

ISABELLA COUNTY 10 YEAR PLAN (DRAFT VERSION) AUGUST 31, 2006

SUMMARY SECTION

The purpose of this document is to meet the challenge presented to Isabella and other Michigan counties, by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), to develop a Ten Year Plan to end Homelessness. Several members of the Isabella County Continuum of Care (ICOC), the Isabella County Community Collaborative (ICCC), and representatives from educational institutions, political arenas, faith based community, and the local transportation provider, met to define homelessness, name contributing factors to homelessness, and draft plans including specific goals, to prevent the occurrence of homelessness as well as to meet the needs of homeless county residents.

A. Human service agencies, educational institutions, law enforcement agencies, health care institutions, and local community members, deal with issues related to homelessness every day in Isabella County. These issues range from the very personal issue of being homeless, having a friend or family member become homeless, taking in a homeless family member or friend; to service provision including to homeless persons. Currently no good data exists, although some figures are noted in the General Section, a., to provide exact numbers of the homeless persons served, but everyone coming into contact with them knows that they exist. Part of the 10 year plan is to develop a better data collection system. That issue is dealt with in the Goal Section of this document.

Levels of commitment to the plan, with 1 being low and 10 being high, were given as follows: 5 for Central Michigan Health Dept. and Isabella Soup Kitchen; 9 for Isabella County Transportation Corporation; and 10 for Community Mental Health, Eight-Cap, Women's Aid Service, Salvation Army, McBride Quality Care, and the Department of Human Services. Several other agency representatives left the meeting prior to recording their level of commitment.

In order for the plan to proceed, it was agreed that homelessness, using information specific to Isabella County, needed to be defined. The definition agreed upon follows:

- any individual or family, with no permanent mailing address
- persons living in sub-standard, or unsafe living situations
- persons living "doubled up" or "couch surfing" with other individuals or families for indeterminate lengths of time

B. A vision was developed to provide the plan with a purpose and direction. That vision follows:

“Isabella County will endeavor to provide opportunities to meet the specific housing needs of county residents, in a timely and efficient manner; with a focus on prevention and sustainability, through the utilization of both public and private resources.”

Homelessness is not just a problem for persons who are homeless, but for the entire Isabella County community, because productive citizens contribute to the creation of a productive community. Individuals and families living in safe, affordable, permanent housing make up safe, strong neighborhoods.

Productive citizens actively participate in community decisions leading to community growth. Non-productive citizens can be a costly drain on the Isabella County community.

According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the current short term “fixes” for dealing with the homeless population is a greater financial burden on our economy than finding permanent solutions is. Homeless persons make frequent use of hospital emergency rooms, because they have illnesses related to living in unhealthy situations and do not have regular physicians. It costs \$8,706 more a year, for an emergency shelter bed funded by HUD’s Emergency Shelter Grants program, than the average amount of a federally funded housing subsidy (Section 8 housing certificate). Since homeless persons have no place to sleep, they often loiter in businesses that are open all night; and sometimes get arrested for this. The National Alliance to End Homelessness reports that arrests for loitering costs taxpayers approximately \$14,480 per person per year. According to the Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness, in rural areas single mothers and children make up the largest group of homeless persons; children make up approximately 40% of the national homeless population, and about 50% of Michigan’s homeless population. Two main reasons for homelessness are increased lack of affordable rental housing and the increased number of persons living in poverty.

Homelessness costs continue through generations. Homeless persons, including their children are ill more often than housed persons. Being ill more often and not having a permanent home leads to school absences, which leads to poor education, which leads to another generation of family poverty.

C. Currently the response to homelessness is a very good working collaboration between a few agencies and a few individuals within those agencies. Meager financial resources are shared and stretched by sharing the financial burden among several agencies.

Through current MSHDA, DHS, local, Emergency Food and Shelter program, and other funding resources, local agencies are able to meet some of the emergency shelter needs, including a portion of the sub-populations of domestic violence victims, and youth in transition. Short term needs such as initial

casework services, first months rent, one time payments to prevent evictions, payment of utility shut off bills, emergency funds for car repair or other crisis, are met to some extent. However, there are very few resources to sustain those in temporary but long term emergency situations, such as waiting for disability payments to begin, starting over after a violent episode, and moving from foster care, incarceration, medical care facilities, etc. to independent living.

Emergency sheltering of the general population is currently handled through the use of motel vouchers, when funds are available, with three to five day stays and crisis casework services. Transporting persons to shelters in other locations is also used to deal with homeless persons.

CMH is able to provide some supportive living settings for the developmental disability population, but on a very limited basis. There are some housing units specific to senior citizens and persons with physical disabilities, but there are always long waiting lists for these units. Currently there are very few resources to assist those needing temporary or long term supportive housing, due to domestic violence, lack of life skills, youth, and mental and/or physical health issues. Often helping agencies are using sparse resources to assist the same families each time there is a crisis, without any permanent solution to the problems.

Whereas, there is an overabundance of student based housing in Isabella County; and many vacant houses in the city of Mt. Pleasant, there is a lack of affordable housing for those living at or below poverty levels, those who have lost their jobs, had a change in family structure, or are involved in other personal issues that detract from their ability to obtain or sustain housing. There are some section 8 housing vouchers that are being utilized and some income based apartment units. However, there are generally long waiting lists for the vouchers and units; indicating the need for more.

GENERAL SECTION

A. It would appear as if there is no really good baseline data regarding homelessness, either nationally or in Isabella County. Some national data suggests that approximately 1% of the total population, experience homelessness each year, and that this figure is probably low because it represents data from homeless service providers, and does not include persons not utilizing service providers (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, Urban Institute, and the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers, 2004).

According to 2000 census figures, there are 63,351 persons living in Isabella County. Considering the lack of reporting from DHS, law enforcement, and local schools, Isabella County's scope of homelessness could be slightly higher than the national estimates.

Locally, over a year long period, 336 families, either homeless or in immediate danger of becoming homeless, varying in size from 1-8 persons, were assisted by the Salvation Army, 243 families by 8-Cap, 93 persons by Women's Aid Services, Inc., and 35 families by CMH. These numbers do not fully represent the scope of the problem, because they do not include persons served by DHS; the number of youth living from friend to friend seen by local schools, or those homeless persons not having contact with helping agencies.

Approximately 3% of those counted in Isabella County were transients and needed only emergency shelter before moving on; approximately 30% of those counted needed either temporary or permanent supportive housing, and the remainder needed help obtaining and/or sustaining, permanent housing, usually in the form of some type of supplemental rental assistance until they were able to obtain jobs paying living wages, develop life skills, or other such criteria.

As noted above, many of the county residents who are helped with resources to prevent or end homelessness find themselves in the same situation many times over. In any case, very limited resources are used for chronically episodically homeless persons. This plan embraces a Housing First model, which assesses homeless persons' housing needs and meets them along with service provision to ensure sustainability.

Although, there has been no local study of the cost of homelessness to the community, there are many. (national studies regarding costs are discussed in the Summary Section of this document). The resources to deal with local homelessness are very limited, and if being used for this particular chronically homeless group, there are few resources remaining for other types of homelessness. Also, when the community can only provide short term solutions, the problems remain unsolved and continue to occur.

Contributor factors to homelessness in Isabella County are:

- financial issues
- lack of life skills and personal issues
- lack of decent affordable housing
- health issues
- violence and addictions

A closer look how these factors impact persons who become homeless follows:

Financial Issues

These issues range from national and local economy issues to lack of personal knowledge related to financial planning. Isabella County employers have access to a pool of potential employees willing to work part time, low paying jobs, through Central Michigan University. Lack of full time employment and low income employment, create situations where many non-skilled workers must work more than one job to obtain income sufficient to make a living wage. Many

cannot afford the adequate healthcare, transportation, or childcare needed to assist them in maintaining employment. Their low income status often leads to poor credit ratings, no income for emergencies, unexpected or large expenses, and inability to afford first months rent when they are forced to change residences.

Life Skills and Personal Issues

Some homelessness in Isabella County can be attributed to lack of skills necessary to obtain and/or sustain housing. These skills include the inability to maintain a home through regular cleaning and repair, lack of knowledge of community resources, and lack of personal skills. Lack of life skills can be attributed to generational poverty, inadequate education, low self esteem, inability to set personal boundaries, ensure ones safety at home, interact appropriately with others, and the inability to resolve conflicts.

Chronic homelessness can be associated with persons lacking life skills.

Personal issues include language and cultural barriers, lack of job skills, youth kicked out of the family home, change in family structure, lack of a support system, lack of accountability, lack of adequate or no transportation, and the choice not to have a permanent residence.

We believe that persons are best served by moving them into permanent housing as soon as possible; and then working on the skills required to sustain housing.

Housing Issues

Although, based on the number of vacant apartment complexes and homes, it would appear that there is a housing “glut” in Isabella County, the number of decent affordable housing units for the non-student population is insufficient to meet the needs of the local community members. As with local employers, local landlords have a large pool of student renters, so are able to populate housing units with several individuals, increasing local market rental costs. Many units, both apartment and single housing dwellings, sit vacant due to the current glut and the inability of local residents’ income to meet local rental costs.

Much of the current affordable housing is located several miles from local employment opportunities, and much of it is sub-standard quality housing.

Health Issues

Both physical and mental health issues contribute to homelessness. There are those persons whose intellectual abilities or mental illnesses will result in them needing temporary or permanent, supportive housing. There are also those persons who, due to their physical health status, either temporary or permanent, will become homeless and or require supportive housing.

Having a mental illness can create issues of chronic homelessness.

Public Policy and Natural Disasters

Public policy decisions such as a decision to go to war can create homelessness by taking away a family provider, through military service, injury and death. War and other policy decisions can create an unstable economy, leading to job loss, lower incomes, lack of or inadequate public transportation system, all contributing to homelessness.

Public policy effects Isabella County's population of children in foster care who are not adopted so age out of foster care and become homeless; and those being released from incarceration. Isabella County has no prison; however, there are Isabella County residents who have gone to and are released from, prisons and from the local jail. Many times there is no permanent plan for housing for these people, and they move in with family or friends for a short time and then become homeless. They are difficult to house population due to their criminal history.

Education system failure can be due to local, state, and federal policies leading to the failure of educational institutions to teach the technical and life skills necessary to obtain and sustain employment and housing.

Natural disasters can be both public and personal issues. Tornadoes can create housing problems for several persons in a community. Fires can destroy both single and multiple family units, leaving persons homeless.

Violence and Addictions

Persons become homeless due to experiencing violence in their living situations. This includes families where child abuse may require the current family provider to be removed from the home, leaving no means to sustain housing, and victims of domestic violence who have to leave the family home due to safety issues.

Addictions can create homeless through the inability to sustain employment and housing due to family finances being used for drugs, gambling, and other addictions.

Both addictions and family violence can create issues of chronic homelessness.

B. Several years ago, Isabella County addressed emergency homelessness with a homeless shelter used only for sleeping, with no casework services . There was no funding for staffing the shelter, so CMU volunteers provided some of the coverage; leaving personnel from various human service agencies providing coverage during the times when students were not available.

Also, historically, and to some extent currently, there is a feeling of, "If we build it they will come," when talking about a local shelter for homeless people. The fear

exists that county resources will be used to house and serve homeless persons from other counties.

There have been very few agencies and few individual persons within those agencies, who address the issue of homelessness for more than one day a year at the local Housing Summit. Although, from time to time community members voice dissatisfaction with and/or total lack of awareness of how homelessness is handled, they have not wanted to be part of a solution. Often those involved in the solutions are those who regularly deal with homeless issues, and/or receive resources through COC membership.

Historically, the Isabella County homeless population is made up of non-visible homeless persons such as people doubled up, youth aging out of foster care or couch surfing.”

Although, we cannot end the reasons or causes of homelessness, we can develop a plan to prevent some of the causes, and to deal with homelessness when it occurs in our county. In order to do that we will need to continue use of our current resources and make some changes.

Changes include obtaining accurate data to support our need for more resources a broader base of community involvement in the problems and solutions, expansion of current emergency/transitional/ and supportive housing services and resources; including motel vouchers, domestic violence shelter capacity, local faith based resources and services, transitional youth resources and services, habitat for humanity, and the use of MSHDA housing resources and programs.

C. The statements following our new vision stated in the Summary Section above, communicate the benefits of stable housing.

Cost effectiveness is indicated through meeting housing needs in a timely and efficient manner; and return on investments is through productive citizens leading to a productive community. Communities thrive on community involvement in planning, development, government, etc.

Planning structure and Process

D. In order to solve issues of homelessness in Isabella County, many perspectives were needed to define the causes and associated problems of homelessness before prescribing solutions. This initial charge was met by a collaborative group of human service agency staff, local businesspeople, non-profits, faith-based organizations, elected officials, landlords, educators, homeless, previously homeless, and near-homeless individuals in early summer, 2006. Committees and focus groups of homeless and formerly homeless persons, helped define homelessness in Isabella County, gave "undocumented"

information about the number and circumstances of homeless, scoped the problems that lead to and are associated with homelessness, identified those factors where the committee could effect influence or change, and set to work on a solutions-oriented approach to planning for change as it effects dealing with current homelessness and putting plans in place to prevent homelessness from occurring in the future.

Women's Aid Service, Inc. has been the lead agency through which these efforts have been channeled. However, all community factions named above provided the information used to develop the plan.

The plan is for the committees to be formed by January 15, 2007. Committees will meet at least quarterly to monitor their goal area. Monitoring to include: assessing progress and continuing need/rationale for the goal as written; and make recommendations to the entire Housing Organization Group for alterations or termination of the goal as needed.

Each year at our Housing Summit in May we will invite community members to join us in celebrating the success we have made that year in reaching our goals.

In order to obtain **sustainable** results, the committee looked at the contributors and root causes of homelessness. These contributors turned out to be as varied as the stories we heard from homeless, previously homeless, and near-homeless individuals interviewed in our focus groups. As a result, the plan keys on the population we're serving, asks for the federal definition of homeless to be broken down into transient, transitional, and supported categories, and looks to a single point of entry and case management approach as critical success elements in providing sustainable results.

Areas Addressed

- prevention and permanency
- providing everyone with the OPPORTUNITY for permanent housing (not everyone chooses to have housing)
- transient, permanent, and supportive housing categories
- utilization of both public and private resources
- contributing factors to homelessness

The committee incorporated several similar contributing factors to homelessness, into the 5 categories; therefore, it is important not to concentrate on the generic titles such as "Financial Issues", or "Life Skills," but to be vigilant about looking at the categories with the comprehensive descriptors found below:

Financial Issues

- Poor credit or credit rating
- Loss of income
- Unexpected/unplanned expenses outside of budget
- Cannot afford first month's rent

- insufficient income to plan for emergencies
- Change in family structure, including death of provider & divorce
- Lack of living wage
- Lack of money
- Lack of resources
- Economics
- Poor budgeting/money management
- Lack of knowledge of financial resources

**Over-arching issues is poverty -- no financial resources, no medical care, no food, etc. No basic needs met.*

Lack of Life Skills and Personal Issues

- Inability to resolve conflicts, set boundaries, and low self esteem
- Lack of skills to maintain a home
- Basic home care skills
- Lack of awareness of helping resources in community
- Inability to ensure personal safety

* Contributing to life skills are personal issues which included:

- Language and cultural barriers
- Need for independence
- Choice
- Desire/drive/understanding/lack of accountability
- Generational poverty
- Pattern of abuse or neglect in family; family dysfunction
- Unplanned pregnancy
- Being kicked out of parent's home
- Fire and natural disasters
- Criminal record
- No transportation or inadequate transportation

Housing Issues

- Lack of decent and of affordable housing
- Couch surfing
- No permanent mailing address, or way to be reached
- No living wage to provide resources for a home
- Moving from one residence to another
- No where to go where you feel welcome
- Not knowing if you're going to have a place to sleep each night
- Not feeling safe at home
- Rents inflated due to students
- Can't afford security deposits

- No money for utilities
- Lack of availability of three bedroom rental units
- Waiting list for subsidized housing
- Poor reputation so landlords won't rent to you

Health Issues

- Mental health issues
- Inability to understand or relate to societal "norms"
- Lack of intellectual capability (low functioning)
- Behavior issues, i.e. anger
- Mental illness
- Physical health problems
- Illness disrupting ability to work
- Large medical expenses -- can not afford house payment
- Job loss due to injury/sickness

Violence and Addictions

- Domestic violence
- Substance abuse
- Gambling addictions

Our Goal development included looking at current strengths and weaknesses as they relate to contributors to homelessness.

GOALS

Goals were determined and outlined based on the "SMART" system. Following are the results.

Financial Issues

Goal 1: Address permanent housing needs of individuals/families through the development and implementation of a housing first plan.

Actions

- Committee to start process by November 1, 2006, obtain involvement by November 15, 2006, continue process as grants become available
- Seek MSHDA Grants, Foundation Challenge grants and utilize fundraising to obtain funding for goal projects
- Consider interest earned at the Community Foundation
- Determine grant RFP's for fund requests
- Develop a focal point for the fund distribution and collection
- Request the assistance of the Community Foundation and faith based community in promoting the challenge grants
- Utilize Isabella County's definition of homeless when distributing funds

- Target churches, media, businesses, CMU, Civic groups/community service luncheons, and the general public for funds
- Develop presentations by April 2007 and utilize existing programs/resources

Measures

- Amount of funds contributed and number of contributors
- Amount of funding obtained through grants
- Number of volunteer hours spent annually
- Number of existing programs/agencies receiving donations
- Media attention given

Goal 2: Single point of entry for homeless related services.

Actions

- Committee to start process by February 1, 2007, obtain involvement by June 2007, evaluate progress at least quarterly
- Exploration of Gratiot's GREAT system
- Checklist in the initial application for services needed so clients don't fill out paperwork at every single agency.
- Develop system to share data between agencies
- Develop tool to provide data regarding costs
- Continuum and the Collaborative become focal points.
- 211 administered through Listening Ear
- Tracking system to count homeless persons developed by May 2007
- Request assistance from Bridges project thru CMU by March 2007
- Develop Website and employee who would update this website.
- Commitment obtained from each agency regarding who will update and track data by March 2007
- Examination of transportation cost, agency advocates' time, duplication of effort at least quarterly

Measures

- Number of times each agency uses the website
- Number of persons assisted through this system
- Increase and/or decrease in time spent in assisting persons
- Web-based system in place
- Baseline of costs by Sept. 08; compare to similar factors of Sept. 09
- Approximately 100 cases opened for general services covering: financial needs, housing, utilities, food, transportation, per month

Goal 3: Establishment of 211 community resource system

Actions

- Committee to start process by February 1, 2007, obtain involvement by June 2007, evaluate progress at least quarterly
- Develop persuasive plan and actions for Listening Ear to be named the focal point for 211
- Develop a letter-writing campaign to get legislation passed to implement 211 by February 2007; have constituents copy the Continuum so we're aware of the letters going out
- Phone calls to our representatives to keep on top of the issues starting by February 2007 and continuing quarterly

Measures

- System implemented and running smoothly by 2009

Goal 3: Increased financial support available for homeless services using the Housing First model; to include education through casework services over the next ten years.

Actions

- Committee to start process by November 5, 2006, obtain funding beginning January 1, 2007, evaluate progress at least quarterly
- Continue to request funds through grants, through local, state, and federal funding sources, for local homeless providers beginning February 2007 and continuing as needed and available
- Better coordination and sharing of resources between agencies, resulting in less duplication of services beginning November 2007

Measures

- Level of increased funding measured yearly at housing summit
- Track both receipt and distribution of funds, as well as continued gaps in needs for client assistance on going

Goal 4: Business community educated and engaged in hiring local, full-time employees at a living wage with benefits

Actions

- Committee to start process by February 1, 2007, obtain involvement by June 2008, evaluate progress at least quarterly
- Have Representative Bill Caul, or current rep. working at the state level
- Conduct Chamber of Commerce seminars on the benefits of full-time employees receiving living wages with benefits – need incentives to minimize the costs, beginning September 2007 and continuing at least quarterly

- Provide employer incentives such as job readiness and training

Measures

- Changes in the unemployment rate for the county
- Number of people going off Medicaid and going onto employer-assisted or covered insurance benefits
- Number of local full time jobs available
- Level of local wage rates
- Number of full-time, benefited employees in Isabella County tracked through Chamber of Commerce statistics

Life Skills/Personal Issues

Goal 1: Collaboration for curriculum development in our schools, beginning at the pre-school level and throughout high school with skills taught relevant to life.

Actions

- Committee to start process by February 1, 2007, obtain involvement by June 2007, evaluate progress at least quarterly
- Meet with key stakeholders, i.e. PTO's, RESD, curriculum directors, human service agencies to reinforce the need for including life skills in education
- Test students on current life skills knowledge and application by October 2007
- Develop life skills curriculum and/or components of curriculums
- Incorporate curriculum into area schools plans
- Teach skills
- Meet with PAC's to gain statewide support for life skills in early childhood education by January 2009

Measures

- Number of life skills classes or modules taught in Isabella County schools
- Rubrics included for life skills, not just academic knowledge
- Legislation passed that supports life skills education
- Rubrics for life skills in place at the schools
- Testing results
- Number of modules developed
- Number of life skills offered in the schools

Goal 3: Local students graduate from high school

Actions

- Committee to start process by February 1, 2007, obtain involvement by June 2007, evaluate progress at least quarterly
- Develop a plan to keep students in high school by October 2007

- Seek partnerships between public/private/adult/alternative education/schools/school boards/and government officials to draft the plan by December of 2007

Measures

- Percentage of students receiving high school diplomas now vs. after developing the plan
- Track high school graduates and drop-outs by percentage rather than raw numbers

Goal 4: Adult life skills classes taught/offered following housing assessment and placement.

Actions

- Committee to start process by February 1, 2007, obtain involvement by June 2007, evaluate progress at least quarterly
- Obtain membership and involvement of educators, business persons, and human service agencies
- Develop a curriculum
- Secure locations for classes
- Decide who will provide personnel to facilitate classes

Measures

- Engage key stakeholders in developing the classes by November, 2007
- Tie taking life skills classes to financial rewards
- Number of agencies involved, number of classes offered, number of persons participating in classes

Goal 5: Those experiencing personal issues that lead to un-wanted homelessness will be provided with permanent housing first, where indicated, along with services to assist them in preventing/ending their homelessness.

Actions

- Committee to start process by February 1, 2007, obtain involvement by June 2007, evaluate progress at least quarterly
- Exploration of needs related to housing for various identified personal issues.
- Exploration of current available services
- Development of list of resources
- Disbursement of list
- Creation of baseline numbers of current numbers of persons seeking services
- Development of a housing first plan to meet needs

- Obtain agencies willing to give personnel to the project/to provide services
- Obtain funds for service provision/emergency assistance

Measures

- Compare current number of families assisted after a fire or a natural disaster to number assisted after development of a coordinated plan
- Number of persons requesting services after experiencing episodic personal issues
- Development of list of needs for the personal issues identified at visioning meeting, by March of 2007
- Development of resource list to meet these needs, by May 2007

Housing

Goal 1: Provide housing rental assistance to allow time for homeless persons to become self-sufficient.

Actions

- Committee to start process by November 5, 2006, evaluate progress at least quarterly
- Develop housing first model to use
- Determine population(s) to provide services to
- Develop assessment tool for individual families to determine permanent housing needs
- Forge working agreements with landlords for permanent housing based on collaboration with case work services
- Work to sustain the housing individuals/families currently have
- Explore MSHDA rental assistance program
- Work closely with local MSHDA personnel to track waiting lists, update them, assist in locating persons on list, to secure more vouchers for county
- Hire housing resource person to provide casework services not met by another agency
- Obtain funding to support casework services
- Obtain funding to provide rental assistance program

Measures

- 5 years for education and then collaboration and proving ourselves with testimonials and experience
- Impact 5-10 families/month among agencies involved in program
- Number of families provided services that have sustained housing

Goal 2: Creative ways determined to utilize older, vacant homes including use as housing first permanent units.

Actions

- Committee to start process by November 1, 2006, obtain involvement by November 15 2006, evaluate progress at least quarterly
- Determine population(s) to use units
- Develop housing first plan for various populations
- Determine service providers to provide services for sustainability
- Obtain MOU's with service providers willing to provide sustainability services
- Develop assessment tool for individuals/families
- Assess individuals/families to determine eligibility for housing first program
- Research "Own Your Own Apartment Complex" for safe, affordable housing. Model through the Annie Casey Foundation.
- Consider jail release work programs for rehabbing homes
- Work with the city planner to develop options
- Explore rent to buy with the older housing and buying your apartment an option
- Explore/visit Clare County Hard Times Café's program of using non-traditional housing dollars in regard to Rural Development
- Leverage life skills classes by utilizing homeless/near-homeless individuals in rehabbing of homes
- Meet with Habitat for Humanity for input to the process regarding code enforcement issues, contractors, etc.

Measures

- Exploration of options completed by 10/07
- Homes secured on going; beginning 11/06 and continuing at a rate dependent on need, funding availability, and persons to Older, vacant
- Number of individuals/families utilize non-traditional housing dollars for USDA Rural Development housing
- Number of individuals/families involved in the housing first program
- 5-10 year plan developed based on the options identified

Goal 3: Prevention of homelessness

Actions

- Committee to start process by February 1, 2007, obtain involvement by June 2007, evaluate progress at least quarterly
- Obtain involvement of discharge planners such as: jail administration, DHS foster care & Family to Family, hospitals and nursing homes
- Utilize creative/non-traditional housing. See Goal 2.
- Utilize MSHDA rental assistance with case worker services
- Increase in-county/city legislation regarding housing standards
- Educate landlord associations about assistance, tenant's rights, Section 8 benefits of working with tenants
- Help with weatherization of housing

- Assist with security deposit, utility short off and eviction notices
- Work to build assets -- opportunity for home ownership
- Look at non-traditional sources of grants or multiple foundation grants (local) for up to \$1000 for transportation dollars.
- Increase Dial-A-Ride services' hours of service.

Measures

- Success measured two years out
- Number of discharge planners involved and plans implemented
- Involvement of city officials
- Number of and attendance at informational landlord seminars
- Baseline of evictions measured in two years
- Decrease in the number of repeat homeless
- Decrease in the number of chronic homeless
- Utilization of MSHDA Housing Vouchers

Goal 4: Obtaining a Housing Resource person to lessen the eviction rate and increase homeless service provision.

Actions

- Committee to start process by February 1, 2007, obtain involvement by June 2007, evaluate progress at least quarterly
- Possibly use a CMU student intern working through the Continuum (Family Studies Major) until funding can be obtained
- Provide case services while acquiring MSHDA rental assistance or other means of sustaining housing until client able to self-sustain
- Seek and secure funding
- Research resources, hire staff person and intern

Measures

- Intern in place by 10/09
- Long-term position in place by 10/10
- Day Center/resource place secured by 2/11
- Eviction base rate vs. rate one year after Housing Resource person in place

Goal 5: Temporary housing option (shelter) available for short term emergency situations with focus on housing first and services for sustainability.

Actions

- Committee to start process by February 1, 2007, obtain involvement by June 2007, evaluate progress at least quarterly
- Focus on one to 30 days transitional/shelter housing
- Determine options for temporary or transitional housing

- Develop housing first model to be used for individuals/families in emergency shelter
- Determine sustainability services to be offered
- Determine agencies to provide sustainability services
- Explore alternatives to current motel vouchers for crisis
- Explore Compassionate Care Network
- Conduct needs assessment for transitional, emergency services
- Forecast of cost of physical shelter and maintenance to be completed
- Assess utilization and success stories of those moving to permanent housing

Measures

- Number of people housed
- Casework services available
- Number of individuals/families moved to permanent housing (outcome success)

Goal 6: Temporary and Long Term Supportive housing for those with DD, mental illnesses, physical disabilities,

Actions

- Committee to start process by February 1, 2007, obtain involvement by June 2007, evaluate progress at least quarterly
- Needs assessment performed to identify the populations and numbers
- Education of the community needed for integration of individuals into the community

Measures

- Housing secured for those with physical and/or mental disabilities
- Casework services provided to assist with issues related to maintaining housing
- Scattered site supportive housing
- Number of complexes and scattered site units available
- Utilization of supportive housing
- Neighborhood meetings to address concerns/issues/education

Goal 7: Permanent, safe, confidential, handicap accessible housing and supportive services provided for those homeless or at risk of being homeless due to violence, substance abuse, and/or other addictive behaviors.

Actions

- Committee to start process by November 1, 2006, evaluate progress at least quarterly
- Identify and provide access and resources, emergency shelter services for those in need, focus of services to be on housing first

- Assess each individual/family for housing permanency needs
- Determine needed services and service providers
- Provide services for sustainability of housing
- Assess extent of risk of homelessness and risk factors
- Provide substance abuse and other addiction counseling including assessment and/or commitment into treatment programs
- Provide safe, confidential housing for domestic violence victims including supportive housing first services
- Needs assessment to determine current number of units/programs needed
- Work with Clare & Gratiot counties to enhance capacity and handicap accessibility of current dv shelter serving all 3 counties
- Plan facility upgrading
- Identify and seek funding sources
- Identify current resources, in-patient facilities
- Provide substance abuse and other addiction counseling including assessment and/or commitment into treatment programs
- Provide safe, confidential housing for domestic violence victims including supportive services
- Develop community group to educate how these issues affect homelessness and gain buy-in

Measures

- Needs assessment to determine current number of units/programs needed
- Safe, confidential, housing available to meet community needs by 2/09
- Committee by 5/07
- Needs assessed by 12/07
- Plans for updating dv shelter by 12/08
- Funding options to update dv shelter explored by 2/09
- Funds obtained by 8/09
- Updates/enhancements completed by 12/10
- DV emergency housing and service provision current and on-going
- Substance abuse assessments, counseling, and placement current and on-going
- Number of DV victims housed, provided with services
- Number of substance abuse persons provided with supportive services

Health Issues

Goal 1: More accurate figures on the true number of homeless in Isabella County.

Actions

- Committee to start process by February 1, 2007, obtain involvement by June 2007, evaluate progress at least quarterly
- Survey inquiry in cold months, preferably January, February 2007
- Tool for all agencies to use to track homeless persons served
- Regular tracking of homeless persons being served

Measures

- Accurate statistics representing the number of people homeless, including the chronically, and continuously episodic homeless population
- Results of the survey to be communicated back to the committee the end of February, 2008
- Monthly reports to the COC on homeless numbers from participating agencies, on-going

Goal 2: Mentally impaired people who need services and are not yet getting them are identified and assisted in getting services.

Actions

- Committee to start process by February 1, 2007, obtain involvement by June 2007, evaluate progress at least quarterly
- All human service agencies educated about MI symptoms and how to access services by the end of the 2007

Measures

- MI homeless individuals identified
- Number of trainings held, number of attendees
- Number of MI adults will increase use of services

Goal 3: People with sudden catastrophic illness causing emergency financial crisis will receive assistance

Actions

- Committee to start process by February 1, 2007, obtain involvement by June 2007, evaluate progress at least quarterly
- Target MPACF funds for assistance
- Collaborate with medical programs at CMU and MID
- Provide community wellness programs to help prevent catastrophic illness
- Promote AIDS Council
- Increase the number of support groups
- Educate legislators so that policy doesn't concentrate on blaming the victim
- Determine who will assess persons requesting help
- Determine who will manage resources to assist

Measures

- Reduction of the number of individuals receiving denials, because they “fall through the cracks, when they seek assistance due to sudden health issues
- PAC's and legislator's targeted for information on why we need to broaden restrictive definitions so that all who need assistance are able to receive help
- Public forums held within 3 years (10/09) to educate both community members and politicians
- Liaison at the policy level who is tracking policy changes
- Funds obtained