chronic homelessness. By December 2002, the Georgia policy team developed a *Homeless Action Plan to End Homelessness in Ten Years*. Since that time, Georgia has participated in an additional Academy on improving access to mainstream services for families with children experiencing homelessness (held in April, 2005). Additionally in 2002, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness was revitalized. One of its missions was to foster the creation of state interagency councils. These events, coupled with the recognition here in Georgia that an interagency council would be essential to creating a statewide plan and collaborative homelessness initiatives, led to the creation of the GIHCC by Executive Order of Governor Sonny Purdue on February 11, 2004.

This report summarizes the activities undertaken in support of the Council's goals.

## Progress on Action Plan Steps and Goals

### Goal One

**Expand access to and use of the Federal mainstream housing and support service programs by homeless families and chronically homeless individuals. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) identified mainstream service programs include Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Children's Health Insurance Program (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.**

### **Accomplishments**

- Using State Housing Trust Fund dollars, DCA is able to fund and support local sponsors of regional homeless resource fairs in all of Georgia's 12 regions. During SFY2010, fairs were held in Athens, Atlanta, Augusta, McDonough, Savannah and Valdosta. The Regional Homeless Resource Fairs are designed to facilitate communication between providers and effectively coordinate services offered to homeless families. Many of these fairs used the Project Homeless Connect model endorsed by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. This model is designed for agencies to coordinate and sponsor one-day, one-stop events to deliver services to people experiencing homelessness.
- The Georgia SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery) Project teaches case managers SOAR strategies to expedite the disability application process and increase approval rates for individuals who are homeless and have a mental illness. There were 9 *Stepping Stones to Recovery* trainings (2-day) held around the state for 157 participants. *SOAR Basics* trainings are available for administrators and others who are in need of basic information about SSI/SSDI benefits for supervisory and referral purposes. This 90-120 minute training was held at 8 locations around the state.
- In order to more fully address the nationwide systemic barriers that exist for SSI/SSDI applicants, Georgia sought approval from SAMSHA's National SOAR Coordinator to form a Southeastern SOAR Consortium. Led by Georgia's SOAR Project Manager, representatives from the six surrounding states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Tennessee) meet by conference call each quarter to discuss application barriers and identify SSA Region 4 system changes.
- The Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) SOAR Project worked with the Social Security Administration and Disability Adjudication Services to establish a statewide "flagging system" to identify homeless cases and SOAR cases. These flags enable DAS to provide outcome data on flagged applications. DAS provides data on approvals and application rates quarterly on "all" cases "homeless" cases and "SOAR" cases. SOAR assisted cases have a 71% percent approval rate in an average of 126 days.

- A monthly SOAR Provider Coalition meeting is held with participation from the Social Security Administration and Disability Adjudication Services to provide technical assistance and support to trainees.
- An additional DBHDD SOAR Benefits Specialist was placed in Athens, Georgia and hosted by Advantage Behavioral Health System.
- During SFY2010, DCA received \$2,109,353 in ESG funds from the federal government. Funds received by ESG grantees during this reporting period totaled \$4,060,666 in State and Federal homeless assistance funds. Through the 203 ESG programs funded during the fiscal year, a total of 35,987 persons received housing assistance (30,565 in emergency shelters and 5,422 in transitional housing) and 67,680 persons received supportive services. On average, each day 3,056 individuals were provided shelter, 2,007 individuals were provided transitional housing, and 2,217 persons received supportive services.
- During SFY2010, the Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness program (PATH) was administered through the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) and funded eight (8) Homeless Outreach Teams located in Atlanta, Columbus, Augusta, and Savannah. PATH services target individuals with serious mental illness, including those with co-occurring substance use disorders, who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless and do not access services on their own. PATH services include community-based outreach, mental health, substance abuse, case management and other support services, as well as a limited set of housing services. In SFY2010, PATH Service Providers outreached 2,471 homeless individuals with mental illness statewide, enrolled 1,217 (49%) of them in PATH funded Case Management Services to assist with accessing housing and mainstream services. Of the 948 clients who were discharged from PATH Case Management Services in SFY2010, 516 (54%) were linked to BOTH housing and mental health services, 9 accessed housing only, 152 accessed mental health services only, and 271 lost contact. The number of PATH clients who accessed housing upon discharge represents a significant improvement compared to SFY2009 when only 26% (n=174) of the discharges accessed housing. This improvement is attributed to a renewed priority on access to housing by PATH providers.
- In FY10, Georgia Department of Education purposefully restructured the Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) division in an effort to expand our outreach services to ensure that students experiencing homelessness anywhere in our state are identified, and have equal access to a free and appropriate public education without barriers. Intense focus and targeted technical assistance was provided to include more focused training on compliance, monitoring, and state reporting requirements. The EHCY staff was expanded to (3) Program Consultants, and (1) Program Analyst. A consultant is assigned to the metropolitan region, the South Georgia region, and the North Georgia region of the state. Student performance data indicate that LEA McKinney-Vento grantees continue to demonstrate increases in the percentage of homeless students who met or exceeded standards in Math and Reading on the CRCT. A significant increase is noted in the English Language Arts test scores. The data clearly demonstrates that students experiencing homelessness in Georgia are able to meet the same challenging academic standards as those students who are housed, which is the intent of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance program.

## Goal Two

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

### **Accomplishments**

- DCA's housing search web site, GeorgiaHousingSearch.org continued to grow. By the end of SFY2010, the web site had more than 155,000 units listed and averaged 9,000 searches per day. Service providers for the homeless, as well as the general public, can use this service to find rental housing units based on price, numbers of bedrooms, available amenities, access to mass transportation, and accessibility features available.
- DCA created a set aside of Low Income Housing Tax Credits (\$900,000) that could be accessed by developers of projects for homeless individuals with disabilities that were also receiving funds from the Office of Special Housing Initiatives .
- The Shelter Plus Care program is designed to provide housing and supportive services on a long-term basis for homeless persons with disabilities and their families. There are 68 current projects with 1,399 units under contract. Thirty-six (36) programs are operating in a five-year grant period while 32 programs are operating in a renewal term for a 12 month period. The programs benefit and estimated 2,000+ persons who are homeless or chronically homeless and have a disability as along with their family members.
- A close partnership continues to exist between DBHDD community-based mental health services and Balance of State Continuum of Care subsidized supportive housing units funded through Shelter Plus Care (S+C) contracts from the Department of Community Affairs. DCA has partnered with 18 community service boards on S+C projects.
- DCA's Permanent Supportive Housing Program (PSHP) finances the development of affordable rental housing with accompanying supportive services for eligible homeless tenants with special needs. The program offers 100% capital financing combining the resources of the federal HOME block grant program and the State Housing Trust Fund for the Homeless. In addition, project based rental assistance through the federal Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program is available from the DCA in communities where DCA administers the HCV program for 100% of the PSHP units occupied by eligible tenants. Eligible tenants include heads of households or family members who are either homeless or threatened with becoming homeless and have a disability. The disability must be of long-continued and indefinite duration, substantially impedes their ability to live independently, be improved by more suitable housing conditions, and may be a physical, mental, developmental, or emotional impairment including impairment due solely to alcohol or drug abuse. During SFY2010, DCA awarded \$3,399,242 in HOME funds and \$150,000 in State Housing Trust Funds to one project that will produce 26 special needs units. Since its inception, the total number of units completed and under construction is 456 with 76 units under review. The total amount of funds committed to the program exceeds \$60,000,000.

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Population Served</b>	<b>Status</b>
Millennium Center	Cuthbert	Families with substance abuse	Completed
Hearthstone Landing	Canton	Families experiencing domestic abuse	Completed
Grove Park	Macon	Individuals with mental, developmental, physical disabilities or substance abuse disorders	Completed
Pines Family Campus	Valdosta	Families with substance abuse	Completed
Maxwell House	Augusta	Individuals with mental, developmental, physical disabilities or substance abuse disorders	Completed
Highlands West	Augusta	Individuals with mental, developmental, physical disabilities or substance abuse disorders	Completed
Colony West	Macon	Individuals with a disability who also have an Independent Care Waiver	Completed
Seven Courts	Atlanta	Individuals with mental, developmental, physical disabilities or substance abuse disorders	Completed

Dutchtown Campus	Savannah	Individuals with mental, developmental, physical disabilities or substance abuse disorders	Completed
College Square	Fort Valley	Individuals with a disability who also have an Independent Care Waiver	Completed
Pine Ridge	Rome	Individuals with mental, developmental, physical disabilities or substance abuse disorders	Completed
Willow Glen	Columbus	Individuals with mental, developmental, physical disabilities or substance abuse disorders	Completed
The Safety Net	Atlanta	Youth aging out of state foster care or individuals with mental, developmental, physical disabilities or substance abuse disorders	Under Construction
Gateway at Town Center	Brunswick	Individuals with mental, developmental, physical disabilities or substance abuse disorders	Under Construction

Projects currently under review with preliminary commitments are:

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Population Served</b>	<b>Developer</b>
O'Hern House	Atlanta	Individuals with mental/developmental disabilities or substance abuse disorders	Project Interconnections

- The Supportive Housing Council of the Regional Commission on Homelessness (Metro Atlanta) continues its work to implement the Five Year Supportive Housing Plan for the Atlanta Region with regular planning and coordination meetings of service providers, housing providers and governmental officials. The target is to create 2,100 new supported housing beds and, as of June 2010, 2,050 new beds have been created to serve chronically homeless persons.
- The Atlanta Development Authority created a \$22 million Homeless Opportunity Fund in 2005 to support the development of additional permanent supportive housing units and women and children assessment centers. Almost \$19 million of that fund was approved for projects in 2006-2007, creating 1,800 housing units — 740 of those are permanent supportive housing units that have been completed — and leveraging almost \$107 million in funds from other sources. An additional \$1.5 million was approved from the fund for construction and installation of automatic public toilets, which has been completed.
- The Atlanta Housing Authority continued its 2005 commitment of 500 project-based Housing Choice Vouchers over five years by the Atlanta Housing Authority to promote the development of permanent supportive housing units through the programs of the Regional Commission on Homelessness. In June 2010, 400 chronically homeless persons were placed in subsidized housing as a part of the AHA Demonstration Project.

### 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.**

#### **Accomplishments**

- Working cooperatively, the State Board of Pardons and Paroles, Department of Corrections and DCA are implementing the Georgia Re-entry Partnership Housing (RPH) Program, providing demonstrated supportive housing options to those individuals who are incarcerated and eligible for parole supervision. The program has reduced the cost of incarceration, along with providing health and stability. The State of Georgia has been successful with negotiating funding agreements with state and local corrections and/or law enforcement agencies to provide continue operating subsidies for supportive services so in order to set aside housing providers specifically targeted towards problem residence inmates. During SFY2010, the Re-Entry Partnership Housing (RPH) Program assisted 199 eligible parolees with housing placement, meals and the opportunity to reintegrate into the general population to become reconnected with society. These placements, costing at total of \$157,500, resulted in a net savings to the state of \$5,168,645.
- Near the end of SFY2010, the DBHDD's SOAR Project began working with the Georgia Department of Correction in collaboration for upcoming training for Multifunctional Correctional Officers to identify inmates with a mental illness who would be eligible for release from state prisons. The team will process pre-release applications for SSI/SSDI using SOAR techniques.
- Georgia state hospitals were approved to hire SOAR Benefits Specialist with exclusive duty to the procurement of Social Security Benefits for hospital consumers. Benefits Specialists include, Patricia Wright (NWGRH), Peter Ward (GRH-Atlanta), Cynthia Poole (CSH) and Tandra Dickerson (WCGRH).
- DBHDD continues to support NAMI Georgia's CIT training for law enforcement officers to learn strategies to assist individuals with mental illness to divert incarceration and engage in treatment. In SFY2010, 820 law enforcement officers participated in one of the 53 National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) -Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) trainings conducted within all 5 DBHDD Regions. Since SFY2006, DBHDD has sponsored more than 160 CIT trainings attended by 2,990 law enforcement officers and first responders.
- DHR utilized a monthly review process to track and review individuals residing on Mental Units in our hospitals, who have been hospitalized for more than 60 days. The process intended to ensure solid transition planning for individuals who are going through the transition process. Individual cases are reviewed monthly by the State Olmstead Coordinator to insure they are transitioned to the community with appropriate supports and services that meet the desires and wishes of the individual, and also provided the level of support that allows the individual to progress successfully in their recovery. The transition process is

intended to be "person-centered", and requires a partnership between the consumer, the individual's personal support system, the hospital, and the community provider.

- Governor Sonny Perdue appointed a State Olmstead Coordinator to oversee and foster collaboration among state agencies with Olmstead obligations.
- In SFY10, DBHDD transitioned back to the community 297 individuals with behavioral health issues, and hospital lengths of stay greater than 60 days.
- DBHDD also increased community resources to help keep people from entering the hospitals, and attempted to ensure that individuals in the hospitals actually need that level of care. These efforts included:
  - Increasing the number of beds in Crisis Stabilization Programs bringing the total to 303 in SFY2010.
  - Continuing the use of External Review Organization (ERO) in an effort to improve our utilization review functions in the hospital System.
  - Increasing the number of Case Expeditors that work as a link between the Hospital System and the Community Providers. Case Expeditors work to break down barriers that can cause an individual to be stuck in the hospital. Expeditors are now assigned to each hospital that focus specifically on individuals who have been in the hospital for more than 60 days, or individuals with any length of stay that has identified barriers to discharge (which is most often related to homelessness).
  - Continuing a project that trains Certified Peer Specialist to provide outreach to homeless mentally ill consumers on the street and in shelters to facilitate getting them into community-based services prior to them needing more acute services from state hospitals or emergency rooms.
  - Ensuring that Georgia Crisis and Access Line (GCAL) continues to operate statewide. Individuals from across the state can call a single number for access to care or help in a crisis. Access to information is also available via the GCAL website.
  - Providing Crisis stabilization capacity through the 23 hour observation units in all 7 of our state hospitals.
  - Providing access to Adult Mental Health (and co-occurring) Mobile Crisis Service in 46 counties.
- The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services awarded the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) a \$34 million grant over the course of five years to build Medicaid long-term care programs that will help people transition out of institutions and back into the community. The Project will be a joint effort between DCH, DHS and DCA. As of July 31, 2010, 340 individuals had successfully transitioned back into their homes and communities through MFP.

## Goal Four

**Develop replicable local community planning model(s) which demonstrate how integrated housing and service delivery strategies can be implemented at the local level for homeless persons. Models should reflect Guiding Principles in areas of collaboration, governance, authority and finances.**

### **Accomplishments**

- The Georgia Department of Labor (DOL) is engaging in on-going partnerships with Gateway Center, located in Atlanta. DOL is supporting the centers with professional staff that provide a variety of services and resources — including: job readiness and interviewing workshops, occupational and skills assessment, resume development, on-site job fairs, job matching and referral, employability skills training, and job finding books and DVDs.
- DCA has continued its funding and support of the Homeless Information Management System (HMIS) implementation for six of the seven Georgia Continuum of Care. This past year, the focus has been on increasing utilization of the HMIS system by the 343+ HMIS member agencies. Significant progress has been made since the HMIS project started in 2002 both in the number of agencies using the system and in the quality of data input into HMIS. The system was used to track services provided to 207,946 homeless or at-risk Georgians in the twelve months ending June 30, 2010. Of this total number, 68,235 were children and 5,200 were senior citizens. As a by-product of collecting good homeless data, the State is developing a more comprehensive picture of the homeless population's needs and is able to see how those needs and demographics change over time. This data is allowing local community agencies to better allocate resources and serve their communities in their mission, and the State's, to end homelessness. DCA sponsors the Continuum of Care HMIS Steering Committee that explores and promotes collaboration between the state and local Continuum of Care representatives.

## Goal Five

**Engage 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.**

### **Accomplishments**

- In SFY2009, Governor Sonny Perdue put forth a plan to restructure the Department of Human Resources, in part to bring a greater focus to mental health, developmental disability, and addictive disease services. During the legislative session, the General Assembly passed HB 228, which was signed into law by the Governor. On July 1, 2009, the new Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities assumed most of the responsibilities of the former Department of Human Resources Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Addictive Diseases. With the Department having just celebrated its first anniversary, there is continued emphasis on developing community capacity in supported services and decreasing institutional admissions to the states' psychiatric hospitals.
- The Georgia Interagency Homeless Coordination Council continued its work, meeting quarterly, and building active cooperative efforts to address the needs of Georgia's homeless population, with a special emphasis on the chronically homeless. The Council continued work on developing the SFY2011 Action Plan. Three of the four existing subcommittees met on a regular basis (Access to Mainstream Resources, Permanent Supportive Housing, and Discharge Subcommittees). In addition, the council created a fifth subcommittee which focuses on Children and Families.

## 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.**

### **Accomplishments**

- In the FFY2009 Continuum of Care funding competition, the seven (7) Georgia Continuums of Care were awarded \$30.6 million in funding for the Supportive Housing and Shelter plus Care programs. The seven Continuums also received an additional \$3.6 million in HUD Emergency Shelter Grant funds. DCA and the State Housing Trust Fund for the Homeless Commission sponsor the “Balance of State Continuum of Care” covering 152 counties in order to ensure statewide coverage.
- A number of participating agencies received American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) funding that impacts individuals and families who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. Three of the ARRA programs that most directly impact individuals and families who are homeless are the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP), the Community Services Block Grant ARRA funding (CSBG), and the Fresh Start Program through Department of Family and Child Services (DFCS).
  - HPRP is designed to provide homelessness prevention assistance to households who would otherwise become homeless—many due to the economic crisis—and to provide assistance to rapidly re-house persons who are homeless. The DCA adopted a regional approach, partnering with seven non profits to implement the program across the Balance of State. By the end of June 2010 the program had served 1961 households (5794 individuals), spent \$4,487,228 and served Georgia residents in 136/151 counties. Further information can be found can be found at <http://www.dca.ga.gov/housing/specialneeds/programs/HPRP.asp>
  - The CSBG ARRA funding provided an additional \$26.9 million to Georgia’s Community Action Agencies, through the Department of Human Services, formerly DHR. This funding was used for a range of services and activities such as activities addressing employment, education, better use of available income, housing, nutrition, emergency services and/or health to assist the needs of low-income individuals including the homeless, migrants and the elderly.
  - The Department of Human Services (DHS) partnered with United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta (UWMA) for the Georgia Fresh Start program, a statewide initiative that provided families up to \$3,000 of one-time, crisis financial assistance for past due housing and utility assistance. This initiative was able to serve 16,952 families in 152 of the 159 counties in Georgia, totaling \$20.5M.