

Ending Homelessness in
Baraga, Houghton, and Keweenaw Counties by 2016

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SUMMARY

Homelessness in Baraga, Houghton, and Keweenaw Counties is an issue that we hope to eradicate by 2016. In our communities we do not often see people living on the streets or under bridges, but the problem is real and one that with community will, we can eliminate.

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has a clear definition of homelessness; unfortunately it does not adequately cover our homeless population. Baraga, Houghton, and Keweenaw Counties (BHK) have several unique factors that limit the viability of living on its streets. The two greatest contributing factors are climate and location. Our winters are long, cold, and snowy. People living on our streets have little chance of survival during those long winter months. The other major contributing factor is location. The BHK area is rural with a population of roughly 46,000 and a population density of 18.9/sq mile. The city of Marquette, 100 miles from the city of Houghton, has a population of 20,500 (Marquette County has a population of 65,000) and is the closest population center. The closest city of more than 100,000 is Green Bay, WI, 210 miles to the south.

In BHK our homeless are found living with family and friends, sleeping in cars, and in warmer months, camping. Family history runs deep in BHK and many families and individuals have family and friends that are often willing to accept them into their homes for short or long periods of time. These families and individuals are not living on the streets but they are without a home of their own.

In BHK there is also a large population that is on the verge of becoming homeless. There are many individuals that have low incomes, have difficulty meeting utility bills, are seeking public assistance, and are underemployed, or unemployed.

County	Average Family Income	Students receiving free and reduced lunch	Number of FIP Recipients
Baraga	\$42,500	579 (42.2%)	169
Houghton	\$38,635	2,423 (43.3%)	220
Keweenaw	\$36,758	Included in Houghton data	7

Vision

All individuals and families should have suitable, safe, and affordable housing

Response

- Prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless
- Coordinate existing resources for those at-risk of becoming homeless

- Provide a coordinated response to those that become homeless with the first priority being housing
- Work with domestic violence shelters to ensure they have adequate resources to address their needs
- Work collaboratively to develop new housing resources

GENERAL

Problem

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development defines homelessness as follows:

- An individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence
- An individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is
 - a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill)
 - an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized
 - a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
- Does NOT include those individuals or families that are “couch surfing”

This definition does not adequately capture the population in the BHK area that is homeless. Our local definition for homelessness is:

- Individuals and families who lack of a permanent, affordable, safe and suitable address.

While this definition is broad in its reach, it captures those individuals and families in our area that, although, not living on the street do not have a home to call their own. This definition is not recognized by HUD or MSHDA but by defining homelessness in these terms it forces us to address the real housing problems that our area faces. In this plan, whenever actual numbers of homeless people are referenced, those numbers are based on the HUD definition.

In order to effectively combat those that are considered homeless by either definition the most important first step is to keep people housed. Because of this, prevention of homelessness is the main focus of our efforts. In the BHK area, our actual homeless numbers are relatively low but the number of people that are at-risk of homelessness is high. Actual numbers are difficult to obtain but some general information is provided below:

Homeless Population

- DHS Homeless Statistics
 - Currently 37 individuals classified as homeless
- Point in Time Survey
 - Average of 3 individuals a year
- Domestic Violence Shelters
 - Baraga: Average 250 clients annually
 - Houghton/Keweenaw: Average 250 clients annually
- Supportive Housing for Youth Program

- 43 referrals in 2005
- 30 through 8/15/2006
- Individuals leaving substance abuse treatment facilities
 - ~10 individuals a year have no “home” to return to when their treatment is complete. They are housed by the treatment facility until suitable and sustainable housing is found.
- Individuals leaving Houghton County Jail
 - ~6 individuals a year are released that do not have a “home” to return to.

At-Risk Population

- The BHK Community Action Agency provided energy assistance to ~1000 individuals and families in FY 2006
- The BHK DHS recipients of energy assistance for FY 2005
 - Baraga 1,100
 - Houghton 4,387
 - Keweenaw 313
 - Total 5,800
- The Salvation Army and St. Vincent DePaul
 - Due to recent staffing changes, SA and SVdP were both unable to provide us with accurate statistics. Both have exhausted their annual resources in recent years.

Historic Response

Homeless

There is little infrastructure in BHK to deal with homeless individuals and families.

- Supportive Housing for Youth Program (SHYP): 18-month supportive housing program that serves youth between the ages of 16 and 20. (H)
- Domestic Violence Shelters: Temporary shelter for victims of domestic violence and their children. (BHK)
- DHS/Salvation Army Motel Voucher: Vouchers for stays in local motels. There is a limit on the number of nights. (BHK)
- MSHDA Section 8 Vouchers. (BHK)
- Community housing commissions: Many communities within the BHK area have housing commissions that sponsor subsidized housing, most have waiting lists and are not suitable for rapidly housing individuals or families. (BHK)

Beyond the above listed programs, there is nothing available for people who become homeless in our area. Because of this, some area agencies will sometimes purchase a bus ticket for those individuals so they can return to their county of residence.

At-Risk

Our communities' response to those at-risk of becoming homeless in the past has been fractured and cumbersome. Services are scattered throughout the area and coordination of those resources is often less than ideal. An individual who is seeking assistance with heating their home (common occurrence) is likely to visit several different agencies throughout the area each providing a small amount of assistance depending on the circumstances. Many of those agencies provide little in terms of case management to their clients and relevant information is not often shared between agencies. This had lead, at times, to clients "double dipping".

Defining and identifying our at-risk population is challenging. Many individuals and families may on the surface seem to not be at-risk but are very much living on the edge.

Factors that contribute to that risk are as follows:

- Low income
- Under educated
- Unsafe housing
- Specific Populations
 - Mentally ill
 - Substance abuse
 - Parolees
 - Long-term unemployed (26 week unemployment comp)
 - Those with no support system
 - Those who have exhausted public and private support systems
 - People with physical disabilities
 - Youth
 - Victims of domestic violence and their families

New Vision

At-Risk population

Our vision for BHK is one where all individuals and families have suitable, safe, and affordable housing. This is not an easy task to achieve but is achievable with a coordinated community effort. The first step in this process is to keep individuals and families that are currently in housing, in that housing. In order to achieve this there are several key actions that will assist in this endeavor.

- **Housing Resource Specialist**-A position that is not tied to any one agency
 - Has knowledge of all locally available programs and service, their eligibility, availability, key contact people, and restrictions
 - Continuously updates resource lists to insure information is accurate
- **One Stop Shop**
 - Single "shop" to assist those residents that are seeking assistance with utilities, housing payments, and other services related to homelessness
 - Housing Resource Specialist will be housed here

- **Coordination of resources**
 - Existing resources need to be more effectively coordinated. This includes knowledge of programs and eligibility and current status of funds. Currently this is lacking in our area with many agencies and staff not fully aware of what is available locally.
- **Cross-Systems Training**
 - Develop agency cross-training to effectively inform agencies and their staff about existing programs, resources, and their eligibility requirements.
- **Single Point of Entry**
 - Allow clients to enter the “system” at the first agency they contact
- **Forms available at various locations**
 - A step towards Single Point of Entry, allowing clients to complete in-take forms at various agencies throughout the area
- **Increase agency participation in MI Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)**
 - Allow for better tracking of homeless individuals and the services they access.
- **After hours availability**
 - Currently most services are not available after 5:00 pm. Develop a system that allows clients to access certain services after business hours.
- **Media**
 - Use the media to raise awareness of the issue of homelessness
- **Funds**
 - Coordinate use of existing funds and seek new funds that assist in the implementation of the 10-Year Plan.
- **Life skills training**
 - Increase access to life skills training
 - Require participation in life skills training to be eligible for certain resources.
- **Job skills training**
 - Work with clients to ensure they have adequate skills to gain and retain employment.
- **Reduction of red tape/bureaucracy**
 - Make it easier for clients to receive services
- **Attracting all agencies to the table**
 - All agencies involved in homeless prevention need to be at the table in some capacity. Those that are not need to be convinced of the need.
- **Prisoner support**
 - Support prisoners as they re-enter society
- **Updating of resource guides**
 - Guides need to be complete and updated regularly
- **Discharge Planning**
 - Work with correction facilities, substance abuse treatment centers, hospitals, and other residential facilities to ensure that clients are not released without an appropriate residence.

- **Transportation to services**
 - Increase transportation services within the BHK area

Homeless Population

By implementing the above mentioned steps, we will be able to do a better job of insuring that people who are housed remain housed. There will be individuals and families that for various reasons lose their housing. When this occurs the first step that needs to take place is to get that person into suitable, safe, and affordable housing. The biggest challenge in meeting this goal is the housing itself. Currently in the BHK area there is no temporary housing available for adult males beyond the three day stay at a hotel. That is simply an inadequate amount of time for someone to find housing. In order to overcome this obstacle some steps need to be taken.

- **Address the housing needs of those individuals with mental illness**
- **Develop stock of temporary housing.**
 - Work with local landlords to have a supply of temporary housing available. One main focus of those utilizing this service will be securing permanent housing.
- **Address the housing needs of victims of domestic violence**
- **Develop affordable supportive housing.**
 - Support systems need to be in place for those in temporary housing so they are receiving the assistance needed to hold on to their housing. Those services are wide ranging and include but are not limited to: substance abuse treatment, job training, life skills training, mental health screenings and treatment.
- **Develop home ownership program.**
 - Reduce barriers to home ownership in our area
- **Address the housing needs of those with substance abuse problems**

Strategic Response

Process

Drafting of this plan included participation from numerous community stakeholders focused on ending homelessness in 10 years. A series of meetings took place to identify resources, needs, and explore ideas that will help us achieve this goal. Throughout this process new members were brought into the fold enabling our message to get to a greater audience. Through work on the Plan many “newcomers” to the table became aware of the need for a change in our response to the issue of homelessness. Agencies are more aware of the problems our current local system has.

Our primary focus is in addressing the needs of those at-risk of becoming homeless and creating a stock of available housing for those that become homeless. Getting the general public behind our efforts is an important next step. Through local media we will present our plan to the public. Locally we have a media that is willing to work with us on

informing the public about the issue itself, why it is important to address the issue, and what our response is.

Although our Plan is “finalized”, it is far from complete. The CCHSCB, the Advisory Board for completion of the Plan, has charged the BHK CoC with the responsibility of seeing the Plan through. There is still much work to be completed with the Plan itself. Many community stakeholders still need to be brought more into the fold. Details on some of our goals are not clear and other goals are such a radical change from the norm that dedication over the course of years, not just months, is needed to see them to fruition. The CCHSCB and BHK CoC see this Plan as a living Plan, circumstances and needs change over time. It is our intention to revisit the Plan when needed to see that we are still doing the work to end homelessness in the BHK area by 2016. As changes and successes occur, we need to communicate to our community those changes in order to keep them engaged in the process.

The BHK CoC will use the Plan to guide them in their work in the coming years. When MSHDA and other resources are available, the Plan will be the basis for any application we make. The BHK CoC will continue to provide regular updates to the CCHSCB on the progress made towards our goals. The CCHSCB remains committed to the Plan and believes work on its goals is a primary concern for the CCHSCB itself.

GOALS

Coordination of Prevention Resources

Goal: Better coordinate local prevention resources

Strategies:

1. Move towards a one-stop-shop (OSS) for some prevention programs. Currently many of our prevention resources are scattered across our region. Many agencies are not located within in walking distance of each other and with limited public transportation, traveling between those agencies is difficult. Needs of the client should be primary. Several communities have demonstrated successful programs and we will investigate those further to build on their successes.
2. Ensure there is a clear emergency/after hours contact system for agencies. Currently our system is fragmented and agencies are not sure where to call for assistance. Additionally with shrinking operating budgets, it is often difficult to contact a person directly, and usually impossible after 5:00 pm.
3. Develop flow chart for those seeking assistance. While in the process of developing the OSS, agencies will work together so that when a client is seeking services they will know the exact sequence to best receive those services.
4. In-Take Forms readily available: While working towards the OSS agencies will make their in-take forms available at other agencies thus making it easier for clients to enter the system.
5. Develop regular update system for agencies. Some of our communities do a good job of communicating between agencies so that staff are aware of the status of key programs and funding. A system will be developed to make it easier for all communities and agencies to do this.
6. Housing Resource Specialist (HRS). Person/s who will be the housing specialist for the three county area. They will have knowledge of existing housing resource, programs and services for those at-risk of loosing their housing, and be a resource for those that are seeking permanent housing of their own.

Cost

1. N/A
2. Unknown. Some resources are already available but under utilized (Dial Help, local 24 hour crisis line; 211)
3. Unknown. Staff time to develop flow chart, printing costs
4. Unknown. Staff time to train others on in-take form, printing cost, mailing costs
5. Unknown.
6. Estimate of \$50,000 annually. This includes salary, benefits

Outcomes

1. Clients seeking assistance with utility shut-offs, evictions....will get the assistance they are eligible from one agency. Benefit will be easier access to available

- services, less “double dipping” of services, and greater tracking of where services are used.
2. Agencies will know whom to call first when they have a client who needs assistance and will be able to reach a person 24/7.
 3. Clients will know how best to receive services.
 4. Clients will more easily enter the system.
 5. Agencies will be aware of current status of various programs, services, and funding status.
 6. Clients will have access to all housing resource services under one roof.

Responsibilities:

1. Long-term goal that will take input from all local agencies. CCHSCB and BHK CoC will work together on this strategy.
2. BHK CoC in conjunction with Dial Help, local 24-hour crisis line and after hours call center for UP 211.
3. Prevention Resources Committee of BHK CoC
4. Prevention Resources Committee of BHK CoC
5. Prevention Resources Committee of BHK CoC and Cross-Systems Training Committee of CCHSCB
6. BHK CoC will continue to look at the HRS. Possible use of ESG funds, other MSHDA resources when they become available, and other local agency funds

Key Dates:

1. Late winter/spring of 2007, BHK CoC and CCHSCB will begin to look more closely at this issue
2. Currently working with Dial Help to insure they have necessary information to assist clients that call in emergency and after hours situations
3. BHK CoC will convene the Prevention Resources Committee in fall/winter of 2006/07
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5. BHK CoC will convene the Prevention Resources Committee in fall/winter of 2006/07
6. BHK CoC will review ESG programs in the winter of 2007.

Cross Systems Training

Goal: Develop an annual Cross Systems Training for area agencies.

Strategies: CoC members will work with the Copper Country HSCB to develop the training.

Cost: Unknown at this time. Anticipated costs: Room rental for the event, refreshments, publicity, staff time.

Outcomes:

1. Agency line staff will gain a greater understanding of what programs and services are available in the area. (participant survey)
2. Agency staff will learn eligibility criteria for those programs and services. (participant survey)
3. Agency staff will learn who the key contacts are within each agency for specific programs and services. (participant survey)

Responsibilities: Copper Country HSCB staff will take lead role in developing the training. CCHSCB subcommittee with representation from the BHK CoC will be formed to work out details including timing of event, location, presenters and overall format of the day.

Key Dates: Committee will begin work in the fall of 2006. CCHSCB Members and BHK CoC Members have been asked to serve on the committee. They will determine the best time to implement the training. Because many programs have major or minor changes with the start of a fiscal year, it is anticipated that the training will take place in the mid to late fall of 2007.

Housing

Goal: Increase the amount of and reduce barriers related to affordable, supportive, and temporary housing. Use Housing First approach to achieve this goal.

Strategies:

1. Apply for funds from MSHDA and other appropriate sources to rehabilitate several homes in the BHK area to be used for two types of supportive housing
 - a) Emergency Supportive Housing
 1. Currently there is no emergency housing available in the BHK other than Domestic Violence shelters.
 2. Supports will be in place to rapidly move individuals to more permanent housing.
 - b) Temporary Supportive Housing
 1. Youth and families will be able to stay in housing for up to six months
 2. Support staff will work with clients to ensure that they have access to needed services: job training (MI Works!), life skills (various agencies), social services (various agencies)
 3. Goal is that clients will be in permanent housing, preferably housing they own.
2. Apply for funds from MSHDA and other appropriate sources to increase availability of temporary supportive housing in the BHK area
 - a) Expand the SHYP program so that more youth can be served
 - b) Implement Tenet Based Rental Assistance Program so that we can rapidly re-house homeless individuals and families.
 - c) Work with local landlords to ensure that there are units available for those in need of housing.
 - d) Ensure that once housed, clients receive necessary services to move them into permanent housing, preferably housing they own.
3. Work locally with for and non profit entities to reduce barriers to home ownership.
 - a) Develop program to rehabilitate existing homes in the BHK area
 - b) Work with individuals and lending institutions to address the difficulties in receiving the necessary financing to own their own homes.
4. All of the above strategies target those that are homeless, at-risk of becoming homeless, or are currently “doubled up”.

Cost:

1. Purchase of homes ~\$75,000, rehab costs ~\$25,000-50,000
 - a. Rehab costs will be reduced by using local carpentry instruction programs and working with service organizations
2. Total cost unknown, 25% local match required for current MSHDA Tenant based rental assistance program.
3. Unknown.

Outcomes:

1. Rehabilitation of existing homes
 - a. Emergency shelter for all populations will be available to all in the BHK area
 - b. Those clients using emergency shelter will be rapidly moved to temporary supportive housing
 - c. Youth and families will have access to the services they need to move to sustainable permanent housing
2. Temporary Supportive Housing
 - a. More units will be available to youth who are homeless
 - b. Temporary Supportive Housing units will be available to BHK residents
 - c. Clients will move to their own permanent housing within six months of entering the Temporary Supportive Housing units.
3. Reducing barriers to home ownership
 - a. Utilize existing stock of homes that are in need of repairs but are affordable
 - b. For many in our area, mortgage payments could be significantly lower than current costs of renting.

Responsibilities: The BHK CoC will work collaboratively on various aspects of this goal. Certain agencies will take lead on different aspects. Lead Contact for Plan development will continue to serve as lead contact through first round of MSDHA funding related to 10-Year Plans

Key Dates:

- Oct 19, 2006-BHK CoC Meeting. Further investigate how best to apply for available MSHDA funds
- Oct 24-25, 2006-Michigan Homeless Summit. Several representatives from BHK will be in attendance to ask questions and look into a more regional approach to some of our concerns (Chemically dependent chronic homeless population)
- Nov 16, 2007-BHK CoC Meeting. Finalize plans for NOFA submissions

PR Campaign

Goal: Inform the public about the homeless situation in BHK and the 10-Year Plan's response to this

Strategies:

1. Invite and ensure local media participates in a release of the 10-Year Plan to the general population
2. Work with local media to increase awareness of the issues related to homelessness in the BHK area
3. Coordinate the above efforts to coincide with Homeless Awareness Week.

Cost:

1. \$200.00 for Kick-Off Event

Outcomes:

1. Increase awareness of Plan strategies
2. Increase awareness of issues related to homelessness in the BHK area
3. Increase participation in implementation of 10-Year Plan strategies

Responsibilities: CoC Membership will play various roles. Plan Lead Contact will work closely members to insure success.

Key Dates:

October 19, 2006-BHK CoC Meeting-Finalize details for Implementation Kick-Off (Nov 16, 2006)

Late October 2006-Meet with local media to begin getting our message out

November 16, 2006-BHK CoC Meeting/Implantation Kick-Off luncheon. Coinciding with Homeless Awareness Week our event will unveil the plan to the community at large