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**Interagency Homeless Coordination Council
Annual Progress Report
State Fiscal Year 2009**

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 SFY2009, fairs were held in 5 regions. The Regional Homeless Resource Fairs are designed to facilitate communication between providers and effectively coordinate services offered to homeless families. Several of these fairs used the Project Homeless Connect model endorsed by the United States Interagency Council on 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 **190** 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 **15** locations around the state for **256** participants.
- In order to more fully address the nationwide systemic barriers that exists 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 Human Resources (DHR) 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. Statewide, on average, homeless cases have a 16-20 percent approval rate in an average of 90 days and SOAR assisted cases have a 50-70 percent approval rate in an average of 80 days.
- A monthly SOAR Newsletter connects those who have been trained with advocates and stakeholders to raise questions, share information, and advance learning. 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.

- During SFY2009, DCA received \$2,199,724 in ESG funds from the federal government. Funds received by grantees during this reporting period totaled \$5,390,639 in State and Federal homeless assistance funds. This amount consists of \$5,079,450 for emergency shelter, transitional housing, and related supportive services; \$307,189 for homeless prevention; and \$4,000 to support the technical assistance needs of homeless service agencies. The State also drew \$354,984 in Federal funds for administration through the ESG Program during this fiscal year. The total amount of homeless assistance funds expended during FFY2008 was \$5,745,623. Through the 254 ESG programs funded during the fiscal year, a total of 38,822 persons received housing assistance (32,601 in emergency shelters and 6,221 in transitional housing) and 67,157 persons received supportive services. On average, each day 2,931 individuals were provided shelter, 2,470 individuals were provided transitional housing, and 2,227 persons received supportive services. During the operating year, agencies throughout the state reported providing homeless prevention assistance to 35,282 eligible persons (14,542 individual and family households). Through these programs, 181 individuals &/or persons in families were provided homeless prevention assistance on an average daily (prevention programs operate about 250 days per year); the majority of persons who received this type of assistance were persons in families (85%). (Agencies also leverage other funds and in-kind services to support these programs).
- During SFY2009, the Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness program (PATH) was administered through the Department of Human Resources and funded Homeless Outreach Teams located in Atlanta, Columbus, Augusta, and Savannah. PATH services are for people with serious mental illness, including those with co-occurring substance use disorders, who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless. 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 FY2009, PATH Service Providers conducted outreach with 2,650 homeless individuals in Atlanta, Columbus, Augusta, and Savannah. They were able to enroll 1,089 homeless individuals with mental illness into ongoing PATH funded Case Management Services. Of the clients discharged from PATH services, 46% were linked to mental health services and 26% were linked to BOTH housing and mental health services.

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 SFY2009, the web site had more than 116,000 units listed and averaged 8,000 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 (\$750,000) that could be accessed by developers that provided for at least 25% of the units occupied by homeless individuals with disabilities.
- 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. Persons served by this program primarily have disabilities associated with serious mental illness, chronic problems with alcohol and/or drugs, and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) or related diseases. Since FFY1995, DCA has received \$37.9 million dollars in S+C commitments to assist 47 sponsors. Grants awarded to DCA for sponsor-based rental assistance have been: FFY1999 for \$3.7 million, FFY2000 for \$3.3 million, FFY2001 for \$1.3 million, FFY2002 for \$2.5 million, FFY2003 for \$2.8 million, FFY2004 for \$5.8 million, FFY2005 for \$4.1 million, FFY2006 for \$4.9 million, FFY2007 for \$5.9 million and the most recent awards for six new projects in FFY2008 for \$3.7 million. In total, 73 S+C projects have been awarded. In all, over 1,313 homeless and individuals with disabilities are targeted to receive shelter and supportive services utilizing 1,313 housing units over five or ten year periods. An additional 648 family members will also benefit, raising the total estimated benefit to 1,961 persons per year.
- A close partnership continues to exist between DHR 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 head of household or family members that must be either homeless or threatened with becoming homeless and an individual with 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 SFY2009, DCA awarded \$13,450,000 in HOME funds and \$450,000 in State Housing Trust Funds to four recipients that will produce 119 special needs units. Since its inception, the total number of units completed and under construction is 456 with 70 units under review. The total amount of funds committed to the program exceeds \$55,000,000.

Project Name	Location	Population Served	Status
Millennium Center	Cuthbert	Families with substance abuse	Completed
Hearthstone Landing	Canton	Families experiencing domestic abuse	Completed
Grove Park	Macon	Individuals with mental/developmental disabilities or substance abuse disorders	Completed
Pines Family Campus	Valdosta	Families with substance abuse	Completed
Maxwell House	Augusta	Individuals with mental/developmental disabilities or substance abuse disorders	Completed
Highlands West	Augusta	Individuals with mental/developmental 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 disabilities or substance abuse disorders	Completed
Dutchtown Campus	Savannah	Individuals with mental/developmental 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 disabilities or substance abuse disorders	Completed
Willow Glen	Columbus	Individuals with mental/developmental disabilities or substance abuse disorders	Completed
The Safety Net	Atlanta	Youth aging out of state foster care or homeless with mental/developmental disabilities and substance abuse disorders	Under Construction
Gateway at Town Center	Brunswick	Individuals with mental/developmental disabilities or substance abuse disorders	Under Construction

Projects currently under review with preliminary commitments are:

Project Name	Location	Population Served	Developer
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 1,750 new supported housing beds and, as of June 2009, 1,800 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 1,490 housing units — 600 of those are permanent supportive housing units that have been completed — and leveraging almost \$95 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 2009, 300 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. As of June 30, 2009, 749 parolees have been placed in selected organizations, i.e. faith-based community-based nonprofits, community-based nonprofits, for-profit organizations, and individuals. As the program continues to expand, cost savings can be sustained by effective parole supervision and intervention. If these offenders had not been released, the State would have incurred an additional \$31,418,574 million dollars in costs to incarcerate these eligible parolee until they discharged from prison. Even with the cost of parole supervision of \$4.08 a day, the net savings to the State is over \$17 million dollars.
- Near the end of SFY2009, the DHR's SOAR Project began working with the Fulton County Public Defenders Office to identify inmates with a mental illness who would be eligible for release from Fulton County Jail but for their lack of income, health insurance and housing. The team will process pre-release applications for SSI/SSDI using SOAR techniques. The outcome data will be used by Fulton County Jail to leverage funds for a full-time benefits specialist at the jail.
- In SFY2009, 440 law enforcement officers participated in one of the 22 National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) –Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) trainings conducted within all 5 MHDDAD Regions. Funded by DHR. Over 2,000 law enforcement officers have been trained since the start of the program in 2006.
- 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.

- In SFY09, DHR transitioned back to the community 215 individuals with behavioral health issues, and hospital lengths of stay greater than 60 days.
- DHR MHDDAD 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 by 22 in SFY2009.
 - 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.
 - Increasing the number of counties with Adult Mental Health (and co-occurring) Mobile Crisis Service coverage by two, bringing the total number of counties covered to 46.
 - Launching a new web site to provide resource and current research information to consumers, families, professionals, and the general public.
- 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 and DHR. At the end of September 30, 2009, 165 MFP participants had transitioned from institutions into 49 of Georgia's 159 counties. Of these participants, 64 were either older adults or had a physical disability and the other 101 had developmental disabilities.

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

- DCA conducted the second statewide Unsheltered Homeless Count in January of 2009. The objective of the Unsheltered Homeless Count was to determine the number of homeless families and individuals in Georgia. The data was collected and particularly focused on people's housing status on the night of January 25, 2009. The count is part of DCA's responsibilities for the federal Balance of State Continuum of Care plan, as well as its efforts to create county level homeless information statewide. This count also was designed to assist the State of Georgia to improve planning for homelessness and housing. The count revealed that an estimated 21,000 Georgians are homeless at a single point-in-time and that over 90,000 will experience homelessness at some time during the year. The 2009 count report, *Georgia's 21,000*, can be found at:

http://www.dca.ga.gov/housing/specialneeds/programs/documents/HomelessCountReport09web_000.pdf

- The Georgia Department of Labor (DOL) is engaging in on-going partnerships with Samaritan House and Gateway Center, both 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.
- The Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) is supporting DCH in its efforts to re-define and re-write plans and procedures regarding the registration, evacuation and sheltering of those citizens identified as having medical special needs. These new plans will be exercised in GEMA's 2010 Statewide Hurricane Exercise.
- GEMA has completed its Evacuee Support Plan for Catastrophic Incidents and has presented the plan to other states that may be identified as "hosts" in a catastrophic incident to be used as a template.
- The Atlanta Regional Commission closed out its strategic evacuation planning project for the Atlanta area. The Fulton County Emergency Management Agency is now taking further steps to develop tactical plans and conduct exercises related to evacuation of Metro Atlanta, contingent on future DHS/UASI funding.
- DCA has continued its funding and support of the Pathways Connections Homeless Information Management System (HMIS) statewide implementation program including local community user committees. This past year, the focus has been on increasing utilization of the system by the 235+ 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 the statewide Pathways Community Network's HMIS. The Georgia statewide HMIS was used to track services provided to 151,740 homeless or at-risk Georgians in the twelve months ending June 30, 2009. Of this total number, 48,512 were children and 4,215 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. Each of Georgia's seven Continuums of Care has a substantial number of homeless service providers using the HMIS system. There is representation from many sectors of the homeless service/shelter system – information and referral, emergency shelters, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, HOPWA providers, domestic violence shelters, and service-only agencies. DCA sponsors the Continuum of Care HMIS Steering Committee that explores and promotes collaboration between the state and local Continuum of Care Plans.

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 existing Department of Human Resources, in part to bring a greater to focus the 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.
- 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 the SFY2009 Action Plan. Three of the four sub-committees met on a regular basis (Access to Mainstream Resources, Permanent Supportive Housing, and Discharge Subcommittees).

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 FFY2008 Continuum of Care funding competition, the seven (7) Georgia Continuums of Care were allocated \$27.5 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. Two of the ARRA programs that most directly impact individuals and families who are homeless are the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) and the Community Services Block Grant ARRA funding (CSBG). Although these two programs did not start until SFY2010, a great deal of program planning was accomplished by state agencies during the second half of SFY2009.
 - 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. \$14 million of this amount was allocated to 11 local government agencies in Georgia. DCA received slightly over \$19 million dollars to implement the program in the balance of state. More information about HPRP 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 can be 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.
- In order to ensure Georgia was making the best use of ARRA funds, state agencies met several times to coordinate the funding and explore ways to collaborate. These meetings included representation from state agencies such as the DCA, DOL, DHR, Department of Early Care and Learning, and the Georgia Family Connection Partnership.