

Section III. HOMELESS

A. Homeless Needs

1. *Actions Taken to Address the Needs of Homeless Persons*

One of the efforts to address the needs of the homeless that was undertaken by the United Way (www.uwlanc.org) and its co-partner, the Interagency Council for the Homeless, in 2008 was to develop a Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness. This document was completed and approved by the Interagency Council for the Homeless and was supported by the Lancaster County Commissioners in 2008. The Advisory Board for the Ten Year Plan included representatives from:

- the United Way of Lancaster County,
- Redevelopment Authority of Lancaster County,
- the private sector,
- 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 direction, guidance and administrative support for the Advisory Board.

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

- “Housing First,”
- Permanent Housing,
- Defining the Role of Transitional Housing,
- Homeless Employment Strategy,
- Services to the Chronically Homeless, and
- Prevention.

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 2008 Continuum of Care Plan as a part of the Consolidated Plan. Both plans are available at www.lchra.com.

The Redevelopment Authority, on behalf of Lancaster County, addressed the needs of the homeless by continuing to administer the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) using ServicePoint, which was originally implemented in July 2002. The federal government funds a majority of the program costs through a grant program called the Supportive Housing Program (SHP). During 2008, the consultant that was hired in 2007 to improve data accuracy and increase user friendliness could not continue his service contract. Another consultant was hired and held several training sessions, working one-on-one with several participating agencies to improve the utilization of the system.

Community Homeless Outreach Center (CHOC) had more than 1200 individuals come through its doors since it opened in November 2007. Twenty-five percent (25%) of those clients that have attended CHOC for more than 20 days are considered chronically homeless. CHOC serves refreshments and snacks, allows a client to use the phone, shower, and do laundry. CHOC provides an address to receive mail. Several local service providers go to CHOC including, but not limited to Veterans Affairs, Community Services Group, Lancaster County Drug & Alcohol, CareerLink, the Lodge and Tabor Community Services. SouthEast Lancaster Health Services also assists the homeless at CHOC to obtain medical attention or medication.

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 fourth year in winter 2008–2009. 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, on behalf of the County of Lancaster, provided both ESG and CDBG funds to help homeless persons transition to permanent housing. Most 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. The Lancaster County Housing Authority gave 11 vouchers in the homeless preference effort in 2008.

3. *New Federal Resources Obtained from Homeless Super NOFA (Notice of Funding Availability)*

In 2008, ten (10) programs applied for federal grant funds through the HUD SuperNOFA Continuum of Care (CoC) process:

- The YWCA OF Lancaster applied for funding for a new Single Room Occupancy (SRO) project - \$633,600 for ten 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 (STIL) renewal - \$115,973 for one year.
- Tabor Community Services – East King Street Apartments renewal - \$43,158 for one year.
- Tabor Community Services also applied for a new Lancaster County Rapid Re-Housing project - \$528,341 for three years.
- Lancaster City Housing Authority - Shelter Plus Care renewal - \$122,592 for one year.
- Lancaster County Housing Authority – new Shelter Plus Care project - \$311,040 for five years.
- Community Basics, Inc. - Fordney Road renewal - \$175,879 for one year.
- Community Basics, Inc. - Lincoln House Apartments renewal - \$116,444 for one year.
- MidPenn Legal Services – Homeless Advocacy renewal - \$39,999 for one year.

At the time of the preparation of this report, it was not known which of these programs had been approved for funding by HUD.

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 achieved 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 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 lockouts 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 (PFA) 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 and The Lodge, Inc. of PA, (both funded with County CDBG dollars) provide protective/representative payee services which prevent homelessness by ensuring timely rent payments.
- *Food, Clothing and Furniture* - Local food pantries, such as those at 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 clearinghouse 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 (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 an Energy Conservation Center 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 to the Domestic Violence Services shelter (funded with CDBG). 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:

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 because of improper evictions.
- During 2008, "Heading Home", The Ten Year Action Plan to End Homelessness in Lancaster County was issued. This document is a partnership effort of the City of Lancaster, Lancaster County, United Way of Lancaster County and the Lancaster Interagency Council for the Homeless. This plan discusses, among other issues, clear objectives, outcomes, strategies and benchmarks for prevention. A copy of the plan is available at:
<http://www.uwlanc.org/pdf/HousingHomelessReport%20web.pdf>

C. Emergency Shelter Grants

Please see Section 11 for the ESG Grantee Statistics, ESG Grantee Activity Summary, ESG Performance Measures, the Financial Status Report for S-07-UC-42-0006 (Final), and the Financial Status Report for S-08-UC-42-0006 (Annual). The number of people served under the ESG program in 2008 was 948.

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 person 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 organization to review strategies for discharge planning.

Many of the people in shelters and transitional housing are ex-offenders. 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 (RMO). In 2008, the RMO continued to work on the expansion of a pre-employment training program in the construction industry for ex-offenders, through collaboration between the Lancaster County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) and the 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, as well as 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 created a voluntary Adult Drug Court based on proven national research and program models. This provides the participants an opportunity to pursue treatment for their addiction(s), while productively addressing associated legal problems. The Court has recently created 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 to stay employed and to avoid committing new crimes.

Lancaster is still in the process of developing a Mental Health Court. A judge has been named to provide oversight. Staff members have convened meetings of stakeholders, as well as subcommittee meetings, to address the goals and

needs of the program. The program will be housed under Adult Probation and Parole's Special Offenders Services, and it is scheduled to be created in 2009.

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