

Blueprint of the Plan to End Homelessness

in St. Clair County, Michigan
October 2006



“Everyone Deserves a Place to Call Home”

Prepared by:

**St. Clair County
Community Services Coordinating Body**
• Housing and Support Services Work Group

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ST. CLAIR COUNTY
COMMUNITY SERVICES COORDINATING BODY
THE MULTI-PURPOSE COLLABORATIVE BODY



“...leading the way in the development of services to meet the needs of the community.”

October, 2006

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dear Community Member,

We remind ourselves, our community, and those beyond our community that no one in this country should have to go without a place to call home.

St. Clair County joins with every other county in Michigan in developing a local plan to see if there could be better approaches to getting and keeping people housed.

There are an estimated 700 homeless people over the course of a year in St. Clair County. Our shelters are often too full and turn people away. Additionally, more support services to assist homeless families are needed.

Although we do have some resources within our area to minister to the needs of the homeless, there is much room for improvement. We have seen large increases in the numbers of homeless families. More and more working people are among the homeless. Rising numbers of youth and victims of domestic abuse are seeking shelter. At the same time, funding for local homeless programs and for publicly assisted housing continues to drop.

I believe that St. Clair County is willing enough and resourceful enough to truly be a model for reducing if not ending homelessness.

It is my hope that this plan is adopted by everyone in the community and that each one of us feels a sense of ownership in addressing this issue.

In attempt to wrap our arms around a big project, we asked ourselves many questions including:

- What would it take to make stable and affordable housing available to everyone?
- How would the housing continuum serve the chronically homeless; those with a mental illness and /or persons with substance abuse issues?
- What would need to change so that working one full-time job meant you could afford to be housed?¹
- How would we be sure that hitting a patch of bad luck – losing a job, getting sick or injured – did not mean losing your home?

- How would that housing continuum serve those transitioning from the correctional system? Those transitioning from a residential substance abuse program? Those exiting foster care?
- What aren't we doing now that we would need to do? What additional resources would we need? What systemic barriers would we need to change? What things are outside our control?
- How would we define "ending homelessness?" How would we know when we are there?

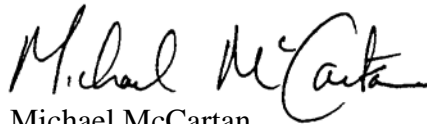
Answers to questions like these are complex and require resources, commitment, and sustained interest of the entire community. This plan serves as a Blue Print for discussion and implementation of activities which move us toward the realization that

"Everyone Deserves a Place to Call Home"

The plan is dynamic and will continue to evolve as our local providers and citizens respond to the challenges and opportunities which are a part of this journey.

I would like to thank the many public and private agencies that contributed to the development of this plan and are providing leadership with regard to homelessness and affordable housing issues. St. Clair County has a rich history of cooperation when it comes to addressing important social issues. Certainly, our continuing ability to do so will be a key building block as we wrap our arms around the tasks necessary to implement this plan.

Sincerely,



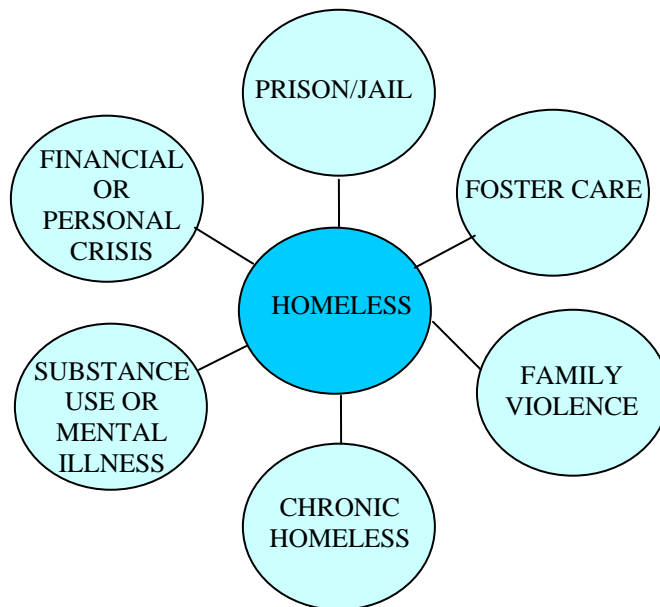
Michael McCartan
Chairman, St. Clair County
Community Services Coordinating Body

Introduction

The Community Services Coordinating Body of St. Clair County has a plan to mobilize the nonprofit, public, and private sectors in the community in an alliance to end homelessness.

On any day in St. Clair County between 65 -75 people, including children, are homeless. In addition, many more families are at risk of becoming homeless due to a variety of factors such as those listed below:

Points of Entry Into Homelessness in St. Clair County



The diagram above specifies the sources of homelessness as identified by local service providers working with this population. They include both short-term crisis situations and chronic issues such as mental illness and addictions. Children are taking the brunt of the impact as more and more families experience homelessness. The average age of the shelter user is going down in a society where the average age is increasing.

Homelessness is a complex social problem, which does not lend itself to simple solutions. Yet we believe that great strides can be made toward ending homelessness if we start by addressing housing issues, then ensure that there are the resources and supports in place to sustain that

housing. While we do not have to end poverty in its entirety to end homelessness, ultimately, our ability to end homelessness rests upon the degree to which we are able to wed the efforts of the homeless service delivery system to those of other mainstream programs and systems of care—programs and systems whose shortcomings have contributed to its growth. Only through comprehensive collaborative strategies will we be able to fully assist people to access and sustain affordable housing and achieve community integration and economic stability.

Currently **Safe Horizons** has a 28-bed capacity at its **Pathway Shelter Home**. These beds are available to serve individuals and families. The Pathway Shelter Home has, on occasion, arranged for additional beds at a nearby vacant facility.

Safe Horizons also funds forty four (44) supportive housing units within the city of Port Huron. The recent addition of this resource to the local housing continuum has had a positive impact on relieving the incidence of homeless recidivism. Additional supportive housing and staff support is needed.

Massive Impact Ministries, a non-profit, founded in 1998 also provides transitional housing and accepts clients via the Michigan Prisoner Reentry Initiative (MRPI). The program will also begin serving women in 2007.

The Clearview Program is a residential program of Sacred Heart Rehabilitation Center and serves women recovering from substance abuse issues. Clientele of this program are often homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

The Harbor for Youth is a 10-bed coed facility serving children ages 11-17. The Harbor is a non-profit agency which is the only runaway and homeless youth emergency shelter program in the Thumb Area of Michigan.

The Wings of the Harbor is a 4-bed transitional living program ensuring homeless youth ages 16 through 21 are provided shelter, skills training, and support services.

Mother Hills House is a comparatively new arrival within the housing support service system. Mother Hills is functioning more as an emergency shelter facility and houses between 40 – 60 individuals each day.

An overall goal of any local planning strategy to end homelessness must include the efforts of all providers. Therefore, an effort to help clarify support and integrate the work and process of all providers is an important ingredient to developing a collaborative response to homelessness.

For the purposes of this plan, we used the definition of homelessness as “being without a bed, room, apartment, or other place of one’s own to live for at least one night”. The Housing and Support Services Work Group has referenced the Federal McKinney Act for the formal definition of homelessness.

Vision

In ten years or less, all individuals and families facing homelessness in St. Clair County will have access to safe, decent, affordable housing and the resources and supports necessary to sustain it.

Mission

In support of our broader **VISION STATEMENT** we have a more immediate **MISSION** to . . .

- Prevent homelessness whenever possible;
- Rapidly re-house people when homelessness cannot be prevented;
- Provide case management services that promote housing stability and self sufficiency;

Goals

In our efforts to accomplish our **VISION** and **MISSION** we will pursue the following goals . . .

- Move people into housing first;
- Stop discharging people into homelessness;
- Improve outreach and prevention services for homeless people;
- Emphasize permanent solutions;
- Increase the supply of permanent supportive housing and support services;
- Increase the supply of accessible housing;
- Redirect funding to accomplish goals;
- Improve interagency coordination;
- Create innovative new partnerships to end homelessness;
- Increase economic opportunity for homeless people;
- Identify and address gaps in the service system;
- Enlist the support, leadership and participation of the community to accomplish the **VISION** to end homelessness;

Guiding Principles

The Ten Year Plan to end homelessness in St. Clair County recognizes that:

- Strategies will be periodically revised as needed to react to changing conditions or additional information.
- Although the state provides important support and coordination, leadership and implementation must come from the local community.
- Local adoption of the plan may mean a reprioritization of resources such that funds are allocated in support of attaining plan objectives.
- The input and participation of service users is critical to the successful implementation of the initiative to end homelessness.
- Securing the endorsement and ongoing participation of local leaders from the public and private system is necessary to assist with funding and/or system changes.
- Specific outcome measures must be incorporated so that the community has the means to determine progress.
- Best practices need to be identified and replicated as a means of assuring quality and promoting collaboration toward common goals.
- A lead entity such as the Community Services Coordinating Body must monitor plan progress and ensure accountability.
- Securing participation and approval of the entire community, especially community leaders outside of government, is necessary to build and sustain the political and community will required to achieve the vision.
- Homelessness affects all members of a community and requires everyone working collaboratively to make changes.
- And last, but not least . . .

“Everyone Deserves a Place to Call Home”

Implementing the Plan

This plan represents a shift in our approach and a retooling of the homeless service delivery system in St. Clair County. The gradual redevelopment of current resources, the development of additional public and private resources, and renewed interagency collaboration strategies requires the ability and willingness of stakeholders to provide the leadership necessary for change to occur.

It should also be noted that stakeholders may find it necessary to develop periodic action plans that detail short-term implementation strategies in support of specific parts of the 10-Year Plan.

As part of the Community Services Coordinating Body of St. Clair County the Housing and Support Services Work Group continues to play a key leadership role in addressing issues of homelessness and access to affordable housing.

Our current service delivery system is focused more upon managing homelessness rather than eliminating it. Therefore, the many public and private agencies who are represented within the work groups are thinking about a different paradigm, a different manner of organizing and delivering services.

EMPHASIS AREA: *Plan Sustainability*

The 10-Year Plan to end homelessness in St. Clair County will require adequate support, structure, and measurements in order to establish and maintain the long-term momentum necessary to accomplish the VISION of the initiative. Initiatives within this area include such things as: **Data Collection, Project Support, Leadership Development, Outcome Measures, and Community Education.**

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY I.D. DECISION MAKERS	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	RESOURCES	TARGET DATES
<p><u>DATA COLLECTION:</u></p> <p>An updated needs assessment will be undertaken in order to refresh the data and statistics concerning homelessness in St. Clair County. The assessment will include input from service users as well as providers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing and Support Services Work Group • Community Services Coordinating Body 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I. D. of gaps in services delivery system • Updated profile information on service users • Updated information as to type and extent of community resources available to address affordable housing/homeless issues • Continued use, expansion, and reliance upon HMIS data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negligible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey design - November 2006 • Implement - January 2007 • Analysis - February 2007 • Repeat process in 2012 and 2017
<p><u>PROJECT SUPPORT:</u></p> <p>Adequate staff resources will be required to assure that the provisions and activities of the 10-Year Plan are properly overseen and monitored</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Services Coordinating Body Steering Committee • Local, public and private funding sources • FEMA • Veterans Administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A .5 FTE Project Coordinator will be identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$20,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November 2007

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY I.D. DECISION MAKERS	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	RESOURCES	TARGET DATES
<p><u>LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT:</u></p> <p>In addition to the public/private agency leadership the plan will involve “champions” from the corporate and faith based sectors of the community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Services Coordinating Body Steering Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selected corporate and faith based leaders will help promote and support the initiatives of the plan Community awareness of and participation in effort to reduce homelessness will be enhanced Access to private sources of funding and support will be enhanced Broader constituencies of support and participation will be identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negligible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> October 2007 – Recruit November 2007 – Orient December 2007 – Develop action plan
<p><u>OUTCOME MEASURES:</u></p> <p>In an effort to determine if implementation of initiative related to the plan makes a difference, it is necessary to monitor key outcome measures. (It may be necessary to make modifications to the measurement plan based upon data findings and/or new or emerging opportunities)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Service Coordinating Body Local, public and private providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decrease in number of people discharged from institutions into shelter Decrease of length of stay in shelter Decrease in need for emergency shelter services Increase in number of Supportive Housing Units Increase of case management capacity (Supportive Services) Increase in number of affordable housing units Decrease in number of evictions Increase in legal services capacity to serve homeless or those at risk Decrease in length of time to access supportive services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be determined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome measures monitored quarterly commencing January 1, 2007
<p><u>COMMUNITY MEASURES:</u></p> <p>Strategies will be undertaken to garner the participation and support of the community in the initiative to end homelessness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Services Coordinating Body Steering Committee Corporate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with Times Herald Editorial Board to launch initiative Public presentation annually regarding the 10-Year Plan initiative to end homelessness Homelessness and affordable housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$5,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> January 2007 Ongoing April 2007

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY I.D. DECISION MAKERS	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	RESOURCES	TARGET DATES
	champions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith based champions • Provider agencies 	local symposia conducted to assess progress, provide community education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular radio spots featuring service providers and/or recipients 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April 2010

EMPHASIS AREA: *Prevention*

The best strategy for those at risk of homelessness is to prevent its occurrence in the first place. Prevention efforts include approaches such as one-time or short-term rent or mortgage assistance, legal assistance programs, representative payee and direct payment programs and housing placement services. Also included are more systemic strategies that seek to prevent homelessness by ensuring that people leaving jails, prisons, foster care, or treatment facilities are not discharged to the shelter system, as well as strategies that seek to forestall homelessness in cases of family crises, such as domestic violence. Although much is already happening in the area of prevention, the work group wants to increase the scope and responsiveness of the current system.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY I.D. DECISION MAKERS	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	RESOURCES	TARGET DATES
<p><u>LEGAL SERVICES:</u></p> <p>Expand the community's capacity to respond to the legal issues impacting people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing and Support Services Work Group • Legal Aid • County Bar Association • Law Enforcement • Prosecutor/Judiciary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More private attorneys willing to provide free services • Social service providers more informed concerning Landlord-Tenant and housing laws, public benefit determination, consumer rights • Appropriate referrals from shelter staff and other service providers • More representation on civil issues that interfere with a clients ability to be self sufficient • Decrease in evictions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be determined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June 2008
<p><u>DISCHARGE PLANNING:</u></p> <p>Improve linkage to permanent housing and services for people exiting institutions (MPRI, foster care, domestic violence shelters, etc.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing and Support Services Work Group • Local and State prisoner re-entry services • Local, public and private service providers • DHS • Local parole and probation representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer people being discharged to the street or to a shelter • Interagency agreement/understanding to avoid discharge to the street or shelter • Cooperative agreements between and among public and private providers regarding housing needs of special populations (e.g. criminal sexual conduct). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be determined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2007 Ongoing • 2007

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY I.D. DECISION MAKERS	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	RESOURCES	TARGET DATES
<p><u>FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE:</u></p> <p>Re-examine and refine the assets available for financial assistance that can be used to prevent eviction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing and Support Service Work Group • Local Housing Authority • Local Section 8 providers • Local, municipal government representatives • Corporate/Labor Representation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification of process to access one-time, short-term and/or transitional financial assistance • Decrease in evictions • Additional funding sources canvassed included FEMA (EFSP), Veterans Trust Fund, State Emergency Relief Funding, and Church Congregations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negligible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2007
<p><u>CENTRAL INTAKE:</u></p> <p>A central point of system entry for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless is critical to developing a coordinated and efficient service system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Services Coordinating Body • Local Public / Private Agency Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease in time necessary to access services • Coordinated and individualized consumer action plan immediately available • Minimum / elimination of duplication of services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be determined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2007
<p><u>DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION:</u></p> <p>Enhance, expand, and where necessary create programming and resources aimed at reducing and preventing the incidence of domestic violence. Domestic violence is the leading cause of homelessness in our community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local public/private agency leadership • Community Services Coordinating Body • Housing and Support Service Workgroup • Legal Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced demand for shelter • Reduced incidence of reported domestic violence • Increase in formal community-wide prevention programming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be determined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2008

EMPHASIS AREA: *Rapid Re-Housing*

As described in the National Alliance to End Homelessness' 10-Year Plan, a HOUSING FIRST approach seeks to help people exit homelessness as soon as possible by placing them in permanent housing and linking them to needed services. The factors that have contributed to a household's homelessness can best be addressed once the household is housed. The type of permanent housing will vary dependent upon the needs and preferences of each household.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY I.D. DECISION MAKERS	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	RESOURCES	TARGET DATES
<p>AVAILABILITY:</p> <p>Additional affordable permanent housing must be developed and sustained as part of the overall strategy to end homelessness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Services Coordinating Body • Housing and Support Services Work Group • Local, public and private providers • Landlord/ tenant associations • Local government municipalities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased availability of permanent housing for individuals and families • Increased subsidies for persons with serious and persistent disabilities who can live independently in market rate housing with appropriate supportive services • Increased availability of supportive housing (transition or permanent) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be determined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2008 Ongoing • 2008 Ongoing
<p>ACCESSIBILITY:</p> <p>The service system will seek to redesign and/or clarify issues related to accessibility to integrated services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing and Support services Work Groups • Local, public and private providers • Landlord/tenant associations • Local government municipalities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification of program entry requirements • Enhanced capacity to link households in temporary housing with appropriate market housing • Increased coordination of outreach for persons who are homeless and may not be requesting services • System wide adoption of Housing First approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be determined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2007 • 2008 • 2007 Ongoing • 2007 Ongoing

EMPHASIS AREA: *Comprehensive Case Management*

Housing stability is a function of a household’s ability to access resources that ensure that, when a crisis occurs, it does not threaten the security of that household. Supports include affordable healthcare with mental health and substance abuse services, stable employment, and for families, childcare. Such supports are all the more critical in poor households, for whom a crisis means choosing between addressing essential needs for housing, food, or health care.

Comprehensive case management services will ensure that households have access to a full range of resources and supports necessary to protect the stability of their housing.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY I.D. DECISION MAKERS	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	RESOURCES	TARGET DATES
<p><u>ACCESS:</u></p> <p>Linkage to available community revenues will be expanded and enhanced as part of the overall strategy to end homelessness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing and Support Service Work Group • Public and private provider agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanded community based case management services • Integrated strategies between the homeless service system and mainstream service systems that ensure formerly homeless households have access to all appropriate community supports • Increased housing stability and reduced future risk of homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$55,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February 2007 • 2008 • 2007 Ongoing

Recognitions/Resources

This plan is influenced by a number of important resources including, but not necessarily limited to:

- ❶ Many public and private stakeholders in St. Clair County
- ❷ The work done by the National Alliance to End Homelessness
- ❸ The previous work done by the St. Clair County Community Services Coordinating Body (Housing and Support Services Work Group)
- ❹ Homeless Task Force of St. Clair County