

GOGEBIC AND ONTONAGON COUNTIES

10-YEAR PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS

GOGEBIC-ONTONAGON COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

Phone: 906-932-4200 ♦ betlewskij@gocaa.org ♦ Fax: 906-932-0271

VISION STATEMENT

In 2006, we begin the Campaign to End Homelessness in Gogebic and Ontonagon Counties in Michigan.

The elimination of homelessness is an achievable goal; no man, woman or child should be forced to sleep on the streets, in the woods, or on a cot in a shelter, on any night, for any reason, in any town or city in Gogebic or Ontonagon Counties.

The vision will be brought to fulfillment by endorsing the Housing First concept/strategy and the implementation plan to end homelessness in Gogebic and Ontonagon Counties by the end of 2016.

GOALS

1. HIRE A CONSULTANT TO CONDUCT AREA WIDE ASSESSMENT

Select market research services to determine housing needs assessments that will examine our community's overall housing situation ranging from entry-level homes, affordable housing, existing housing options (landlord relations), examine rehabilitation needs, potential demand and housing alternatives. Specific recommendations will provide information that will address housing imbalances for low-income people and potential homeless individuals. Fifty percent of planning grant funds will be allocated. Local matching funds will be solicited if it is required.

- ▶ Market research group selected by December 1, 2006
- ▶ Housing needs assessment-study content approved by March 1, 2007
- ▶ Study complete by August 2007
- ▶ Outline a plan for how to fund supportive services to permanent Supportive Housing developments coming on line by 2007-2008

2. IDENTIFY RESOURCES

Building upon research and work completed by area social service agencies, develop a plan for centralizing the response system for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

- ▶ The work group will create a resource - handbill, pamphlet, one phone number: relationship to 2-1-1, to integrate present system to serve homeless/potential homeless by March 1, 2007
- ▶ Collect information to form document by June 1, 2007
- ▶ Document completed by September 2007
- ▶ Case management coordination/outreach team by January 1, 2008

3. ASSESSMENT

In the context **of the framework who is eligible and how clients receive the services**. Existing outreach eligibility and verification forms will remain. This will avoid duplication and create point-in-time data collection.

- ▶ Implement form standards team and develop common service and administrative standards (verification forms) across providers by April 2007
- ▶ Establish – HMIS system for area-wide data collection by July 2007
- ▶ Develop a plan that outlines and clarifies how clients are served and how funding decisions will be made in a more coordinated and aligned way by February 2007

4. TRANSIENTS

Transient is alike, yet different, from chronic. This group will address those individuals/families that are “passing through” the two county area and need assistance with temporary housing.

- ▶ Action plan and procedure created by June 1, 2007

5. PREVENTION

Combine and incorporate existing prevention programs and dollars into overall plan.

- ▶ Accessing centralized prevention dollars (Who and How?) by July 2007
- ▶ Assessing need for link to follow up services (Who and How?) by October 2007
- ▶ Committee reporting on investments, effectiveness and population distribution (Who accesses funds – for what reasons?) by January 2008
- ▶ Plan will be completed by March 2008

6. CHRONIC

Chronic is alike, yet different, from transient. This group will come up with strategies to prevent evictions and homelessness (rent, mortgage, utility assistance, case management, landlord relations and sub-standard housing). And, thus, change the homeless assistance system within the context of larger efforts to help very poor people and transients.

- ▶ Increase number of housing/shelter units developed and managed by non-profits, and outline a plan for how to build community capacity in non-profit

housing development by January 2008

- ▶ Establish use of housing/shelter units of existing, privately owned housing stock, combined with supported housing services. Secure needed vouchers by January 2008
 - Secure commitments from property management companies
 - Identify number of units to include in pilot
 - Identify and secure subsidies, section 8 vouchers
- ▶ Action plan and procedure created by January 1 2008

OTHER SIGNIFICANT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Short term rental vouchers/subsidies intended to rapidly re-house, stabilize and re-engage homeless people in their communities. Initiate Housing First model.
2. Approach willing landlords who want to be involved in program.
3. Engage overall community in 10 Year Homeless Plan.
4. Obtain endorsements from local and state officials and organizations.

GENERAL

Over the past 10 years, leadership from community based service providers has provided services to the homeless using Emergency Shelter Grant prevention programs focusing on five core areas: utilities; rent/mortgage arrearages; 1st month rent; motel shelter; security deposit.

Approximately 400 persons are served annually in both counties. This includes single individuals, families and children. Our clients include both chronic and transient.

As a leadership and advisory group, which includes such entities as Department of Human Services, Community Mental Health, law enforcement, Domestic Violence Escape, Inc., St. Vincent DePaul Society, Gogebic-Ontonagon Community Action Agency, local school districts and municipalities, we have decided a lack of affordable housing is a contributing factor related to homeless issues in our two county area.

Homelessness will continue until there is an adequate supply of affordable housing. Services must be there for new and existing renters and homeowners to help them maintain safe, stable and affordable housing.

Prevention works. Our current system impacts homelessness for individuals and families everyday. Our service areas include Gogebic and Ontonagon Counties in the Upper Peninsula of

Michigan. Early intervention with homelessness prevention services saves money, families and lives.

Specifically, the GOCAA Continuum of Care is seeking support to design and implement a comprehensive plan that will end homelessness in Gogebic and Ontonagon Counties in ten years. We are beginning a five step plan and goals.

Participation from social service institutions including private housing, rental property owners, employers, educators, law enforcement, planning bodies, elected officials, civic leaders and other decision makers will help us implement our Homelessness Plan.

We were successful in recruiting the right people, in the right place, and at the right time to articulate the issues and put into action a plan to make an impact on homelessness.

SUMMARY

Gogebic-Ontonagon Community Action Agency (GOCAA) has been working in Gogebic and Ontonagon Counties for over 40 years. And, during these years, has been collaborating with local Human Services Agencies.

Since the early 90's, GOCAA has administered Emergency Shelter Grants in conjunction with areas service groups, including our area's Continuum of Care.

We have identified homelessness as a problem both in the short term and in the long term. Toward this end, we have identified a comprehensive study/assessment be conducted to focus and frame our future action plan.

SUPPORT DOCUMENTATION

1. Homeless Prevention Advisory Board Roster
2. Memorandum of Understanding
3. Minutes of Meetings
 - June 19, 2006
 - July 13, 2006
 - July 26, 2006
 - August 23, 2006