

COOR CONTINUUM OF CARE
Crawford, Oscoda, Ogemaw, Roscommon

**10 YEAR PLAN
TO END HOMELESSNESS**

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COOR Housing Coalition Ten Year Plan To End Homelessness

Take a walk down your street. Stop in front of your home and take a good long look. This is the last time you will see it. Walk inside and take a look around. Enter your bedroom. Look at the clothes hanging in the closet, in the dresser, on the floor. Look at all the other possessions you have: shoes, brushes and combs, hair dryer, ties, jewelry, watches, and so on. You have one 30 gallon garbage bag. That's all you get to use. It's all you can carry. You'll have to help carry your child's bag. What will you take with you? What will you leave behind?

You've lost your job. You haven't been able to find another one. You had to get rid of the car. You couldn't afford the insurance. Now, you're losing your home. Where will you go tonight and tomorrow night and the night after that? Who will take you in? Who's going to help you through this?

Your Community – hopefully they have the resources and the goodwill.

Maybe this isn't a scenario you'll ever have to face. It might describe a relative, good friend, the next door neighbor. Would you help? Can you help? There are people in our community faced with this same challenge. The homeless are living in tents, sleeping on someone's couch, living in their car, hiding in abandoned buildings. Will you help them?

The COOR Housing Coalition Continuum of Care, along with the Department of Human Services, Community Mental Health, and other agencies throughout our community have participated in writing the following Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness. How can you get involved?

Vision

To end homelessness in Crawford, Ogemaw, Oscoda, and Roscommon (COOR) Counties by providing safe affordable housing and the services required to achieve and maintain permanent housing.

Definition of Homeless

People living in a place not meant for human habitation such as: parks, tents, vacant buildings, automobiles, etc., and those doubled-up. In our rural communities it is very common for families and friends to allow the homeless to “spend a few nights on a couch”. Therefore we believe it is very important to include this group of homeless in our

“Plan”. For the purposes of the “Plan”, families will be used to describe all homeless, whether they are individuals, families, or youth.

Summary

The 2005 COOR Point In Time (PIT) Survey identified 50 homeless families, per HUD’s definition. Our survey also indicated 64 families were doubled up. Each year we have less than a 20% return on the survey. According to the 2000 Census, the COOR (Crawford, Ogemaw, Oscoda, and Roscommon Counties) community has a population of 70,805. Based on this information, we estimate that approximately 1% of the population in COOR is homeless.

Through our surveys, meetings, and visioning sessions, we have identified causes, effects, current programs, what is lacking in our community, and how we are going to address these issues. A survey was distributed to 50 agencies, schools, churches, and sheriff and police departments in our community. Invitations to our visioning sessions went to 160 agencies, schools, churches, low income housing complexes, and elected government officials. Ads were also placed in the four counties’ newspapers inviting all to participate in the visioning sessions. A final session was held in September to refine and finalize our “Plan”.

The Housing Commissions recently implemented the use of HMIS (Homeless Management Information System). HMIS allows agencies to track the homeless population they work with.

Our homeless population includes, but is not limited to, single men and women, families with children, youth aging out of foster care, chronically homeless, domestic violence victims, and prisoner re-entries.

We have identified the following to be the major contributing factors to homelessness.

1. Lack of safe affordable housing;
2. Loss of agency assistance;
3. Not enough resources for sustainable housing;
4. Lack of education;
5. Lack of living wage jobs;
6. Domestic violence;
7. Transportation;
8. Generational Poverty;
9. Mental illness, substance abuse;
10. Medical costs;
11. Family conflict; and
12. Lack of family support.

Current Programs

The COOR community currently has the following homeless and homeless prevention programs available to qualifying families.

- DHS offers security deposit, first month's rent, utility, eviction assistance, and foreclosure prevention to qualifying families. (SER funding)
- The Housing Commissions receive ESG funding (\$6,350 per two counties) for homeless prevention: utility shut offs, eviction notices, 1st month's rent, and foreclosure prevention. This funding assists an average of 25 families in the four county area. We currently average 30 calls per week for assistance.
- The COOR Continuum of Care recently received ten vouchers through the Transitional Supportive Housing Lease Assistance Program (TSHLAP). Within three months of beginning the program, all ten vouchers have been issued. An eleventh voucher was received in September 2006.
- Churches, Salvation Army, St. Vincent de Paul, and Veterans' Administration also assist with utility shut offs, eviction notices, 1st month's rent, and foreclosure prevention.
- There is one homeless and domestic violence shelter for women and children. Our shelter can house 24 women and children. It operates at capacity most of the time.
- NEMCSA offers Supportive Housing Assistance. Supportive housing provides security deposits, 1st month's rent, and a voucher for purchasing household items such as dishes, pots and pans, towels and washcloths, etc.
- MSHDA's Housing Choice Vouchers (previously known as Section 8) status is as follows:
 - Crawford County – 52 vouchers, waiting list 70,
 - Ogemaw County – 76 vouchers, waiting list 175,
 - Oscoda County – 21 vouchers, waiting list 45,
 - Roscommon County – 71 vouchers, waiting list 100,
 - The waiting period is averaging six to twelve months.
- DHS offices are working on the Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative.
- The Salvation Army provides temporary shelter for the homeless. They will provide a motel room for up to seven days.
- NLCMH – Crawford and Roscommon - PATHWAYS and Supportive Housing.

- Michigan Works! – Work First Investment Act.
- AuSable Free Clinic – Mercy Hospital in Grayling has recently opened a free clinic.

Our “Plan”

Our “Plan” identifies and describes our goals and how we are going to implement them. Our goals are divided into one, five, and ten year strategies.

We have adopted the “Housing First Methodology” for our “Plan”. Our TSHLAP grant is based on “Housing First” and is proving to be a very effective way to assist our homeless population. We received ten vouchers through the grant. Our program is designed so that we were able to get approved applicants into safe homes near their jobs and other resources, and work with them in setting short-term and long-term goals. The goals are related to: education, better jobs, transportation issues, health, children, nutrition, housekeeping, connecting them with other agencies, and affordable permanent housing. The homes our clients are living in meet HUD’s HQS. To date, all of our clients are still housed and working on their goals. The interagency service teams meet monthly to monitor each client’s progress.

The Advisory Board will be expanded to include the COOR Housing Coalition Continuum of Care Planning Committee members. The Advisory Board will continue to participate by supporting and assisting with the implementation of the “Plan”, recommend changes, review and support grant applications. The board will determine the feasibility of available grants to attain our goals. Meetings will be held minimally on a quarterly basis.

Year One

- Capacity building – Housing Resource director and staff. To implement and manage the “Plan” effectively, a Housing Resource staff will be developed. Until that time, the COOR Housing Coalition Continuum of Care will administer the day-to-day projects identified in our “Plan”. Staff funding will be sought through government and foundation grants and fund raising. Completion expected January 2008.
- Lobby Government Officials – We will be hosting a “Homeless Awareness” day, inviting our state and federal representatives and senators, sharing our issues and goals, asking for their support and assistance in implementing our “Plan”. First meeting will be held by July 2007.

- Public Awareness – Local government has participated in our visioning sessions and will be asked not only to approve our “Plan” but to give continuing support throughout the ten year implementation. Starting with Homeless Awareness Week activities in November 2006, we will bring a heightened awareness of the homeless issues in our community to the general public. Local officials will be asked to sign resolutions acknowledging Homeless Awareness Week. This year the National Honor Societies will be asked to participate in planning and implementing awareness activities. Each year during Homeless Awareness Week, we will have activities and provide a public update of the progress of the implementation of our “Plan”. Successes and failures will be measured through increased community involvement in homeless projects and initiatives. Encourage posting of our “Plan” and activities on county websites. Posting on websites will be done after our final plan is approved.
- Develop Inter-Agency Support & Involvement – Continue to encourage government and non-government agencies to participate in our Continuum of Care on a regular basis through meeting notices, minutes, and invitations to attend our meetings. This will be an ongoing campaign. Successes and failures will be measured through increase in Continuum membership. This is currently an ongoing effort.
- Count the Homeless – Design and distribute a form for all agencies to use to count the homeless. Involve agencies, schools, sheriff and police departments, DNR, and US Forest Service personnel to complete and return the form. It will be similar to the Point-In-Time Survey but will take place for a longer period of time. It will help us identify the locations of the homeless. The count will be completed in Summer 2007.
- Coordination of Services – Have joint sessions of all agencies in each county to better identify all homeless services. Agencies will be challenged to use existing services and resources to create new programs through the blending of services and current funding. Successes and failures will be measured through tracking the increase in numbers of homeless families receiving more services. Committees will be formed to continue to coordinate services. First meeting will be held in January 2008.
- Ruby Payne Bridges Out of Poverty Training – Linda Cronk from MSU Extension has offered the training to all agencies. To give everyone a better understanding when working with those in poverty, agencies will be encouraged to take the training. Training will take place in the Spring of 2007.
- Safe Housing – Currently none of our counties has rental code. Therefore there is a high number of substandard housing in our communities. During the last two years, Oscoda County has been working on rental code. On September 26, 2006,

the Oscoda County Commissioners approved a county-wide Rental Ordinance. A rental rehabilitation grant was submitted to MSHDA during the first round of HRF 2007 grant applications. After one year, we will give presentations to the other counties' government officials, sharing our code and successes and failures to encourage their adoption of rental code. Success will be tracked through the increase of available safe low income housing. Implementing of a rental code will also increase the surrounding property values and will encourage homeowners to repair their homes. Rental code established in each county by 2010.

- Temporary Housing with Services – Evaluate the need of more homeless shelters. Currently we have one homeless and domestic violence shelter for women and children. This shelter services all four counties. We do not have a shelter that can house men. Some of the issues with only one shelter are: proximity to job, access to agencies in their home county, and transportation. Having a temporary shelter in each county would help alleviate the issues stated. The capacity of each shelter would be based on the population of the respective county. Converting a vacant home for shelter use would allow us the opportunity to use it for a different type of housing in the future, such as a low income rental or permanent supportive housing. Develop housing in one county in the first year. Each county to have temporary housing by 2010.
- County Owned Properties – Counties currently receive properties back for non-payment of taxes. County commissioners will be encouraged to give usable properties to their housing commission. The properties can be used for low income rental homes or sold to low income qualifying families. Homes may require rehabilitation or building. Grants from various sources will be written. All counties will be encouraged to commit to this project. This goal will be ongoing and measured by the increase in available affordable housing.
- Transportation – Most homeless families do not have the financial ability to own a vehicle. Many of them do not have a driver's license. Obtaining a driver's license will be one of their goals after they are housed. Public transportation in rural communities is very limited. Currently the public transportation systems operate within the largest community in each county. Expand availability of public transportation by 2010. Success will be measured by the decrease in lack of transportation issues. Roscommon County Transit Authority is pursuing a grant to possibly extend the hours of operation.
- Educate our new tenants – Assist with reviewing rental agreements and other documents. Teach them how to be a good tenant. Provide them with the book *Landlords and Tenants, A Practical Guide*. This is ongoing. We currently do this with our TSHLAP clients. We also provide a copy to our TSHLAP landlords. It has decreased the number of complaints from landlords and tenants. Tenant and landlord education has been taking place in Oscoda County since 2003. Education

of tenants and landlords in Crawford, Ogemaw, and Roscommon counties began in 2006.

- Transitional Housing – Locate one in each county. Transitional housing will provide homeless; especially domestic violence victims, homeless and transitioning youth, chronic homeless and homeless families with children; the opportunity to have a place to stay while working on getting into permanent housing. When no longer needed, these homes can be converted to permanent rentals. One of our biggest issues is prisoner re-entry. Some of them need to adjust to society before becoming a tenant or homeowner. Transitional housing would provide them with the opportunity to attain independence. Success will be measured by counting how many homeless leave our institutions with a home to move into. Transitional housing will be funded through government and foundation grants. Transitional housing to be available in each county by 2016.
- Provide detailed list of services available to homeless to all agencies, sheriff and police departments and jail administrators. The listing will be updated and distributed as new programs become available. This first publication will be available by June 2007.
- Feedback from the “no longer homeless” – Encourage sharing of successes and failures. Encourage them to become mentors to other homeless families.
- Review and assess progress and success to date. Evaluate goals and the measurements used for each goal. Review will be completed at each meeting of the Advisory Board. Changes to the “Plan” will be accomplished as needed.

Year Five

- Volunteer Program – Coordinate agencies, businesses, and general public to develop a volunteer program to work with homeless in several capacities. Volunteers are needed to serve as mentors, assist with repairs, and training. Bridge of Hope has critical mentoring portion. This will be ongoing. We will measure our success by the number of volunteers in the program. Program will be developed by the end of 2011.
- Non-traditional Subsidized Housing – Work with faith-based organizations to implement subsidized housing programs such as Bridge of Hope. Nationally, Bridge of Hope has proven to be a very successful program. Program implementation is currently being evaluated in Oscoda County. Community Caring hopes to implement it by 2009. After our success, we will work with other faith-based organizations to implement.

- Education – More educational opportunities are needed in the community. A large majority of our homeless do not have a high school diploma. GED classes are offered only during the school year. We need to encourage the high schools, Kirtland Community College, and Baker College to work together to provide more educational opportunities to our homeless. Coordinate and conduct meetings with school superintendents and representatives from the colleges. Success will be measured by the number of families increasing their level of education. Better access to educational opportunities by 2015.
- Living Wage Job Opportunities – Involve EDC’s, Chambers of Commerce, MI Works, NEMCOG, MSU, and North East Michigan Manpower Consortium in the implementation of our “Plan”. Involvement by 2012.
- Continue to work on goals identified in Year One of the “Plan”.
- Feedback from the “no longer homeless” – Encourage sharing of successes and failures. Encourage them to become mentors to other homeless families.
- Review and assess progress and success to date. Evaluate goals and the measurements used for each goal.

Year Ten

- Day Care Centers – Develop more day care centers in each community. Coordinate with 4C Council in each county to increase child care facilities.
- Housing Advocacy Group – Develop group of advisors and mentors to help families stay housed. Success will be measured by tracking the number of homeless participants and their ability to stay housed. Group to be developed by 2017.
- Feedback from the “no longer homeless” – Encourage sharing of successes and failures. Encourage them to become mentors to other homeless families.
- Homeownership Programs – MI Works offers Housing Self Sufficiency program. If one of their goals/dreams is to be a homeowner, encourage participation in the HSS program. Success will be measured by the number of families who participate and how many succeed. First family in program by 2018.
- Health Care – Work with local hospitals to develop free and/or urgent care clinics in each county. Feasibility evaluation will be completed by 2016.
- Reward the Working Poor – Lobby government officials to amend policies to reward the working poor instead of maintaining a system that encourages too

many people from entering the work force. Most homeless people do not have the ability to obtain living wage jobs. Lobby for policies that will continue to provide assistance to the working poor. Goal will be measured by tracking changes to government policies that affect the poor in our communities. Meetings with government officials will be held throughout the life of our “Plan”.

- Review and assess progress and success to date. Evaluate goals and the measurements used for each goal. Assessment to be completed in 2016.

Our Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness involves the participation of human resource agencies, faith-based organizations, government agencies, the previously homeless, and the community. To succeed in the implementation of this Plan, we will need your involvement. To become involved, please contact your local County Housing Commission office.

The Housing Commissions may be contacted at the following locations.

Crawford County Housing Commission, County Building, 989-344-3284

Oscoda County Housing Commission, Courthouse Annex Building, 989-826-1167

Roscommon County Housing Commission, County Building, 989-275-8306