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Interagency Homeless Coordination Council Progress Report State Fiscal Year 2008

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 US Department of Health and Human Services and the US 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.

**In order to match the annual progress report with the State Fiscal Year, this report covers progress made January 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008. Future reports will be provided based on the State Fiscal Year.*

Progress on 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, Department of Community Affairs is able to fund and support local sponsors of regional homeless resource fairs in all of Georgia's 12 regions. During SFY2008, fairs were held in Athens (Region 5), Augusta (Region 7), Carrollton (Region 4), Columbus (Region 8), Dalton (Region 1), Gainesville (Region 2), Macon (Region 6), Savannah (Region 12), and Valdosta (Region 11). The Regional Homeless Resource Fairs are designed to facilitate communication between providers and effectively coordinate services offered to homeless families. Homeless Services providers and others interested in homeless issues attend these events to exchange ideas, discuss new projects, and propose new ways of serving homeless people. The fairs also feature national and local speakers as well as trainers from the Best Practices Technical Assistance Program. Fair participants have opportunities to attend workshops on a variety of topics such as tips for start-up organizations, policies and procedures for operating homeless facilities, and standards of care.
- The Third Annual Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Users' Conferences was held March 17th, 18th, and 19th, 2008. The 2008 HMIS Users' Conference was held in St. Simons and had approximately 146 people in attendance. The focus of the 2008 conference was "Using HMIS to Impact Awareness, Effectiveness and Resources". The conference received positive evaluations from attendees.
- There were a number of accomplishments regarding access to disability including:
 - Disability Adjudication Services (DAS) within the Georgia Department of Labor developed a Homeless Unit with staff that work specifically with individuals who are homeless.
 - Social Security has developed a system to flag and fast track applications for individuals who are homeless.

- The SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery Project (SOAR) in the Department of Human Resources (DHR), Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases (MHDDAD) trained 421 front line case workers, as of June 30, 2008 on how to streamline and expedite the disability application process.
 - DHR has been able to demonstrate that when an SSI/SSDI application is done efficiently and effectively it can be completed within 90 days.
 - DHR has been able to successfully utilize “presumptive disability” for mental illness for which the Disability Adjudication Service agrees the individual is disabled up front and provide benefits before the application is finalized.
 - J.C. Lewis Center in Savannah successfully co-locates Social Security Claims Representatives, Disability Adjudicators and medical records which has expedited the application process.
 - DHR is tracking data on the SOAR process and its success.
 - Multiple education/informational sessions have been held with advocates and representatives working with homeless applicants to assist in expediting the application process.
 - Multiple reminders have been sent to Social Security field offices re: special handling of cases dealing with homelessness.
 - Disability Adjudication Services continues to team with DHR regarding training to advocates and representatives on SOAR procedures. They also work closely with DHR to track the success of the SOAR project.
 - Department of Labor (DOL) and others worked in Savannah to pilot a process for expediting SS applications and through a process of trial and error have been successful.
 - Projects were also initiated in Athens and Columbus to help expand access to homeless applicants. SOAR continues to be active in these areas.
- MHDADD established Crisis Line (Behavioral Health Link) to enable easier access to services
 - DHR created a resource map/manual for services available for women and children including 38 DHR services and contact information
 - During SFY2008, DCA received \$2,180,286 in ESG funds from the federal government. Funds received by grantees during this reporting period totaled \$4,885,628 in State and Federal homeless assistance funds. This amount consists of \$4,611,439 for emergency

shelter, transitional housing, related supportive services and development and \$16,774 to support the technical assistance needs of homeless service agencies. Lastly, \$257,415 of the total was used to support construction projects to provide transitional housing, emergency shelter, and supportive services for homeless persons. The total amount of homeless assistance funds expended during FFY2007 was \$4,885,628. With the 202 ESG grants funded during the fiscal year, 49,524 persons received housing assistance and 67,472 persons received supportive services. On average, each day 4,183 individuals were provided shelter or transitional housing and 2,462 persons received supportive services. During the operating year, agencies throughout the state reported providing homeless prevention assistance to 22,256 eligible persons (9,614 individual and family households). Through these programs, 153 individuals &/or persons in families were provided homeless prevention assistance on average daily (prevention programs operate about 250 days per year); the majority of persons who received this type of assistance were persons in families (88%).

- Union Mission opened the nation's first multi-disciplinary health care campus targeting the homeless and uninsured. All facets of health care are present in the four building campus: Primary care, respite care, oral health clinic, behavioral health, treatment for addictive diseases, specialty care, a medicine distribution center, substance abuse residential services, art therapy, and a health promotion/disease prevention center. Almost 10,000 patients were treated on the campus in 2007.

Goal Two

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

Accomplishments

- The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) housing search web site, GeorgiaHousingSearch.org continued to grow. By the end of 2007, the web site had more than 77,500 units listed and averaged 6,500 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 developed language for the Qualified Application Plan (QAP) for tax credit housing which would give developers an incentive to develop units targeted toward special needs tenants, including homeless persons. Provisions were included for the 2008 QAP based on public hearings held in 2007.
- The purpose of the Permanent Supportive Housing Program (PSHP) is the production 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 (Section 8) is available from the Department of Community Affairs 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 SFY2008, DCA awarded \$9,486,602 in HOME funds and \$914,000 in State Housing Trust Funds to four recipients that will produce 101 special needs units. One project was completed under this program utilizing \$2,899,556 in HOME funds and \$878,144 in State Housing Trust Funds that will create 28 affordable housing units. Since its inception, the total number of units completed and under construction is 362 with 89 units under review. The total amount of funds committed to the program exceed \$44,500,000.

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 substance abuse disorders	Completed
Pines Family Campus	Valdosta	Families with substance abuse	Completed
Maxwell House	Augusta	Individuals with mental/developmental disabilities substance abuse disorders	Completed
Highlands West	Augusta	Individuals with mental/developmental disabilities substance abuse disorders	Under Construction
Colony West	Macon	Individuals with a disability that also have an Independent Care Waiver	Under Construction
Seven Courts	Atlanta	Individuals with mental/developmental disabilities substance abuse disorders	Under Construction
Dutchtown Campus	Savannah	Individuals with mental/developmental disabilities substance abuse disorders	Under Construction
College Square	Fort Valley	Individuals with a disability that also have an Independent Care Waiver	Under Construction

Projects currently under review with preliminary commitments are:

Project Name	Location	Population Served	Developer
Pine Ridge	Rome	Individuals with mental/developmental disabilities substance abuse disorders	Williams REIT
Columbus Housing Authority	Columbus	Individuals with mental/developmental disabilities substance abuse disorders	Columbus Housing Auth.

- 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 \$34.1 million dollars in S+C commitments to assist 43 sponsors. Beginning in FFY1996, approximately \$5.7 million was

received to assist two sponsors with project-based rental assistance on rehabilitated units for a 10-year period and to assist two sponsors with five-year commitments for project-based rental assistance without rehabilitation. 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, and the most recent awards for eight new projects in FFY2007 for \$5.9 million. In total, 67 S+C projects have been awarded. In all, over 1,214 homeless and individuals with disabilities are targeted to receive shelter and supportive services utilizing 1,214 housing units over five or ten year periods. An additional 608 family members will also benefit, raising the total estimated benefit to 1,822 persons per year.

- There continues to be a close partnership between Georgia Department of Human Resources (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). DCA partnered with 18 community service boards on Shelter plus Care projects.
- The Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR) and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Housing Choice Voucher Program collaboration has demonstrated successful housing outcomes when support services were provided through our MHDDAD contracted service providers. This collaboration has provided an opportunity to acquire community-based, safe, decent and affordable housing for consumers to be integrated into their chosen communities using tenant based housing choice vouchers. This collaborative arrangement has been a key element in our MHDDAD Olmstead Initiatives, as we have been able to move persons from institutional placement to community-based services with permanent supported housing thus enhancing consumer independence and recovery. MHDDAD consumers that are referred to the Housing Choice Voucher Program agree to participate in these support services for a full year as a condition of accepting their housing choice voucher. These support services improve the chances that persons maintain their housing. Originally, DHR was allocated 400 Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers as indicated in the letter of agreement of March 24, 2003. The Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases were allocated 220 of these vouchers and Division of Family and Children's Services was to use the remaining 180 vouchers. Dedicated staff from both collaborating agencies have made tremendous strides in planning, coordinating, training and implementing this program and achieved outstanding results in housing persons with serious mental illness. DHR MHDDAD was allocated the 220 vouchers and has exhausted the allocated supply.
 - On October 12, 2007, DCA issued a moratorium on the vouchers due to the allocation of vouchers being in excess of program funding. There has been some attrition during the time the program has been in place, with the majority of consumers being non-compliant in maintaining their support services and some consumers that have not complied with various policies and procedures of the Housing Choice Voucher Program. These are typically having not paid their portion of the rent, violating program rules on reporting income changes or having an undocumented person residing in the residence. Some consumers have

voluntarily withdrawn from the program as they determined their condition required a more supervised level of care. Subsidized housing expenses are a necessary resource for persons that receive Social Security, SSI or SSDI. In some areas of the state it takes approximately 118% of SSI income to afford a rental unit. This collaboration has demonstrated that this DCA resource enhances a consumer's ability to achieve independent housing and allows for re-integration in the community while receiving the necessary mental health services for maintaining recovery and sustaining their independent housing.

- 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 units and as of June 2008, 1,600 new units 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 — 486 of those are permanent supportive housing units — 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.
- Continuation of 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 2008 there were 156 chronically homeless persons placed in subsidized housing as a part of the AHA Demonstration Project.
- Union Mission opened the Don & Kaye Kole Center, a permanent supportive housing project for women with disabilities.

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 the Department of Community Affairs are implementing the Georgia Re-entry Partnership Housing (RPH) Program. The Reentry Partnership Housing Program has 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 that we could set aside housing providers specifically targeted towards problem residence inmates. Currently, almost 500 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, it is believed that cost savings can be sustained by effective parole supervision and intervention. If these offenders had not been released it would have cost an additional \$5.0 million dollars to incarcerate them until they discharged from prison. Even with the cost of parole supervision of \$4.08 a day, the net savings to the State equals \$16.5 million dollars. As of June 2008:
 - Parolees placed: 495
 - Parolees employed: 300
 - Total Amount Disbursed for RPH placement: \$650,900
- Between May 2006 and May 2008, 1,552 law enforcement officers have participated in one of the 83 National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) –Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) trainings conducted within all 5 MHDDAD Regions.
- DHR MHDDAD created a Continuity of Care/Transition Plan process to be used for individuals receiving mental health and/or addictive disease services from the Division of MHDDAD Hospital System or our contracted providers. The process is intended to ensure continuity of care for individuals who are going through the transition process, and is not limited to just discharge planning. We believe that transition planning is a continuous process that is used anywhere along the service continuum where changes occur. Transition planning follows the individual prior to a change in service delivery, during the change, and after the change. The 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.

- DHR MHDDAD has also increased community resources to help keep people from entering the hospitals, and have 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 31 in FY07.
 - Beginning 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 in our regions 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. We now have expeditors 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).
 - Piloting a project that trained 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) is operational statewide. For the first time, 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.
 - Increasing Crisis stabilization capacity through the expansion of our 23 hour observation units to all 7 of our state hospitals.
 - Sustaining mobile crisis capacity available in 44 counties to respond to individuals with mental illness or DD consumers who are dually diagnosed. In addition, submitting a FY09 budget request in that will expand this service to cover all of Georgia's 159 counties if approved.
 - Redirecting 9 million dollars internally to increase the availability of medication to MH consumers and DD consumers who are dually diagnosed.
 - Submitting request to CMS for revised Medicaid reimbursement rates to better support community services.
 - Launching a new MHDDAD website to provide resource and current research information to consumers, families, professionals, and the general public. This website will also have a link to the GCAL website.

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 Community Affairs (DCA) conducted the first statewide Unsheltered Homeless Count in January of 2008. The objective of the 2008 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 27, 2008. 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 first count revealed that an estimated 20,000 Georgians are homeless at a single point-in-time and that over 75,000 will experience homelessness at some time during the year. The 2008 count report, *Homeless in Georgia 2008*, can be found at <http://www.dca.state.ga.us/housing/specialneeds/programs/documents/homelessReport08web.pdf>
- The Georgia Department of Labor (DOL) is engaged in ongoing partnerships with Samaritan House and Gateway Center, both located in Atlanta. The Department of Labor 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) has developed plans and procedures in conjunction with the Department of Human Resources and non-governmental organizations including the American Red Cross for the evacuation of individuals with special needs to safe and appropriate emergency shelters in the event of emergencies requiring the evacuation of the public from locations under threat. The plan has been exercised in the past year with Camden, Chatham Glynn and Liberty counties. The assessment of the exercise is that local county plans in these jurisdictions are adequate to meet the needs the evacuation needs of the resident special needs population in the event of a hurricane.
- GEMA has been selected as one of four states (GA, TN, FL, OK) in the nation to work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to develop an Evacuee Support Plan in the event that Georgia is asked to serve as a "host" state for evacuees fleeing impacted areas in other Southeastern States.
- GEMA has revised the state coastal evacuation plan in concert with DOT and has contracted with the Atlanta Regional Commission to prepare a metro Atlanta evacuation plan.

- 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 120,606 homeless or at-risk Georgians in the twelve months ending June 30, 2008. Of this total number, 11,650 were children and 3,322 were senior citizens. The training plan has been adjusted to address the individual needs of each agency in the collection of HMIS data. As a byproduct of collecting good homeless data, we are developing a more comprehensive picture of the homeless population's needs and are 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. The Pathways training has been narrowed to assisting agencies with local reporting, program element data collection and teaching the importance of collecting the HUD data standards. In addition to focused classroom training programs, Pathways has begun to provide individualized one-on-one agency "on-site training". This one-on-one "on-site training" has begun to identify specific problems with the HMIS implementation and continually address ways to better utilize the HMIS system. The statewide user survey is being used to provide good accurate data from the HMIS agency executive levels and user levels. The feedback has been used to direct the training efforts statewide and assist with determining system enhancements priorities. Additionally, the user survey provides feedback in the following key areas: HMIS customer service, HMIS ease of use, User training experience, Ability to collect homeless information from clients, ability for agency to produce HUD APR from HMIS. Each of Georgia's continuums 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 Planning HMIS strategy work group that explores and promotes collaboration between the state and local Continuum of Care Plans.
- Fulton County has budgeted for 15 case workers in 2008, including five who will operate out of the Fulton County jail to provide discharge services for the chronically homeless.

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.

Accomplishments

- Following the work of the Governor's Commission for a New Georgia, the Georgia Department of Human Services is working to implement the recommendations of the Task Force on Community Care for Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability.
- 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 Interagency Council also began revisiting the original action plan drafted a revised Action Plan for moving forward in SFY 2009.

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 FFY 2007 Continuum of Care funding competition, the seven (7) Georgia Continua of Care were allocated \$24.3 million in funding for the Supportive Housing and Shelter plus Care programs, exceeding its pro rate share by almost \$7 million dollars. The seven Continua also received an additional \$3.6 million in HUD Emergency Shelter Grant funds. The submission of seven Continuum of Care plans provided for statewide coverage.