

Flint and Genesee Continuum of Care 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness

In the process of developing the plan, the Continuum of Care will use the following goals and objectives as a starting point to articulate community actions that will be taken to ameliorate homelessness within ten years.

To end homelessness the committee has developed the following CoC goals for Flint/Genesee:

- Continue to identify existing barriers, resources, and gaps in the community, including services for seniors, youth, LGBTQ, veterans, and returning citizens.
- Create safe, affordable housing units including permanent supportive housing.
- Address barriers to housing, including criminal backgrounds and evictions.
- Establish respite or short-term interim care facilities for persons being discharged from the hospitals with medical conditions who are not able to function independently and who need additional healing time as recommended by their doctors.
- Ensure the availability of substance abuse treatment programs targeted to homeless population.
- Review and implement best practices for those who receive their Housing Choice Voucher to ensure a better housing rate.
- Include provision of and linking and coordinating of mental health services
- Provide supportive services that assist individuals and families in finding and maintaining housing, managing finances, and providing opportunities for economic self-sufficiency.
- Support the implementation of the Coordinated Entry System to develop a more efficient, more effective human services system for Genesee County.
- Maximize community partnerships and utilization of existing resources, and identify new funding streams.

CHALLENGES:

HOMELESSNESS DEFINITION: The HUD definition of homelessness includes four broad categories. However, under the HEARTH Act, these categories do not include “couch surfing” or stays with family/friends that are meant to be short term. These limitations can impact the availability of service options for individuals who do may not consider themselves in need of emergency shelter services.

DISABILITY: In Flint, MI Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area, among people at least five years old in 2003, 17 percent reported a disability. The likelihood of having a disability varied by age - from 8 percent of people 5 to 20 years old, to 16 percent of people 21 to 64 years old, and to 39 percent of those 65 and older.

SENIORS: By 2030, almost 1 in 5 Americans will be 65 or older, at which time the population of older persons will be passing the population of children for the first time in human history.

LGBTQ+ INDIVIDUALS: It is difficult to gather accurate housing data on the LGBTQ community as data forms regularly exclude demographics that apply to people on the spectrum. Additionally, HUD did not begin conducting fair housing testing until after 2010 and data collection and regular testing is still not a standard practice in communities. A significant number of youth experiencing homelessness are LGBTQ identified and have often been displaced due to lack of acceptance, stigma, and violence by their families. It has been estimated to be as high as 40% of youth experiencing homelessness are LGBTQ identified.

FLINT WATER CRISIS: In 2014, officials made the decision to switch from treated drinking water purchased from Detroit to treating water from the Flint River at a city-owned treatment facility. Due to the lack of proper treatment, the corrosiveness of the water caused the erosion of service lines, exposing residents to lead. The needs of Flint children exposed to lead are ongoing and long-term. The ramifications of the Flint Water Crisis on health, employment, education, and family stability is expected to be significant for generations.

COMMUNICATION: Flint/Genesee County presently lacks a community resource tool that provides a central registry of resources. This resource should also be available on multiple platforms to reach underserved populations.

POVERTY AND PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS: In 2016, 41.9 percent of city residents were in poverty compared to 20.9 percent of County residents. In 2016, 31.4 percent of related children under 18 were below the poverty level vs. 60.7% in the City of Flint. 7.7% of County residents ages 65+ were below the poverty threshold vs. 12.6% of those 65+ living in the City of Flint. Eleven percent of all families and 36 percent of families with a female householder and no husband present had incomes below the poverty level.

FLINT HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS: In 2016, Flint, MI had a total of 53,554 housing units, 25.2 percent of which were vacant. Of the occupied housing units, 55.8 were owner occupied and 44.2 were renter occupied. 19% of households had no access to a vehicle.

GENESEE COUNTY HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS: In 2016, Genesee County had 191,033 housing units – 166,244 (87 percent) were occupied. Of those occupied, 69.3% were owner occupied and 30.7% were renter occupied. 9.1% percent of the households did not have access to a car, truck, or van for private use.

In addition the things listed above, the challenges faced by individuals/families experiencing homelessness are:

- Lack of coordination of discharge policies (including shelter, medical, and criminal justice) between the State and County
- Lack of affordable housing in City of Flint, where more than 30% of the housing stock is in dilapidated condition
- Insufficient resources for mainstream programs
- Cuts in funding for assistance by Federal and State government
- Decline in private resources
- Prolonged length of time to qualify for public benefits (for example, SSI has an 18-month determination period, in some cases longer)
- Limited resources for essential services such as health care, and transportation
- Lack of job readiness and employment opportunities at livable wages
- Lack of public awareness

Data used from the U.S. Census, Quickfacts, July 2016/FactFinder

The Planning Process and Working Structure

In 2004, key community members came together with the intention to create an action oriented blueprint to end homelessness that identified the problem, articulated a value-driven vision and mission, and defined the strategic community response. The planning process started in 2004 with a partnership between Continuum of Care, Committee Concerned with Housing, and United Way of Genesee County – Systems of Care. The process focused on identifying the systems in place, the gaps of services, and needs as articulated by the consumers at the annual luncheons hosted by the group at various places in the community.

In 2018, a committee of the Flint/Genesee County Continuum of Care was established for the purpose of reviewing and revising the existing planning document. In its initial meetings, the committee determined the overall format of the existing plan was sound, but updates were required to address gaps in services, underserved populations, established programs, and current trends. The committee developed a community survey which engaged over twenty agencies in providing feedback, which affirmed the five goal areas outlined within the following pages.

The problem of poverty and homelessness cannot be solved by any single organization. Ending homelessness, however, is an achievable goal through a well-planned, sustained long-term effort with all partners working together toward this common goal.

This plan is intended to be a living document. It is fundamental to the success of the plan to include ongoing evaluation of established goals and objectives.

To that end, the Continuum of Care will establish a Ten Year Plan Implementation Committee. The Implementation Committee may, as needed, recommend the creation of work groups to focus on specific goals and objectives. Additionally, the Continuum of Care will rely on existing committees, including the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), to provide current and historical data as well as evaluation.

The proposed structure of the initial Implementation Committee is as follows:

- 3 members from the Ten Year Plan subcommittee (responsible for drafting the plan)
- 3 members from the CoC body
- 3 members from the to-be-formed CoC Board (as determined by the governance charter)

Work groups would be determined from the larger community as needed for their areas of expertise.

In addition to reporting by committees and work groups, a comprehensive update presentation will be scheduled for the Continuum of Care and community partners annually.

The Flint/Genesee County CoC subscribes to a planning model that places importance on articulating and connecting values, guiding principles, vision, and mission. Values drive guiding principles which act as guide posts for vision and mission.

Mission/Vision

The Flint/Genesee County CoC will continue to develop and revise as necessary comprehensive strategies for addressing the issues of homelessness, to move citizens from unsafe, at risk environments and conditions of unaffordable housing or homelessness to barrier free *Clean Affordable Safe Housing (CASH)*. The vision for the CoC is, Residents of Flint/Genesee County will have the knowledge, skills, and resources to access and maintain permanent housing.

Values:

- a) Prevention from a wide perspective
- b) CASH – clean, affordable, accessible, safe, housing
- c) Empowering people to maintain permanent housing
- d) Systematically and quickly re-housing those in need
- e) Increasing the collective at-large voice in all aspects of program development, service delivery, and assessment
- f) Homelessness exists and is unacceptable

Our Guiding Principles: Derived from our values

- a) Integrate a holistic depiction of well-being for families and individuals into this planning process:
- b) Understand & outline families and individuals journeys into and out of homelessness (the socioeconomic, health, and effective journeys from homelessness to permanent housing)
- c) We are people-centered and develop consumer driven processes
- d) Work collaboratively to utilize resources effectively
- e) Strategies include collaboration, continuous updating, openness to innovation
- f) Continuous analysis and metric driven evaluation
- g) Work together to drive communal and political advocacy

1. **Our Desired Impact at the Community Level** – Our approach is to change the community's consciousness and perception of homelessness, and to realign resources so that our vision may be realized and attained throughout our community. The cycle of homelessness needs to be and will be broken.
2. **Our Desired Impact at the Client/Consumer Level** – Without any form of discrimination, all persons in Genesee County, will be able to meet their basic needs and obtain safe, secure, accessible and affordable housing. All homeless persons will have dignity and feel respected, as well as the tools to achieve well-being.
3. **Our Desired Impact at the System Level** – Public and private service providers will organize into a comprehensive and interconnected network of advocacy, with a coordinated approach and wrap around services aimed at eliminating the cycle of homelessness. This network incorporates and values the contributions of both the homeless individuals and the community in the effort to break the cycle of homelessness.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Utilize quality data and enhance cooperation between agencies/programs to influence local planning, in alignment with state and federal initiatives for ending homelessness

Objective 1: Define, identify, and map the current programs, housing stock, and service delivery systems

Objective 2: Enhance quality and availability of data for planning and response to needs of homeless individuals, families, children, and youth

- a) Utilize program map (Objective 1) to identify gaps as well as duplication of services
- b) Conduct Point-In-Time street count(s) of unsheltered homeless
- c) Utilize reporting capacity of HMIS
- d) Identify and implement practices that research has shown to be particularly effective and promising
- e) Identify barriers that hinder/prevent access to services

Objective 3: Foster collaboration/cooperation/coordination between service providers by implementing the Coordinated Entry System as mandated by HUD

Objective 4: Identify marketing gaps that prohibit clients from learning about resources

- a) Utilize program map (Objective 1)
- b) Maintain a guide of community resources (digital/web-based)

Objective 5: Implement intervention practices that research has shown to be particularly effective and promising

- a) Foster an environment that encourages use of new practices with the goal of ending homelessness
- b) Utilize community forums (CoC, current/former clients, funders, etc.) to explore new ideas

Objective 6: Develop a method to measure the effectiveness of services/agencies

- a) Measure the cost of service per client
- b) Utilize reporting capacity of HMIS

Objective 7: Develop methodologies for ongoing evaluation of the Ten-Year Plan implementation and modify as necessary

- a) Establish workgroup(s) that meet regularly to review the goals and objectives and guide ongoing implementation
- b) Establish clear measures of success at both the client and system levels

Goal 2: Expand supply of and ensure access to affordable and safe housing for homeless and/or at risk individuals, families, children and youth

Objective 1: Increase quality, affordable housing stock for extremely low-income households, particularly those who are homeless and/or at risk of homelessness

- a) Increase permanent supportive housing with services and supports for priority target populations as determined by the CoC based on Point in Time and HMIS data that identifies need and quantity needed
- b) Engage developers to increase amount of multifamily and single family dwellings available to meet the demand for affordable housing
- c) Encourage creative housing models that meet the needs of special populations
- d) Establish a housing work group of the CoC to address ongoing needs and concerns regarding housing

Objective 2: Improve housing quality and accessibility for extremely low-income households, particularly those who are homeless and/or at risk of homelessness

- a) Ensure that new housing is built with accessibility considerations and older housing stock is being retrofitted for accessibility where possible and needed
- b) Expand affordable homeownership opportunities, programs and access to low income and at-risk persons
- c) Create partnerships with property owners, landlords and local government to improve property standards and code compliance for extremely low-income households
- d) Create partnerships with property owners, landlords and landlord associations to encourage relaxed requirements for tenancy

Objective 3: Implement the Housing First model in development projects and voucher programs where the model will match service availability with client needs

- a) Ensure compliance by all agencies receiving HUD and/or MSHDA funding where Housing First is required
- b) Encourage the implementation of the Housing First model by other members of the CoC where use of the model is in the best interest of clients and the agency

Objective 4: Create a clear of plan of action for consumers to move from temporary to permanent housing solutions

- a) Utilize the program map (see Goal 1, Objective 1) to share knowledge about available resources
- b) Develop common strategies for CoC members to guide consumers in this process

Goal 3: Strengthen and expand effort to prevent homelessness among individuals, families, children and youth, seniors, mental and physical disabilities, LGBTQ, returning citizens

Objective 1: Improve job/career opportunities by developing new partnerships and strengthening existing partnerships with employment agencies, schools, job corps, Flint/Genesee Chamber of Commerce, as well as the top ten major employers in Genesee County

- a) Educate/communicate the needs of this demographic to potential employers via community forums, workshops, meetings, and /or work groups – expand leaders' thinking
- b) Introduce innovative partnership strategies between agencies and employers to match jobs needed in Genesee County, utilizing approaches such as Bridges out of Poverty (a community wide approach to building resources, i.e., financial, emotional, cognitive, spiritual, physical, relationships, support systems, et.)
- c) Provide access to knowledge skills based training with the goal of expanded job opportunities of employment which would enable housing and living expenses (sustained self-efficacy)

Objective 2: Expand transportation options to reduce reliability/ attendance barriers

- a) Re-engage an improved MDDHS Car Voucher Program or a similar program
 - i. Improve dealerships participation (quantity and quality) by providing the voucher at the time of sale, or with-in days of sale (not weeks or months)
- b) Leverage entities like Forged Flint (affordable car repair) which would decrease job absenteeism and free up resources for basic living. How it works:
 - i. no charge for labor, only responsible for car parts (AutoZone, etc.)
 - ii. mechanics training which provides another pathway to gainful employment
- c) Collaborate with car donations companies, churches or faith based organizations to use vans/busses, and companies providing busing to bring employees to work
- d) Cultivate and create different approaches to leverage MTA busses passes, Your Ride services
- e) Explore supplying gas cards and/or cash advance agencies

Objective 3: Implement a job readiness training curriculum based on a range of skill levels and career personality tests outcomes (reduce biases toward this demographic only qualifying for lower paying jobs).

- a) Develop an avenue to match personality traits to employment searches
- b) Engagement in process should be introduced early and pace frequently
 - i. Pre-K thru 12 continue through job/career/college placement with age appropriate content/training/skill assessment.
- c) Broader awareness of jobs and other options never considered before could ignite confidence in employment
- d) Collaborate with Leadership Academies to invest time and other resources to those located in lower income community
- e) Pursue relevant technical job training specifically linked to the current job availability (higher pay)
- f) Create a platform for ongoing support, e.g., life coaching, mental toughness, and emotional IQ

Objective 4: Preparation for successful entry into the workforce, skill trade or higher education

- a) Develop a professional development strategy designed for this demographic
 - i. Introduce and/or enhance Interviewing process awareness– before, during, and after
 - ii. Emphasize the importance of appearance – Dress for success – partner with agencies such as Catholic Charities and other boutiques for no cost or very low-cost business/work attire
 - iii. Partner with organizations/consultants that educate on self-esteem, reaching for excellence, and paradigm shift
 - iv. Goal setting training

Objective 5: Leverage no cost or low-cost legal services to assist in eliminating barriers, such as:

- a) seek potential expungement of criminal record
- b) potential representation for social security denials or VA benefits
- c) obtain acutance with issues involving harassment or discrimination in housing or employment
- d) Obtain reasonable accommodation of modification for housing related services
- e) Get assistance with eviction or LLIT related court matters

Objective 6: Inclusive feedback loop for this demographic

- a) What's on their minds— how to improve prevention strategies
- b) Invite to be involved in the 10-year planning subcommittee and member of the CoC

Objective 7: Additional areas that need urgent attention to strengthen homeless prevention include:

- a) Teen pregnancy prevention through innovative education
- b) Housing specific for young new mothers
 - i. parental training
- c) Trauma education, partner with companies such as Easter seals and Ele's Place

Objective 8: Implement unprecedeted Homelessness Prevention awareness strategy

- a) leverage current Websites, such as 211, DHHS, City of Flint, County, CoC, GCCC, Commonwealth and pursue new posting announcements in faith based organizations, hospitals, jails, local gas stations, neighborhood hot spots, barber shops, beauty shops, liquor stores, etc.

Goal 4: Increase awareness and utilization of “mainstream” services and community resources for those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless

Objective 1: Strengthen our comprehensive and interconnected homelessness community system of care which includes

- a) strategies for prevention
- b) a common vision of the desired impact for homeless populations
- c) agreed upon anticipated client outcomes
- d) a common vision of the desired impact of the system of care
- e) a common understanding of the client flow from homelessness to permanent housing
- f) flexible strategies that address both the housing needs and treatment needs of the episodically homeless
 - i. Create common protocols for response to “at-risk” populations across systems.
 - ii. Develop and implement systems-wide risk-need screening protocols
 - iii. Assure follow-up supports for relocated families as appropriate to sustain housing stability
 - iv. Develop early intervention strategies with landlords and tenants to minimize evictions
 - v. Ensure development and implementation of protocols preventing discharge into homelessness from key local institutions.

Objective 2: Increase mainstream usage and community resources

- a) Comprehensive & Wraparound Services (look at consolidating under discharge planning):
 - i. Assure active outreach and engagement services for hard-to-serve populations
 - ii. Assure that appropriate services are linked to homeless families at the time they enter into the system
 - iii. Develop and support implementation of common standards for case management in homeless response
 - iv. Create protocol and system resource training for intake and case workers
 - v. Strengthen partnerships and linkages with community and faith-based services
 - vi. Increase access to substance abuse treatment for homeless families with children
 - vii. Expand availability of mental health services for parents and children with mild and moderate mental health conditions
 - viii. Develop and expand services available for pregnant and parenting youth ages 16-24
 - ix. Increase and utilize communication resources to inform the homeless of services available
 - x. Increase accessibility to mainstream resources through local transportation and agency services
 - xi. Maintain current temporary shelter availability and explore opportunities for expansion
 - xii. Increased education to the community regarding the homeless epidemic in Genesee County
 - xiii. Ensure that residents have ongoing and long-term access to care and supportive services related to the Flint Water Crisis recovery process and lead abatement
- b) Consumer Income:
 - i. Expand employment initiatives through partnerships targeted to homeless and at-risk households
 - ii. Increase ease of access to workforce development services for homeless families
 - iii. Promote self-sufficiency in all case management and wraparound services models

Goal 5: Build a political agenda, public will, and funding opportunities to end homelessness for individuals, families, children and youth

Objective 1: Obtain mutual agreement and support among key stakeholders (public officials, funders, relevant public/private institutions, community/neighborhood leaders, spiritual leaders, etc.) for:

- a) the value and scope of the Ten Year Plan
- b) their engagement and ongoing support and participation in the Ten Year plan
- c) Adoption of a “housing strategy” to address the needs of homeless families, children, and youth

Objective 2: Obtain mutual agreement and support among service delivery system players (agencies & organizations) of:

- a) the value and scope of the Ten Year Plan
- b) their engagement and ongoing support and participation in the Ten Year Plan
- c) adoption of a “housing strategy” to address the needs of homeless families, children, and youth
- d) the need to develop a comprehensive & coordinated entry system

Objective 3: Increase effectiveness of local planning and build public and political support for ending homelessness

- a) Identify and address public policies that create unintended consequences exacerbating homelessness among families, adults, children, and youth
- b) Identify and eliminate barriers to service and permanent housing attainment, including planning/zoning issues related to the City Master Plan

Objective 4: Create ongoing structure to advocate for and disseminate information on needs of homeless individuals, families, children, and youth

- a) Fully promote Homeless Awareness Week
- b) Engage media (print, radio, television, and electronic) in broadening dissemination of stories on homelessness

Objective 5: Ensure appropriate funding is available to accomplish the goals of this plan

- a) Explore options for funding and implementation of supportive services for those that are homeless and/or at risk of homelessness
- b) Share funding opportunities with CoC members to increase knowledge and awareness
- c) Encourage collaboration on funding applications where it makes sense