

10-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Oceana County

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Prepared by the Members of the Oceana Housing Council

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10-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Oceana County

I. Summary

A. *Description of the Problem*

1. Background

The Oceana County Housing Council (OHC) has developed the following *10-Year Plan to End Homelessness* in response to an initiative of the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA). This plan is part of a national effort to move from a protocol that manages homelessness using emergency shelters to one that ends homelessness through the provision of permanent housing to those in need.

Since the emergence of homelessness as a national issue in the early 1980s, a complicated and expensive network of emergency shelters and programs serving the homeless has emerged. This network, which functions primarily in urban areas, is now institutionalized, and critics now claim that it facilitates homelessness despite its intention of relieving suffering.

As a response to the “shelter mentality,” the Housing First movement has emerged in recent years. The basic concept of Housing First is that the solution to homelessness is to provide permanent housing, then to bring any necessary services to the individual or household to help them to maintain the housing. According to this philosophy, the dollars that have historically been on emergency shelters would be better spent providing permanent housing and supportive services.

2. Homelessness in Oceana County

The OHC is comprised of individuals representing social service agencies, churches, and volunteer-based organizations that provide services to the homeless and people who are precariously housed. The Oceana OHC has been in existence since 2000. The Council has undertaken a number of initiatives beyond the scope of Emergency Shelter Grant issues, including the recent development of a county-wide Housing Needs Assessment that was produced at the request of the county Board of Commissioners. The OHC has played an active role in promoting the development of affordable housing in the county as well as bringing preventive and supportive services to this area.

Homelessness in rural areas has a different look and feel than it does in the public mind. Decades of media reports on homelessness have focused on the urban homeless, who tend to be very visible and upsetting to the public eye. The urban homeless are more often single adults with no local family ties. They often have chronic substance abuse issues, and they tend to live on the street.

Homeless individuals and households in rural areas are much less visible to the general public. They are much more likely to consist of families, and they frequently do not meet

the restrictive definition of homelessness as defined by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD defines homeless as those who are in a shelter environment, vehicle, out of doors, or temporary shelter (tent, boxcar, etc.). Domestic violence victims are also homeless by definition.

The rural homeless may have a temporary place to stay, but their housing is extremely precarious, causing turmoil and instability in their lives. Because of stronger family ties, the rural homeless more frequently are staying with relatives or friends (doubled up), but the housing is very insecure and is subject to the whims of the owner of the home or family dynamics. Given the lower wage structure and high levels of unemployment that are typical in rural areas, many households are one missed paycheck from homelessness at all times. The lack of housing inspections for rental property, again a feature of rural areas, results in many households living in substandard and dangerous housing in relatively remote areas. Throughout this plan, we describe this type of homelessness as “precariously housed.”

Although the precariously housed are the most frequent type of homelessness seen in Oceana County, service providers frequently encounter HUD-defined homeless individuals and households as well. Particularly during the summer months, the homeless live in temporary encampments on both public and private land and in local campgrounds for extended periods. Additionally, domestic violence victims are housed in the emergency shelter operated by COVE, homeless youth are housed in host homes operated by Bethany Christian Services, and OCEANA’S HOME Partnership provides emergency vouchers for motels. There is also a sub-population of mentally ill who chose to live in remote campsites year-round due to their fear or mistrust of others. Even though these individuals and households meet the HUD definition of homelessness, they are not as visible as the urban homeless, thus contributing to the impression that there is not a major homeless problem in Oceana County. Even though OHC members have devoted considerable effort to educating the community about the level of homelessness in the county, the perception remains that homelessness is not a serious issue in this area.

Taken together, homeless individuals and households represent a significant and growing concern in Oceana County. All of the factors described above lead to the invisibility of homelessness in rural areas, and Oceana County is no exception. This plan is intended both to describe the extent of the problem and to define a set of responses that will result in permanent housing for people at risk.

B. Vision and Definition of Homelessness

As a first step in the process of creating the *10-Year Plan*, the OHC developed the following Vision Statement:

The vision of the *10-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Oceana County* is to prevent homelessness whenever possible and to provide permanent housing to homeless individuals and households according to the Housing First model. This

will be accomplished by early intervention for those who are precariously housed, by developing sufficient affordable and supportive housing to meet the needs of county residents, by facilitating entry into the shelter services network for those in immediate need of permanent housing, and by increasing the availability of services and coordination among service providers.

In addition, the OHC has discussed the target population to be addressed by this *10-Year Plan*. Although some funding sources are constrained by specific definitions, the OHC has defined homelessness as follows:

The Oceana Housing Council defines homeless individuals and households, including children and youth, as those who are forced, by loss of housing, disability, or economic hardship and due to lack of adequate alternative accommodations:

- to stay in a place that is not designed for human habitation, including sleeping in an open-air setting;
- to stay in an emergency shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations;
- to stay in an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized
- to stay in a motel, hotel, trailer park, camping ground, or car;
- to stay in a hospital due to abandonment or are awaiting foster placement (children only);
- to share housing with another person(s).

Homeless individuals and families also include persons who are in imminent danger of eviction or foreclosure and persons facing homelessness due to utility cutoff. Victims of domestic violence (and their dependent children) are considered homeless by definition.

C. Response

The OHC began the process of developing a *10-Year Plan to End Homelessness* in May, 2006. The OHC has met frequently since May to define the scope of the problem, gather information about resources, and establish a set of goals, strategies, and action plans to address the problem.

II. General

A. Scope of the Problem

1. Quantitative Information on Homelessness in Oceana County

For the many reasons discussed above, it is difficult to quantify the level of homelessness in Oceana County and in most other rural counties. The homeless do not live on the street and, other than the local women's shelter, there are no

emergency shelters where the number of homeless can be easily counted. Quantification of homelessness is further complicated by the issue of determining who should be counted: do we focus on the HUD-defined homeless, or do we include the precariously housed as well?

Despite the difficulty of achieving a reliable count of the homeless in Oceana County, the OHC has gained a sense of the amount of homelessness through actual counts and by inference from national data. Like other Continua, the OHC has conducted an annual Point-in-Time survey that provides a sense of the number of homeless individuals and households in the county. The most recent Point-in-Time survey, conducted in January, 2005, indicated the following:

Homeless Individuals	18
Persons in Homeless Families	74
Total Homeless Persons	92

Of the 92 homeless and precariously housed persons in the survey, the following subpopulations were identified:

Severely Mentally Ill	11
Chronic Substance Abusers	6
Dually Diagnosed	8
Victims of Domestic Violence	9
Youth (Under 18)	10
Veterans	2

The average age of female heads of household in the survey was 39, and the average age for male household heads was 41. There was an average of two dependents in each family, with an average age of eight year. While details about other demographic characteristics of the homeless counted in this survey are not available, service providers agree that the homeless in Oceana County are similar to those described in national studies. According to NCH Fact Sheet #11 published by the National Coalition for the Homeless, “studies comparing urban and rural homeless populations have shown that homeless people in rural areas are more likely to be white, female, married, currently working, homeless for the first time, and homeless for a shorter period of time.”

Further specific demographic information has been gleaned from OHP’s Shelter to Stability (S2S) program, a housing first approach used for homeless families and individuals in the county. Their data has found that the typical homeless household is a single mom, age 32 with 2 children and an income of about 80% of the poverty level.

2. Contributing Factors

Before describing the factors that contribute to homelessness in Oceana County, it is important to describe the community in general terms. Oceana County has an estimated 2004 population of 28,172 (2004 census estimate), representing a growth of 8.4% since 2000. The county is growing more rapidly than many other rural counties, largely because of the increasing Hispanic population as former migrant workers settle-out and become permanent residents of the area. In addition to the year-round residents, an estimated 5,000-7,000 migrant workers and dependents seek employment in Oceana County from May-October, harvesting crops in fields and orchards and working in food processing plants.

Oceana County is located along the Lake Michigan shoreline, and its economy is primarily based on agriculture, tourism and the service industry. The largest employment categories are agriculture, retail trade, accommodation and food services, and local government (includes teachers). Most manufacturing jobs are in the agricultural field, as there are several food processing plants located in Oceana County.

The proximity to the lakeshore has attracted an increasing number of upper income retirees in the four townships located along Lake Michigan. Housing start figures for 2005 indicate that the majority of the building permits in Oceana County were taken out in the four lakeshore townships. Because the housing on the lakeshore tends to be more expensive and thus provides better profit margins for builders, few contractors in the area have had an interest in the development of affordable housing in recent years.

Oceana County has no single population center. The city of Hart and village of Shelby are the largest communities, with just over 2,100 residents in each municipality. The villages of New Era, Rothbury, Pentwater, Walkerville, and Hesperia each contain fewer than 1,000 residents. There is not a true public transportation system in the county, although the Oceana Council on Aging provides some transportation for seniors and people with a disability.

Most Oceana County residents live in rural, township areas. Approximately 20% of the housing units in the county are mobile homes, and the majority of these are located in these townships.

Data from the 2000 Census provide the following relevant descriptors of the county population:

Percentage of Hispanic Persons	11.6%
Median Age	37 years
Median Household Income	\$35,307
Percentage Living in Poverty	14.4%
Percentage with Less than High-School Diploma	20.3%

While there are a myriad of contributing factors to homelessness in Oceana County and other rural counties in Michigan, there are two common, pervasive factors: rural poverty and a lack of affordable housing. The percentage of children under the age of 5 living in poverty in Oceana County exceeds the Michigan rate by more than 8% (23.9% vs. 15.6%). Similarly, the percentage of children aged 5-17 living in poverty in Oceana County exceeds the Michigan rate by nearly 6% (18.4% vs. 12.7%). In 2000, 29.6% of renters and 18.1% of homeowners were paying more than 30% of their household income for housing costs.

Oceana County has 211 subsidized housing units (including 24 reserved for agricultural workers exclusively) to serve the approximately 1,300 Oceana County families living at or below the poverty level, and a recent survey of these units indicates a very high occupancy rate. There are also 51 Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) currently used by the general population of Oceana County residents, with an additional 10 vouchers reserved for those with special needs. The HCV program is administered by an agency located in Osceola County, and there has been little growth in the number of HCVs for Oceana County in recent years.

3. Impact on Homeless Persons

The impact of economic factors and the lack of affordable housing on Oceana County residents are seen daily by service providers. While unemployment is a significant issue, underemployment and low-wage employment may be an even larger factor in this area. According to interviews with consumers and service providers alike, there is simply no way for many people to afford permanent housing in view of the employment opportunities available in Oceana County.

One of the most dramatic findings from discussions with service providers is the amount of homelessness among youth under the age of 18. While some students were homeless because of difficulties in getting along with parents, a surprising number were homeless because the parents simply moved away and left them behind to fend for themselves. The move was in turn often prompted by economic factors. Because of the nature of youth homelessness, numbers are extremely difficult to obtain, but conversations with residents indicate that it is a common occurrence. One of the most disturbing aspects of youth homelessness in rural areas is that it forces youth to live in situations in which they may be completely dependent on someone whose intentions may be less than generous.

B. Historical Response

The Oceana Housing Council (OHC) has long recognized the critical importance of rapid re-housing and the Housing First model. In one of its first formal actions after organizing in 2000, the Housing Council adopted a resolution endorsing the Housing First model as its basic organizing principle. As evidenced by its application in 2003 for a Rural

Homeless Initiative grant, the Housing First model has been central to OHC from the beginning of its activities.

Fair Housing has also been a firm principle of the Oceana Housing Council. With the large Hispanic population in the county and historical prejudice against migrant workers and those who “settle out” and become permanent residents, OHC members recognize the potential for discrimination against Hispanic residents and members of other minority groups living in Oceana County.

Service providers in Oceana County have historically addressed the problem of homelessness by providing a broad range of services to their targeted population. Service coordination has been facilitated, especially in recent years, by the existence of OCEANA’S HOME Partnership (OHP), which serves as a central organization with general responsibility for housing and homelessness. OHP has recently improved this response by organizing a “Service Providers Roundtable” to meet monthly and facilitate coordination of resources and services. Through this process, providers have established a well-functioning referral network that utilizes OHP as the “one-stop shop” for housing needs in Oceana County.

Mainstream providers focus on a broad range of issues affecting people in need, and none focuses primarily on housing. The following organizations fit this description:

Department of Human Services – state agency providing cash assistance for low-income families, but few prevention activities available due to funding restrictions

West Michigan Community Mental Health System – provides care for persons with severe and persistent mental illness and those with a developmental disability – provides access for Department of Community Health homeless funds for persons with mental illness and case management and community living supports to CMH consumers living in their own homes or apartments.

Muskegon-Oceana Community Action Partnership – local Community Action Agency that has funding for weatherization and utility assistance,

Organizations providing housing for targeted populations tend to focus on crisis intervention, but they provide assistance with the transition to permanent housing as well:

Bethany Christian Services – provides a host home program for homeless youth; also provides crisis intervention and counseling services; permanent housing remains a problem due to age and impulsiveness of youth population

COVE – provides emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence; also provides relocation assistance, credit counseling assistance, and related services, but these are not viewed as the core mission of the organization

A number of other organizations serve the homeless as part of their larger mission. These organizations may provide some direct service or may refer to other agencies:

Habitat for Humanity – builds homes on a cooperative basis for qualifying families

OCEANA’S HOME Partnership – nonprofit housing developer; administers Community Development Block Grant program for Oceana County government; operates Housing Resource Center utilizing ESG funds and special grant funding from MSHDA

Church Groups – many churches in Oceana County have food distribution and other programs designed to help those in need

It is the intent of the OHC, through this planning process and subsequent implementation of its goals, to end homelessness within the next 10 years by preventing the entry of people into the homelessness system and by providing rapid re-housing services to those who enter the system. *The Oceana OHC believes that the key to providing better service to the homeless and the precariously housed is the further consolidation of prevention and re-housing services into a Housing Resource Center.* Significant steps have been made toward establishing a full-service HRC, but additional resources are needed to enable the HRC to respond in a timely and appropriate manner to the level of need identified in the county. The process of augmenting the activity of the Housing Resource Center in Oceana County will require additional resources from external public and private funders.

C. New Vision

The vision of the OHC, as expressed in the Summary section above, bears repetition here:

The vision of the *10-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Oceana County* is to prevent homelessness whenever possible and to provide permanent housing to homeless individuals and households according to the Housing First model. This will be accomplished by early intervention for those who are precariously housed, by developing sufficient affordable and supportive housing to meet the needs of county residents, by facilitating entry into the shelter services network for those in immediate need of permanent housing, and by increasing the availability of services and coordination among service providers.

1. Benefits of Housing Stability

The advantages of establishing a system that assures permanent housing for the homeless are well-documented. Across the state and nation, nonprofit providers of permanent supportive housing have demonstrated that homeless families and individuals can be successfully and permanently housed with the proper combination of services, income supports and new affordable housing stock.

Most homeless families require an affordable housing unit, a need that can be met with a rental or ownership subsidy permitting recipients to access apartments or single-family homes within the private housing market. For others, including those with disabilities such as mental illness and substance abuse, support services are required to ensure housing stability.

2. Cost-Effectiveness of Housing First Approach

State and national studies have consistently demonstrated the cost-effectiveness of the Housing First approach. Cost-effectiveness has been demonstrated most often for the chronically homeless, as the cost of hospitalization, incarceration, and emergency shelter use is extremely high.

In Oceana County, the homeless are more frequently families, and the cost of homelessness is more difficult to demonstrate. From a purely economic standpoint, the cost of housing a family using emergency vouchers is approximately \$1,000 per month, compared to an average rental cost of \$500 per month. Additionally, shelter usage requires 24 hour staffing for tasks folks can perform themselves (cooking, cleaning, etc.) further adding to the cost of shelter stays as opposed to permanent housing placement, where such care is rarely provided. We believe, however, that the demonstrable costs do not begin to tell the full story of the cost of homelessness.

The personal cost of homelessness to youth, both those who are with their parents and those who are on their own, is not difficult to demonstrate. Homeless youth who are living on their own are subject to abuse and are vulnerable to the whims of those with marginally more resources. Homeless youth who are members of homeless families are socially isolated, are more likely to miss school and fail in their academic endeavors, and lack the security that all children require.

The cost of homelessness to other vulnerable sectors of the population (domestic violence victims, those with a disability, substance abusers, and others) is likewise as much of a personal issue as an economic issue. While we will continue to attempt to quantify the cost savings of the Housing First approach, the greater values of the personal cost of homelessness ultimately drives the mission of the Oceana Housing Council.

D. Strategic Response

1. Planning Structure

The OHC determined early in the planning process to work as a committee of the whole in developing the *10-Year Plan to End Homelessness*. Due to the relatively small number of agencies involved in delivering services to the homeless in Oceana County (as compared to the number of agencies in urban areas), it was determined that the OHC should serve as the Advisory Committee and that sub-committees would be established only if necessary.

2. Participating Organizations

The following organizations have actively participated in the development of the *10-Year Plan to End Homelessness*:

- Bethany Christian Services
- Choices West Counseling Service
- Community Foundation for Oceana County
- COVE
- Department of Human Services
- Habitat for Humanity
- Michigan WORKS – Oceana Office
- Oceana County Council on Aging
- Oceana County Government
- Oceana County Planning Commission
- OCEANA’S HOME Partnership
- West Michigan Child and Family Leadership Council
- West Michigan Community Mental Health Services

The OHC has also received input from the following organizations and individuals:

- Oceana Landlords Association
- Oceana County Sheriff’s Office
- Molly Bopp (Section 8 Administrator)

3. Community Engagement

Previous attempts to gain input into housing issues from the consumer perspective have not met with success in this county, despite the best efforts of service providers. The OHC members will continue to attempt to obtain the perspective of consumers as we implement this plan.

Oceana County government has been informed of the 10-Year Plan and related efforts throughout the development process. Concomitant with the plan development, an interim housing commission has been working on a strategic plan for affordable housing in the county. The reports of both the interim housing commission and the OHC were presented to the Board of Commissioners on September 29, 2006, and the Board of Commissioners have indicated its support for the 10-Year Plan in the resolution included in Attachment 1 to this document.

4. Consumer Involvement

Consumer input has been provided mainly by a consumer representative who serves as an OHC member. This individual has experienced homelessness and some of the frustrations associated with re-housing, and she is an active member of the OHC in our deliberations.

5. Areas Addressed in Strategic Response

The strategic response to the problems discussed above has been addressed in a series of Goals, Strategies, and Action Steps. The statements presented below should be considered to be preliminary and are subject to change during the next six weeks. The Goals address the following generic areas:

- Increasing the Supply of Affordable Housing
- Rapid and Permanent Re-Housing
- Prevention
- Service Coordination
- Capacity Building
- Public Awareness

The goals developed to this date are presented in the following section.

<p>physical or mental disability within the next 3-5 years</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create permanent supportive housing in each community in the county 2. Integrate permanent supportive housing into the general population to avoid the creation of isolated supportive housing units <p>Strategy 5: Increase the supply of affordable single-family housing units in Oceana County by 30-60 units within the next 3-5 years</p>	<p>Housing Choice vouchers; Section 8 vouchers allocated to Housing Commission; MSHDA grant awards for pilot and ongoing programs</p>	<p>To be determined by need and market conditions</p>	<p>More rental support vouchers available for Oceana County residents</p>	<p>Housing Resource Center staff</p>	<p>March, 2007, and ongoing</p>
<p>Action Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide technical assistance to local units of government toward the development and enactment of zoning ordinances and building codes that encourage creativity in the development of new single-family housing that supports the development of quality, affordable housing to a wider range of county residents 2. Explore opportunities to assure the long-term affordability of new housing development using the Community Land Trust model 	<p>None</p>	<p>No direct cost</p>	<p>Increased ease in developing affordable housing</p>	<p>Housing Commission staff and local units of government</p>	<p>March, 2007, and ongoing</p>
<p><i>Strategy 6: Increase the amount of public funding available for rent support in the private market</i></p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase the number of rental support vouchers available in Oceana County, especially time-limited vouchers that will assist in the transition to permanent housing 2. Assure that Section 8 vouchers are administered within the county by the Oceana Housing Resource Center (OHRC) 3. Conduct a market analysis to document that 					

<p>Action Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The OHRC will develop and implement the initial HMIS database and related assessments 2. The OHRC will maintain the database and utilize same to provide accurate reports on homelessness and demographic data related to housing needs. These reports will be furnished to funders, OHC membership, and other interested parties. 3. The OHRC will develop incentives and resources to encourage allied agencies to participate in the HMIS system. 4. As a follow-up to the development of a Housing Assistance Plan, as indicated in Goal 2, Strategy 2, Action Step 6, the service providers engaged in providing allied services to these households will report their activities utilizing the HMIS system. 			<p>area landlords; better “early intervention” information regarding problem renters</p>		
<p>Strategy 4: Create and maintain a listing of all available rental units in Oceana County by 2007</p>	<p>Support from West Shore Mediation Center and their volunteer staff; MSHDA funds, other funds</p>	<p>To be determined in negotiations with West Shore Mediation Center</p>	<p>Enhanced ability to prevent evictions</p>	<p>Housing Resource Center and West Shore Mediation Center staff</p>	<p>January, 2008, and ongoing</p>
<p>Action Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with the Oceana Landlords Association to develop an efficient method of updating information about available units 2. Create a website where the listing of rental units can be accessed by the general public 3. Assure that all landlords register their rental properties 					
<p>Strategy 5: Develop a system to assure the immediate availability of affordable housing for homeless individuals and families by 2008</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Obtain grant funding to enable the OHRC to maintain a minimum of three open rental units available for permanent occupancy for 	<p>MSHDA and FEMA funds, other Funding, Support from Lenders and West Michigan Legal Aid</p>	<p>To be determined in negotiations with West Michigan Legal Aid</p>	<p>Enhanced ability to prevent foreclosures</p>	<p>Housing Resource Center and West Michigan Legal Aid staff</p>	<p>January, 2008, and ongoing</p>

<p>homeless individuals and households</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Work with the Oceana Landlords Association to strengthen their relationship with the OHRC and to facilitate rapid re-housing of homeless individuals and families in Oceana County 3. Work with the Oceana Landlords Association to develop innovative programs that provide incentives to landlords to accept tenants with poor rental records in return for a guarantee of payment if problems develop 4. Improve the coordination between service providers to assure that problem renters are referred to the OHRC 	<p>Financial contributions for local churches and financial institutions; staffing from OHRC to administer program</p>	<p>Minor staffing cost, to be integrated into other OHRC responsibilities</p>	<p>Access to short-term loans for individuals and families in need</p>	<p>Housing Resource Center staff; community members affiliated with funding entities</p>	<p>Mid-2008 and ongoing</p>
<p><u>D. Service Coordination</u></p> <p>Goal 4: Prevent homelessness (Close the Front Door to Homelessness) by implementing programs that help people to maintain their current housing</p> <p>Strategy 1: Establish and maintain a mediation system to enable early intervention when tenants demonstrate difficulties in making rental payments</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the efforts of the OHRC to engage landlords and tenants in mediation 2. Seek grant funds to support mediation intervention 3. Engage West Shore Mediation Center and Oceana Landlords Association in dialogue to design a mediation program <p>Strategy 2: Establish and maintain a mediation system</p>	<p>Expanded state and local funding to support program</p>	<p>Approximately \$20,000 annually for all aspects of program</p>	<p>Enhanced consumer understanding of financial management and positive relationships with landlords</p>	<p>Housing Resource Center staff and community agency staff</p>	<p>June, 2007, and ongoing</p>

<p>to enable early intervention when homeowners demonstrate difficulties in making mortgage payments</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the efforts of the OHRC to engage lending institutions and homeowners in mediation 2. Seek grant funds to support mediation intervention 3. Engage West Shore Mediation Center and local lending institutions in dialogue to design a mediation program <p>Strategy 3: Establish a Revolving Loan Fund under the administration of the Housing Resource Center to provide short-term loans to individuals and households in need of assistance</p>	<p>Commitment of state and local funds to improve level of job training and education</p>	<p>Very significant investment involving multiple federal and statewide programs</p>	<p>Access to better-paying jobs, resulting in more economic security</p>	<p>Members of the Oceana Housing Council and Housing Resource Center staff in an advocate role</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Action Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fully develop the details of a Revolving Loan Fund program that provides ready access to short-term loans to be used for rental arrearages, foreclosure, and utility cutoffs 2. Work with local churches, financial institutions, and public entities to provide seed money for the Revolving Loan Fund 3. Investigate grant opportunities for seed money for the Revolving Loan Fund <p>Strategy 4: Provide financial counseling and information about good tenancy through the Links to Homeownership and other similar programs at the</p>	<p>No new resources required</p>	<p>No direct costs</p>	<p>More effective referral and assessment system</p>	<p>Housing Resource Center staff and staff from substance abuse agencies and other community agencies</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

<p>opportunities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Support all other employment and training support service needs (i.e., daycare, work/training uniforms, etc.) 6. Increase funds to support training, job development, and all other employment-driven needs 	OHRC	Included in previously allocated OHRC funding	Better awareness of homelessness issues in the community	Housing Council members	Ongoing
<p>Strategy 6: Assure that all clients with a substance abuse issue are referred for service to a local substance abuse treatment agency</p>	OHRC	Included in previously allocated OHRC funding	Better coordination among agencies and improved understanding of extent of homelessness in Oceana County	Housing Resource Center staff and community agencies	Ongoing
<p>Action Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide information about opportunities for substance abuse treatment, including access to permanent supportive housing after development is completed, to all agencies serving individuals with substance abuse issues 2. Assure that OHRC staff is well-informed about substance abuse issues, including the identification of individuals with substance abuse issues during the screening process 	OHRC	Included in previously allocated OHRC funding	Better understanding of homelessness issues by political leaders	Housing Council members and OHRC staff	Ongoing
<p>Strategy 7: Increase the involvement of homeless and formerly homeless individuals in the deliberations of the Oceana Housing Council</p>	OHRC	Included in previously allocated OHRC funding	Better understanding of homelessness issues by political leaders	Housing Council members and OHRC staff	Ongoing
<p>Action Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The OHRC will utilize its Renters Support Group to create a Consumer Advisory Panel for the OHRC. 2. This Consumer Advisory Panel will nominate 	No new resources required	No direct costs	Better understanding of	Housing Council members and staff	Ongoing

<p>from its membership representatives to serve on the OHC.</p> <p>Strategy 8: Work with service providers to assure that they implement policies that are designed to prevent homelessness, rather than to require homelessness before services are available</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advocate for changes in public policy, especially with the Department of Human Services, that require issuance of foreclosure before assistance is available to clients <p><u>E. Capacity Building</u></p> <p>Goal 5: Build the capacity of the Oceana homelessness assistance network by soliciting the involvement of local, state, and national public and private organizations</p> <p>Strategy 1: Respond to all appropriate grant opportunities issued by MSHDA, HUD, and private foundations, especially those that are targeted to housing issues in rural areas</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regularly review notices of public and private funding opportunities <p>Strategy 2: Inform local churches, foundations, and</p>	<p>OHRC and OHC</p>	<p>Included in previously allocated OHRC funding</p>	<p>homelessness issues by the general public</p> <p>Better understanding of homelessness issues by the general public</p>	<p>Housing Council members and OHRC staff</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
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<p>governmental agencies of the needs of homeless individuals and households in Oceana County</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a speakers bureau to make regular presentations 2. Solicit funding and active involvement in homelessness issues by encouraging congregations to identify homelessness as a mission of the church <p>Strategy 3: Improve the coordination among agencies serving the homeless</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue and expand the Homeless Roundtable 2. Develop improved methods of documenting the extent of homelessness in Oceana County through Point-in-Time surveys <p>F. <u>Public Awareness</u></p> <p>Goal 6: Increase public awareness of homelessness issues in Oceana County</p> <p>Strategy 1: Maintain frequent contact with the county Board of Commissioners and local city and village councils regarding homelessness issues</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The OHC will at least annually invite the county and local municipalities not already regularly participating in OHC activities to appoint a representative to do so 					
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<p>2. The OHC will at least annually deliver a report on OHC and related activities to the governing boards of the county and local municipalities</p> <p>Strategy 2: Prepare articles for publication in local media regarding the extent of homelessness in the county and activities addressing the issue</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The OHC, working in concert with its member agencies, will ensure at least quarterly placement of appropriate information and/or advocacy articles and/or advertisements in available local media <p>Strategy 3: Assure public awareness of the activities of the OHRC</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The OHRC working in concert with the OHC and its member agencies will maintain current public awareness efforts including the placement of posters throughout the county and at least quarterly ad placement in available local media 2. The OHC will at least annually assess the effectiveness of existing public awareness efforts and recommend additional and/or alternate strategies. Where possible the OHC will engage outside public relations resources to assist in meeting this objective. 					
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Oceana County
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
County Building
P.O. Box 31
Hart, Michigan 49420



RESOLUTION RE APPROVAL OF 10-YEAR PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS IN OCEANA COUNTY

Moved by Mr. Byl and seconded by Mr. Kolbe to approve the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Oceana County as prepared by the Oceana Housing Council which focuses on the need for rapid and permanent re-housing for those residents of Oceana County who become homeless and to support the implementation of the Plan's strategies and action steps that will fulfill the following goals and objectives of the Plan:

1. Expand the supply of permanent, affordable housing by developing safe and sanitary rental and single-family housing units.
2. Develop short-term housing alternatives that are designed to lead to permanent housing for special populations.
3. Assure that all homeless individuals and households seeking service are permanently re-housed within 48 hours by the year 2009.
4. Prevent homelessness (Close the Front Door to Homelessness) by implementing programs that help people to maintain their current housing.
5. Build the capacity of the Oceana County homelessness assistance network by soliciting the involvement of local, state and national public and private organizations.
6. Increase public awareness of homelessness issues in Oceana County.

Roll call vote: Byl, yes; Kolbe, yes; Malburg, yes; Merten, yes; Brown, yes; Simon, yes; and, Van Sickle, yes. Motion carried.

CERTIFICATION:

The undersigned, being the Clerk of Oceana County, does hereby certify that on the 12th day of October, 2006, the Oceana County Board of Commissioners did adopt the above Resolution at its Regular Meeting.

Rebecca J. Griffin, Clerk
Oceana County
Board of Commissioners