

Section III. Homeless Needs

A. Homeless Needs

1. Actions Taken to Address the Needs of Homeless Persons

One of the efforts to address the needs of the homeless undertaken in 2007 was to continue to develop a “Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness.” The final plan was delayed in 2007 but is expected to be completed and approved in early 2008. The Advisory Board for the Ten-Year Plan includes representatives from:

- Redevelopment Authority of Lancaster County,
- the private sector,
- the United Way of Lancaster County,
- a local nonprofit housing developer,
- a financial institution,
- the local Council of Churches,
- a local hospital,
- the City of Lancaster government,
- a homeless provider,
- the faith-based community, and
- Lancaster County government.

A staff member from the United Way provided administrative support for the Advisory Board.

This Advisory Board developed several objectives including but not limited to:

- Homeless Employment Strategy,
- Affordable Housing,
- Prevention,
- Transitional Housing, and
- Housing First.

Another major effort to address the needs of the homeless was the County of Lancaster’s involvement in updating the Continuum of Care Plan for the Homeless. This plan, created by the Lancaster Interagency Council for the Homeless, describes the goals and objectives for the use of funds for the homeless. Lancaster County adopted the updated Continuum of Care Plan as a part of the Consolidated Plan.

In addition, the Redevelopment Authority, on behalf of the County addressed the needs of the homeless by continuing to administer the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) called ServicePoint. The system was instituted in July 2002 and has continued to improve the accuracy of data entry and participation in the system. The County was awarded a grant from the

Supportive Housing Program (SHP) to renew the funding for the HMIS in 2005. An application for program expansion was submitted in 2006 and the project resulted in the issuance of a Request for Proposals for a part-time computer consultant. The winning proposal went to contract in October and began work in November. The addition staffing immediately began to have a positive impact of the effective implementation of the HMIS.

Another very exciting development in 2007 was the opening of the Community Homeless Outreach Center of Lancaster County which is a daytime drop-in center that offers a safe haven for the chronically homeless. It offers a place to rest, shower, launder clothing and receive information on accessing social services. The program is located at the Water Street Rescue Mission but is administered by Tabor Community Services. In the first 45 days of operation to CHOC exceeded all expectations and demonstrated beyond any doubt its effectiveness in helping homeless individuals find housing and obtain services. The Center served 240 people in its first month and a half of service – averaging about 60 people per day by the end of the period. Nearly 300 referrals for services and programs were made for housing placement assistance, employment, medical assistance, and much more.

During the winter months, emergency shelters (Domestic Violence Services, Crispus Attucks and Water Street Rescue Mission) are at or near capacity. In 2005 the Interagency Council for the Homeless, a number of downtown Houses of Worship and the Council of Churches first established a network of facilities that could be used for overnight shelter. This program is running for a third year in winter 2007–2008. This program is primary for homeless men, although limited shelter is available for women as well as men, if the hosting house of worship has sufficient space.

The County of Lancaster allocated both ESG funds, as well as CDBG public service dollars, toward the needs of the homeless.

2. Homeless Persons Making the Transition to Permanent Housing and Independent Living

The Redevelopment Authority continued to administer the HOME Rental Assistance Program in partnership with the United Way's Homeless Assistance Employment Program in 2007 as a pilot program. During 2007, three (3) households participated in the program. The pilot program closed but the three participating households will continue to receive rental assistance until the end of their two year commitment.

The Redevelopment Authority, on behalf of the County of Lancaster provided both ESG and CDBG funds to help homeless persons transition to permanent housing. All of the emergency shelters and transitional housing facilities funded

by the County provide residents with case management services to assist them in their transition to permanent housing. The County also funds two (2) housing and budget counseling programs (also called "Housing First" programs) that help the families and individuals that are homeless to move into permanent housing with any needed supportive services.

The Lancaster County Housing Authority and the Lancaster City Housing Authority continue to give a preference for Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers to persons living in shelters and transitional housing facilities that are working with an organization that will provide at least one year of case management or other supportive services to the client. Lancaster County Housing Authority gave 21 vouchers in the homeless preference effort. Lancaster City gave 17 vouchers in the homeless preference effort.

3. New Federal Resources Obtained from Homeless SuperNOFA

In 2007, nine programs applied for and received federal grant funds through the SuperNOFA process:

- The Lancaster County Office of Mental Health/Mental Retardation applied for funding for Project North Star, to provide permanent supportive housing to severely mentally ill persons. - \$307,684 for three years.
- The Lodge, Inc. of PA applied for funding renewal for its Supportive Housing and Outreach Program (SHOP) which provides intensive case management, housing procurement services and advocacy to seriously mentally ill homeless individuals and their families - \$161,860 for one year.
- Tabor Community Services – Shelter to Independent Living - \$206,932 for one year.
- Tabor Community Services – Jubilee House at King - \$255,348 for three years.
- Lancaster County Housing Authority - Shelter Plus Care - \$314,520 for five years.
- Community Action Program- Bridge Housing for Victims of Domestic Violence - \$242,717 for three years.
- MidPenn Legal Services – Homeless Advocacy - \$39,999 for one year.
- The Redevelopment Authority of Lancaster County also applied for funds for the Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) - - \$206,932 for three years.
- Lancaster City Housing Authority – Shelter Plus Care \$122,592 for one year

B. Specific Homeless Prevention Elements

Lancaster County provides several services and resources to help prevent homelessness. The organizations providing prevention services comprise Lancaster's effort to "close the front door" to homelessness. These organizations work closely together to ensure coordination of services. These services range from those meeting emergency needs (food, rental assistance, etc.) to specific programs that advocate for families facing homelessness by preventing evictions. Preventing evictions is accomplished through budget counseling, landlord advocacy and forbearance agreements, mediation, and intervention. The primary efforts include:

- Rent and utility assistance programs - The Community Action Program (CAP) Outreach and Case Management Program provides emergency material assistance and crisis intervention, service planning, and case management to economically disadvantaged families. Crises dealt with generally include homelessness, imminent eviction, overcrowded or unsafe living conditions, lack of food, lack of fuel, or imminent termination of utility service. The program offers utility assistance, security deposits, first month's rent and rental arrearage payments. This program is the sole source for the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) and Department of Public Welfare (DPW) rental assistance. Furthermore, all DPW crisis funds, local electric and gas suppliers and FEMA utility applications are handled by this program.
- Legal Representation - MidPenn Legal Services (funded with County CDBG funds and Supportive Housing funds) provides legal advice and representation in the areas of landlord/tenant hearings, illegal lock-outs and evictions, negotiations with landlords for "pay and stay" cases, public housing terminations, obtaining or preventing termination of public benefits, bankruptcies, mortgage foreclosures, and securing protection from abuse orders.
- Housing Counseling and Education - Tabor Community Services provides case management, landlord advocacy and intervention, housing location, and budget counseling to prevent homelessness (funded through County CDBG).
- Budget and Life Skills Counseling - Tabor, The Lodge, Inc. of PA, and Neighborhood Services (all funded through County CDBG monies) provide protective/representative payee services which prevent homelessness by ensuring timely rent payments.
- Food, Clothing and Furniture - Local food pantries such as the Council of Churches and other local churches provide material assistance and emergency food and clothing. The "Donation Station" continues to be

operated successfully by United Way LINC. This acts as a clearing house and distribution center for all homeless providers, including prevention providers, for donations of furniture, food and household items.

- Homeowner Programs - Both the City and County of Lancaster operate Owner Occupied Housing Rehabilitation Programs (both funded through CDBG and HOME funds) to preserve affordable housing and prevent homelessness through the provision of critical home repairs for low-income homeowners. CAP operates a Weatherization Program through County CDBG funds to reduce utility costs for low-income homeowners.
- Outreach and advocacy - CAP provides victims of domestic violence with information on Protection from Abuse Orders, which bar the abuser from the home, thereby avoiding the need for the victims to go the Domestic Violence Services shelter (funded with CDBG and ESG funds). MidPenn Legal Services (funded with County CDBG funds) provides legal representation in court for victims of domestic violence, to help them keep their homes and exclude the abuser.

Services Planned To Improve Homeless Prevention:

In order to help people avoid homelessness, planned efforts include:

- Continued work on discharge planning with the local prison and local hospitals to reduce the number of people leaving these facilities and arriving on the doorstep of the emergency shelters.
- Additional and expanded educational efforts are planned to increase the knowledge of tenants' rights and responsibilities to reduce homelessness due to improper evictions.
- The plan developed by the United Way's Community Needs Committee will be used to re-evaluate the gaps in prevention services to provide clear direction for development of programs to address these gaps. Prevention case management was provided to 75 households through Tabor Community Services.

C. Emergency Shelter Grants

Please see Section IX for the ESG Grantee Activity Summary, ESG Grantee Financial Summary, ESG Grantee Statistics, Financial Status Report for S-06-UC-42-0006 (Final), and the Financial Status Report for S-07-UC-42-0006 (Annual). Section IX also includes chart PR0481 which shows on page 4 the matching funds provided by all ESG grantees which totals \$2,506,050. The total number of individuals served under the ESG program in 2007 was 930.

Assessment of Relationship of ESG Funds to Goals and Objectives

The majority of County Emergency Shelter Grant funds are used to continue the operation of local emergency shelters and transitional housing facilities. As permitted by ESG regulations, 30% of ESG funds are used for essential services to help homeless clients move from shelters and transitional facilities into safe, decent, affordable housing.

Homeless Discharge Coordination

The Interagency Council for the Homeless or ICH (of which the Redevelopment Authority is a founding and active member) works closely with publicly-funded agencies to develop discharge plans to prevent discharges which immediately result in the individual becoming homeless. The strategy to implement this planning process includes representatives of those organizations as active members of the ongoing ICH planning meetings. The strategy also includes annual meetings with each individual organization to review strategies for discharge planning.

Many of the folks in shelters and transitional housing are ex-offenders. In order to stem the tide of people being released from the prison directly into the shelters, the ICH is working with the Lancaster County Re-Entry Management Organization. In 2007, the RMO continued to work on the expansion of a pre-employment training program in the construction industry for ex-offenders through a collaboration between the Lancaster County Workforce Investment Board and Lancaster County Adult Probation and Parole System.

Lancaster County Adult Probation and Parole Services, a member of the Reentry Management Organization, has implemented a Pre-Parole Unit that employs a supervisor and four professional staff members who work full-time in the prison. This Unit is responsible for interviewing and assessing inmates and subsequently preparing parole plans that optimize the potential for success when a client is paroled to community supervision. Part of this plan includes selecting appropriate housing for the client

The Lancaster County Court of Common Pleas has instituted a voluntary Adult Drug Court based on proven national research and program models. This provides the participants an opportunity to pursue treatment for their addictions(s), while productively addressing associated legal problems. The Court has recently begun a Job Court, one of the first in the nation, based on the Drug Court model. This court connects people who commit minor crimes with training and jobs to provide greater stability and responsibility that helps them stay employed and avoid committing new crimes.

Lancaster is also in the process of developing the Mental Health Court. A judge has been named to provide oversight. Staff members have convened the first meeting of stakeholders, and have created subcommittees to address the individual goals and needs of the program. The program will be housed under Adult Probation and Parole's Special Offenders Services.

Currently, no ESG homeless prevention funds are being used in the homeless discharge coordination efforts.