

10 Year Plan to End Homelessness in Barry County



Our Vision:

“In 10 years... Barry County will have its services and funding coordinated to offer homeless prevention resources to those in need while also offering access to safe, supportive, affordable housing to all individuals and families”

10 Year Plan to End Homelessness in Barry

County

Plan Outline

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 - b. Increase awareness and outreach to community
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- B. Strategies:**
 - a. Formation of workgroup including agency decision makers
 - b. Ongoing campaign (McKinney-Vento, Community Collaborative, education of key service providers)
Research existing Resource Center models
 - c. Partnerships-Commitments of dollars, local townships, government, creation of endowment, research of HUD and McKinney-Vento
 - d. Communication assessment

- C. Outcomes:**
 - a. Streamline assessment and referral forms
 - b. Countywide understanding and education of homelessness/resources
- Family Resource and assessment center
 - c. Creation of agency focused on funding along with formal allocation process
 - d. Formal evaluation process of services and programs receiving funding

7. Housing

- A. Goals:**
 - a. Immediate, safe housing for all (providing stability in housing before addressing other needs)
 - b. Resources to help with housing for those with or without income
 - c. Case-management after receiving housing assistance

- B. Strategies:**
 - a.
 - Identify available housing, transitional, permanent, shelters, etc.
 - Increased housing development (affordable) with community, developers involvement
 - Leasing assistance
 - Increase in Section 8 Vouchers
 - Shelters or emergency solution for men and youth
 - b.
 - Marketing and public awareness campaign
 - Assessment of current grant allocation
 - c.
 - Identifying existing case-management, future partnerships
 - Resource and assessment center reviewing progress

- C. Outcomes:**
 - a. Affordable, safe housing for ALL
Housing information available on web-site for all county residents
 - b. Funding from various sources available to all tied to case management
 - c. Non-Reoccurrence of homelessness with those receiving assistance

8. Support Services

A. Goals:

- a. -Organized assessment, case management
- b. -Identify needs
- c. -Education and training to maintain stable housing available to all

B. Strategies:

- a. -Communication within agencies (HMIS, single-point of entry)
-Communication with public
- b. -Workgroup formed to review models focusing on service delivery
-Presentation regarding efficient process for service delivery to front-line workers and community

C. Outcomes:

- a. -Successful, independent and supported families/individuals

9. Attachments:

A. Point-In-Time count forms

B. Homeless survey results

10. Acknowledgements

Once upon a time.....



That is how most of the traditional stories begin that we all grew up hearing and reading. In Barry County we are blessed with many positive, heartwarming real-life stories. We also have our share of stories without fairy tale endings. For this reports' purpose, these specific stories revolve around homelessness.

Let's start at the beginning. In order to address an issue, we need to confirm there is a problem. The Barry County Continuum of Care has been in existence for seven years. The main focus of the Barry County Continuum of Care has been on housing and homeless prevention.

Each year, one specific day is set aside in an attempt to obtain a count of how many persons are homeless or precariously-housed in Barry County on that specific date and time. This task is overwhelming, and at best, an approximate. The Barry County Continuum of Care works with each agency, business, hospital, campground, motel, jail, school, and individual in the County to obtain this number. We advertise the date beforehand and utilize local media to communicate this project. Barry County United Way is the contact agency for this task. We would like to share the past three years' results with you to show you better the gaps and needs we have identified with this data.

October 10, 2003

Homeless Identified: 86 individuals (63 children under 18)
Homeless Prevention Assistance Given: 102 individuals

January 29, 2004

Homeless Identified: 110 individuals (78 children under 18)
Homeless Prevention Assistance Given: 90 individuals

January 25, 2005

Homeless Identified: 102 individuals (64 children under 18)
Homeless Prevention Assistance Given: 162 individuals

Yearly results vary for this Point-In-Time Count based on the day of the week the survey is taken. For example, October 10, 2003 was a Friday while January 29, 2004 fell on a Wednesday. Conducting this count on Wednesday allowed contact with all persons attending the local food initiative (averaging 187 persons each week) to be surveyed. Many of these persons were stacking up/doubling up with relatives or friends which falls into the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness. Overall, we feel that this data reflects the known homeless population; while also believing there are as many if not more unknown.

Our current emergency bed count available to those who are in need total 29. This number consists of 14 beds available at the local shelter and 15 beds in the local motels, as well as 20 seasonal beds during the Winter season. You can see we have identified, using this count, an overwhelming gap between our needs and ability to fill those needs. You will see later in this PLAN, a goal to correct this gap through additional forms of housing.

To see the forms used in our Point-In-Time survey see Attachment A1 and A2.

As a continuum we understood and agreed there are problems and needs surrounding the issue of homelessness, but had an obligation to determine whether or not these beliefs and concerns were shared by the Barry County residents. During the week of July 16-22, 2006, the Barry County Continuum of Care conducted a survey to determine the level of understanding surrounding homelessness in our community. It was important to reach a broad target population. Surveys and drop-boxes were placed at Pennock Hospital, (our local hospital), to reach those experiencing medical needs, State Grounds (local coffee shop), to reach teens and white collar employees, Commission on Aging to reach our senior citizens and at the Department of Human Services in order to reach those receiving assistance. A local food distribution is held each Wednesday and the survey was distributed there in hopes of reaching those receiving food assistance. Surveys were also conducted in person at the Barry County Fair with volunteers from Barnabas Ministries and Goodwill Industries in order to reach a random population.

The results of the survey support the understanding that there is homelessness in Barry County. Residents are aware of the need for affordable housing. The answer to question number four supports the belief that approximately one-third of all respondents know where to begin to receive assistance. It also offers hope that residents believe homelessness can be addressed. This PLAN will guide the entire community along the path of resolving this problem. The list of needs varied, which shows great understanding that each person who is either homeless or in a housing crisis has a different need. Finding a way to help individuals' with their own unique need is our greatest challenge. We believe that providing stable housing first will allow us to move onto supporting other issues and needs each individual may have.

For specific answers to the above mentioned survey see attachment B.

The Shift Towards a Solution

As taught in History classes at local high schools, when one refuses to learn from history, history will repeat itself. Barry County has been reactive to housing crisis situations, solving situations as they arise, while not moving forward in becoming pro-active. Change needs to drive our progress and vision and without this becoming our “way of thinking and conducting business” we will fail to succeed in ending homelessness. However, we are determined not to fail. The chart below outlines the changes that need to take place within agencies, funding and thinking to be successful. The changes are a shift from present processes and thinking to a future full of positive changes.

Habitat for Humanity 2005 Ladies' Siding Day



Current Situation

A community sympathetic

towards homelessness but largely unaware of the daily crisis.

Residents must contact DHS first, then obtain a denial in order to obtain help from other agencies and programs. Communication is made to several agencies by the resident involved in a crisis.

Currently, there is one shelter, able to house only women and children for up to 30 days. Teens and men must find a private home, motel, or leave the County.

and communication will be ongoing.

Creation of a Family Resource and Assessment Center. All clients will begin at the Center. The Center will direct the client and provide the follow-up agency with information already obtained. The Center will track data using the HMIS system. This data will be shared with community leaders and agency directors to communicate the need for more housing.

Data gathered from the Family Resource and Assessment Center will drive the shift towards establishing housing in the county for this target population. Dormitory type housing is an option, as are apartment units set aside for this need. Dollars will be looked at for new development and rehab

Creation will begin during the first year. Our goal will be to complete the Center by the end of year two.

Year two through ten. Housing will be a continual need that is assessed until year ten and after.

Solution

The PLAN will be shared with the community. Marketing

Timeframe

Will begin during the first year and will be ongoing.

Current Situation

Limited funding with current funds being used towards

homeless prevention.

Insufficient amount of affordable housing for county residents.

Long waiting periods for Section 8 Vouchers. At this time, Barry County does not have any other form of vouchers, such as, tenant based rental vouchers or homeless vouchers.

collaborative and continuum. This sub-committee will focus on funding. A long term goal will include an endowment for homelessness and housing campaign.

Work with landlords, developers, and Public Housing Agents to determine current availability. Work with Habitat for Humanity towards future needs. Researching ways to combine resources and programs to create housing options. Collaborate with other Counties to create satellite programs and housing.

Work with Public Housing Agent to provide data to MSHDA and HUD that more vouchers, in various programs, are needed. Vouchers to provide Housing First approach. Short-term vouchers are also seen as a solution when tied to strong supportive services.

funding and the allocation. An endowment fund will be established by year five.

Year two through year ten.

Year two or three and ongoing as determined by a data driven need.

Solution

Creation of a sub-committee from our community

Timeframe

Will begin in year one with an emphasis being on current

Definitions

The Barry County Continuum of Care has adopted the following definitions of homelessness:

- Sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation
- Living in a shelter
- Being discharged from an institute without a home to go to
- Living in a home, with another household or family, because you cannot afford your own home
- You have turned 18 and are not longer allowed/wanted in your home with parents/guardians or home is an unsafe place.
- You are under 18, currently living with friends not at home with parents/guards due to not being allowed, wanted or home being an unsafe environment.
- You have received an eviction notice or mortgage foreclosure

Shelter:

Short-term housing providing safety and stability during a crisis.

Transitional Housing:

Housing dedicated to providing safe and decent temporary housing, with the goal of finding permanent housing which will include support in areas needed.

Supportive Housing:

Housing dedicated to providing safe, stable, affordable housing, linked with long-term supportive services.

Chronic Homelessness:

Unaccompanied (no children with the individual) homeless individual with a disabling condition (diagnosable substance use disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability, or chronic physical illness or disability, including the co-occurrence of two or more of these conditions) who has been continuously homeless (one year or more) or experienced four or more episodes of homelessness in the past three years.

Local Data

The following data has been gathered to support the campaign for further assistance and programs needed to reach the goal of ending homelessness in Barry County during the next 10 years. It is our goal to establish the need for Barry County. The following data reflects the calendar year 2005, unless indicated otherwise. The Assistance Program data is specific for the families and individuals that have received assistance towards homeless prevention or housing only. It does not include the population in Barry County that did not receive government or non-profit assistance.

Local:

<i>Population</i>	59,371 (2004)
<i>Unemployment:</i>	6.8%
<i>Income:</i>	46,820 (2001) per household of 4 persons
<i>Per Capita Income per Person</i>	28,530
<i>% of Barry County residents</i>	86.8% (2001 census)
<i>With a high school diploma</i>	

Assistance Programs Data:

Domestic Violence Shelter

<i>Women and children served 2005</i>	172
<i>Average Age of Shelter Resident</i>	36 adult 6 child
<i>Shelter Cost Per Day</i>	\$34

% of persons receiving Public Assistance: 8.2%

Local Food Initiative Served:

Persons during calendar year 2005 256,973

Heating/Utility/Housing Assistance:

<i>Heat/Utility Assistance Accessed</i>	1135
<i>Emergency Service Assistance Accessed</i>	409

(Partial Agency Reporting)

Local Data Continued

Our Purpose

As the Barry County Continuum of Care began discussing the need to formulate a 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Barry County at our meeting six months ago, it was agreed upon that we do some things well and others not so well.

68 families were helped in 2005 by Homeless Prevention Challenge Grant dollars.

We are very reactive to situations:

When a house fire occurs and a family is homeless we have vouchers to pay for a motel room up to three nights. If more nights are needed we have some emergency funding from Barry County United Way that will pay for two additional nights.

We are reactive to domestic violence situations. Green Gables Haven provided housing for 90 adults and 87 children during the calendar year of 2005. These survivors were fleeing for their safety. Green Gables Haven provided safe and stable housing for up to 30 days for these women and children. There were also support services offered during and after their stay for up to six months.

We are reactive to teens who have been forced to leave their home either by choice (fleeing an unsafe environment) or are asked to leave by their parent/guardian. We find families in the area that have offered to help others in the past and will take them in. We contact the ARK in Kalamazoo where they can stay in a group home and receive counseling/therapy for themselves and their families. Barnabas Ministries can also be contacted to provide a safe, clean drop-in center for after school and on week-ends.

When a working parent calls and has an eviction notice or mortgage foreclosure we have possible resources and programs. Agency numbers are willingly given out and appointments are scheduled.

We do not do as well :

In the middle of the night a single male is found walking around downtown because he has no job, no home and no friends. We do not have an answer or place for him at 2:00 AM.

When a single parent calls asking for help with an eviction notice, has no income due to a disability which has not been confirmed and she is waiting for public assistance. We do not have a program or housing that will help her because she has no income or job through no fault of her own.

A single woman, mid-forties, has lost her job due to down-sizing, needs help with a shut-off notice. She has to choose between paying her rent or utilities. She does not meet qualifying income guidelines so cannot help. We see her problem, but have no answer.

The parents, both trying to work at minimum wage jobs, out of the county, with three children who need medical attention and their rent is due. They continually run \$200 short in income each month. We do not have money for monthly prescriptions or affordable housing that will allow them to pay their own rent and buy their own medicine.

Yes, we do a lot of things well, but it is the things we do not do well that show us we need this plan. We need this plan to guide the necessary changes towards our vision. That housing will be affordable and safe for all. That having a home gives security, so that if other areas need to be addressed in lives they can focus on these rather than on where they will sleep that night or next week.

It is simple to say what we need but the path is full of obstacles: funding, stereotypes, shortage of housing, inflation, unemployment, education opportunities, and transportation.

We can remove these obstacles together one at a time. Our greatest success story is the mother of six, working part-time, going to school full-time. She received assistance and mentoring for one year. She graduated from nursing school, passed state boards, has a better job and has broken the cycle. She is a success because we supported her with housing and services which gave her the tools needed to achieve a better life for her and her children. We helped, encouraged, and worked ourselves out of a job with her family. That is success.

“Barry County needs a shelter that can help everyone”
Statement made from Homeless Survey taken July 2006

-Scenarios of Homeless in Barry County

On July 11, 2006 the first Homelessness Crisis Intervention Workshop was held at Pennock Hospital. It was attended by human service office front-line workers, medical/health personnel, faith-based organizations, consumers and non-profit employees. The focus of this meeting was to begin dialogue on ending homelessness. The format of the meeting was kept simple; to review specific scenarios, list what is currently available, identify the gaps in resources/programs and establish what our vision for the future in this area should include. Each of the scenarios listed below are an example of a real client and his/her situation. We have not included names to avoid embarrassment of anyone. These situations are seen by all human service providers on an ongoing basis. The list is not all-inclusive and does not contain any new concepts. The positive of the meeting was the fact that each person there realized they shared a vision for their clients and County.

Scenario #1:

Single mom living at Green Gables Haven, no income, job, or transportation.

Scenario #2:

Single mom with eviction notice and working part-time.

Scenario #3:

Single adult, homeless due to lack of employment, resources, transportation, but cannot receive assistance due to lack of dependents.

Scenario #4:

Family with mortgage foreclosure notice/eviction notice with limited income to cover payments, but cannot afford security deposit to move (should move in 7-10 days).

Scenario #5:

Family of five living in a two bedroom home with relative's family of five. Both parents receiving SSI, but cannot find affordable home within income. Transportation is also an issue.

Scenario #6:

17 year old teen living with friends due to conflict at home, but has worn out his welcome at all of his friends homes.

Scenario #7:

An elderly man dropped off at the hospital emergency room. He does not qualify for a nursing home and has no home to return to.

The list of resources currently available in Barry County includes:

- Department of Human Services (DHS)-Family Independence Program
- Department of Human Services (DHS)-SER (Emergency Funding)
- Community Action Agency (CAA)-Housing Resource Specialist position
- Work First-Transportation/job training programs
- Barry County Transit-transportation
- Barry County United Way-emergency dollars and FEMA funding to be used for food, medical and emergency needs.
- Family Mentoring Program-emotional support and training for families through individual mentors
- Green Gables Haven-shelter and case management for residents and case management for non-residents
- Fresh Food Initiative-free food given out each Wednesday at local church
- MCTI-schooling and housing
- Homeless Prevention Challenge Grant-mortgage and eviction assistance
- Victim's Service Unit-support and transportation
- Strength in our agency collaboration
- Out of County partnerships with Eaton/Allegan Counties
- Department of Human Services-relocation services
- Department of Human Services-home ownership services (\$1,500 cap)
- Community Action Agency-budgeting workshops
- Barnabas Ministries-street outreach for teens
- Barnabas Ministries-independent living home for teen boys
- Catholic Family Services-The ARK-youth crisis shelter in Kalamazoo County, remote assessments (willingness to come to Barry County to do on-site assessments), counseling and outreach
- Catholic Family Services-Community Services-intensive case management for homeless youth 16-20 that is based in the youth's home community
- Child Abuse Prevention Council of Barry County-parenting classes as well as support services
- Barry Health Services Network-resources in the gap for the elderly
- Commission on Aging-support services for the elderly

In the past 12 months Goodwill Industries has assisted 30 persons in Employability Skills Class, Interviewing, Job Placement and On the Job Evaluations training. This past summer six youth received an Employability Skills Class along with work experience. Goodwill Industries is striving to make a difference.

List of identified gaps:

- Affordable housing
- Lack of adequate jobs
- Maintaining employment
- Childcare
- Unmet emotional support
- Process of paperwork for those in crisis
- Flexible transportation
- Knowledge of personal rights
- Limit of funding for resources
- Linking of resource knowledge for client
- Housing management for single dad
- Family shelter
- Transitional housing
- Waiting list for Section 8 vouchers
- Assessment process for agencies
- MCTI timeframe to become enrolled
- Work First for felons
- List serve for needs of clients
- Meeting needs for those over 40 years old without children
- Teen shelter (14 and older, especially boys)
- Lack of available rental units
- Teens aging out of foster care system-lack of support, finance and housing
- Teens needing independent living arrangement
- Accountability of programs not operating adequately



Vision list for what is needed:

- Support of needed changes from key leaders/government in Barry County
- Creation of transitional and permanent, supportive housing
- Available information through either a web-site or media of available housing
- Community communication regarding resources
- Increase in development of affordable housing
- Simplified process for consumers to apply for assistance
- Shared information on clients between agencies while still respecting privacy
- Youth transitional housing with strong case management
- Enlist the Builders Association and landlords to create and find new/affordable housing
- Habitat for Humanity-stronger participation
- Form a work group focusing on funding opportunities
- Enhanced data gathering system in order to support expanded housing/programs/funding
- Single-point of entry for all clients

This meeting and the above list was our beginning. Ending homelessness is not impossible. It is, however, ongoing and changing. As our County changes so will our challenges in this area. This PLAN is intended to become a living document. We will review, critique, change and implement this PLAN on a continual basis. The next areas of this PLAN will outline specific goals, outcomes, and strategies. It is important to understand and believe that these changes will occur. They will occur gradually with a thought-out plan provided by support both financially and physically or by force from consumers who we attempt to change rather than changing our systems to better serve their needs.

64 teens were identified as homeless or living with friends rather than their own home on January 25, 2005.

Prevention and Intervention:

Goals:

1. ***Identify needs; prioritize needs while improving our delivery and approach.***
Determining what the needs truly are is sometimes difficult. Not all clients who come into an agency for assistance understand what is needed by the agency. This in turn makes it difficult for the agency to understand their need. Delivery and approach needs to be varied for each client. Clients are individuals and each one is unique in their own way.
2. ***Increase awareness and outreach community.***
It is apparent that clients do not always know what is available to assist them or where they need to begin to locate resources. Clients become frustrated and burdened finding help. It is to everyone's advantage to increase awareness of our resources and become experts on community outreach rather than waiting for clients to become frustrated and then come to us.
3. ***Increase funding-both grants and sustainable.***
In order to reach new goals being set, financial goals must also be included. It is not our intention to rely solely on grants. Experience has taught us this is risky. It is our goal to create long-term, sustainable funding through working with our local United Way and Community Foundation.
4. ***Continual evaluating and identifying of gaps***
This is a living document. We have agreed that a formal evaluation process of programs is needed along with official point-in-time surveys to assist us in identifying gaps.

Strategies:

1. ***Formation of workgroup including agency decision makers***
A workgroup formed as a sub-committee from the Barry County Continuum of Care along with members of our Community Collaborative will work together to create an intake assessment form, listing of resources available and criteria needing to be met to access these resources. This group would also focus on strategies to assure continual updated information regarding available resources. The creation of a "Family Resources and Assessment Center" would also be a product of this workgroup. They will work to bring in Directors and decision makers of the service agencies. This center will be supported both financially and physically by the participating agencies.

2. **Ongoing campaign (McKinney-Vento, Community Collaborative, education of key service providers)**

We have relied on articles in the local paper, sporadic broadcasts on the local radio and special campaigns to educate the public. This has not worked. Our strategy will be simple and ongoing. After the PLAN is developed an ongoing campaign using all media will begin to reach the community and all agencies, schools and employers. Personal contacts will be made to civic organizations, business owners, and front-line workers. This campaign will kick-off our PLAN. Monies from the initial stipend will be used to make written copies of the PLAN available in offices, businesses, schools, libraries and agencies throughout the county. Monies will also be used to hire a campaign manager.

3. **Partnerships**

Recruitment will be the key of this sub-committee. Partnerships will lighten the load for us all. Community resource fairs, collaboration on grants opportunities, incentive programs to encourage collaboration on projects directed towards filling community needs and streamlining agency processes/delivery.

4. **Communication Assessment**

This strategy will include ways to evaluate if the communication between agencies and the community is effective.

Outcomes:

1. **Streamline assessment and referral forms**

The creating of one central intake form used by all human service providers will lead to more accurate, efficient and complete information being shared within agencies, along with the benefit to the client of only needing to share information/needs once. Many other counties use a central intake form that includes needed information for each human service agency. This one-stop form has proven to save time for the agencies providing follow-up assistance and for the clients also in not having to repeat themselves.

Creation of a "Family Resource and Assessment Center"

This is perhaps our largest dream. Not only do we feel a streamlined assessment form is necessary, a creation of a "Family Resource and Assessment Center" is what is needed to close the gap of poor service delivery, transportation issues for clients needing to spend the day going from office to office, and communication within agencies. This Center would allow our clients to have a single-point of entry that would assess, educate, and communicate to the clients and other agencies. This would be a multi-agency supported creation.

2. **Countywide understanding and education of homelessness/resources**

Each resident in Barry County will have a clear understanding of the human service provider system, be aware of how to access 211 and have a source available to provide information on resources and their providers.

3. ***Creation of agency focused on increased funding for the county along with formal allocation process***

Research will be done to best create partnerships within agencies and the formation of a lead agency willing to take on this responsibility. Local leaders and government officials will be encouraged to join and will be kept informed of all progress.

4. ***Formal evaluation process of services and programs receiving funding***

It is agreed upon that a formal process is needed to verify that funding is being delivered in the most efficient, respectful, and simplified process. Also, each agency receiving funding must be evaluated and compliance needs to be verified on a periodic basis. With additional monies as a goal this outcome is needed to avoid discrimination and inefficiency.



Commission On Aging

Housing

Goals:

1. ***Immediate, safe housing for all (providing stability in housing before addressing all other needs)***

All persons needing housing will be a priority for Barry County. We have seen the low success rate achieved by offering help with support services and expecting clients to maintain their own housing. By striving to provide a form of safe, stable housing within 24 hours and follow up with a thorough assessment for long-term housing needs along with supportive services needs we feel that we can better provide stability in our clients lives. We currently have agreements with several motels for emergency situations and with shelters outside of the county. Our goal is to provide for all of those in need of housing in Barry County who do not want to leave the area.

2. ***Resources to help with housing for those with or without an income***

All persons needing housing regardless of their income will be given assistance. Time periods for that assistance will vary depending on the overall assessment of the client. This assessment will be made by the intake coordinator at the Family Resource and Assessment Center.

3. ***Case-management after receiving housing assistance***

Follow-up case management will be offered to those receiving housing assistance. The incentive for this is to be able to achieve outcome number three, which is non-reoccurrence of the need for assistance. It has been proven to us by statistics showing duplication of assistance in 18 months that the band-aide approach has no long-term effectiveness towards change. In order to change or break the cycle, long term support in the form of encouragement and education is needed. Case management will include counseling, budgeting, child care, transportation and other identified services. The primary agency will determine the needs and provide follow-through. Their evaluation and measured success will include the amount of re-occurring assistance provided.

Strategies:

1. *Identify housing*

All types of housing including transitional, permanent supportive, shelters, Section 8 vouchers, and income based availability will be accessed via phone to a central information office or via web-site established utilizing ESG dollars partnered with other dollars from various service agencies. Housing Resource Specialist dollars have been discussed.

2. *Increased affordable housing development with community and developers involvement*

Partnerships being formed within the continuum between CAA and Habitat for Humanity. Barry County Builders Association has recently begun working with Habitat for Humanity and possible future liaisons are being researched. Barry County Economic Development group has been meeting and has invited the Continuum of Care Coordinator to participate in meetings. This will be seen as a first step to involving other working groups. Barry County Community Mental Health currently has 2 homes in Barry County used strictly for clients receiving therapy who qualify to live independently. This is a model that will be researched as possible examples in the future for other agencies pursuing housing.

3. *Leasing Assistance*

Currently there are no dollars set aside to help those who have little or no income with rental payments. This is a large group that is seeking assistance on numerous occasions. At this point in time, all assistance is given to those with an income and if there is no income then help is given in other areas to try to free up dollars for the client to pay their own rent. However, this has not been successful. An example can be found in the mother leaving the domestic violence shelter who has not applied for general assistance and has been kept from working. The timeframe before receiving monies and finding a job is lengthy when trying to leave the shelter. It is agreed that this situation occurs frequently and we have a gap that has been ongoing. Our strategy will be to reallocate dollars or bring in new dollars to be used for a specified period of time for rental assistance regardless of income when other criteria are met. Barry County United Way has been identified as a possible lead agency along with Community Action Agency.

4. *Increase in Section 8 Vouchers and decrease in waiting list time*

The Community Action Agency Housing Resource Specialist will research bringing more Section 8 vouchers into Barry County. Possible uses for these vouchers would be more short-term than permanent, which is the current program for vouchers in our County. We see the benefit of offering 24 month vouchers with a gradual payment increase towards the recipient's portion of the rent. These vouchers would be tied into supportive services. Also, an emphasis would be put on the self-sufficiency program by the Housing Resource Specialist and through our Budgeting Workshop to all recipients. The Family Mentoring Program would also be encouraged and made available to these recipients.

Outcomes:

1. ***Affordable, safe housing for all with simplified, easy access to availability***
Any person needing housing should be able to contact our future Family Resource and Assessment Center and either be placed in housing for given information on the access site for the needed housing. Housing options will be expanded through partnerships, increased funding allocation for development of housing and gained support for development from our leaders and government. Incentives for landlords willing to work with human service providers will be established and used to obtain buy in from the local landlords.

2. ***Funding from various sources available to all tied to case-management-partnerships***
As previously stated, it is dangerous to keep all funds tied into grants. A lead agency or entity will be identified by the Continuum of Care and Community Collaborative to work on researching and obtaining a variety of funding which will be used to provide immediate access to housing of all types. Assistance will, at times, be tied to further assessment in the hopes of providing support services. The support services will be evaluated and success and fail criteria will be set and agreed upon by all agencies participating.

3. ***Non-reoccurrence of homelessness with those receiving assistance***
This outcome is essential if we are to succeed. It is our goal to assist those in need with the outcome being partial or complete independence from the system based on the ability of the individual/family. It is unrealistic to expect 100% of all clients who receive financial help and supportive services after 24 months or less to become fully independent for the rest of their lives. What is realistic, however, is to track those receiving duplicate assistance over the next 18 months and determine a sliding percentage scale that will not reoccur after program changes have been implemented. The HMIS system will be used to track families/individuals and services given. At this time, not all agencies who are part of the continuum participate in HMIS, but a tracking system will be agreed upon for those and put in place so that information will be shared on a quarterly basis to determine if this goal is being achieved.

353,000 children lived in single parent homes in 2001 through out the state of MI

Support Services

Goals:

1. ***Organized assessment, case management***
Shared case management with one assessment form used by all participating agencies will allow case management to be better understood and evaluated.
2. ***Identify needs***
By referring all clients to begin at the Family Resource and Assessment Center we will ensure that each client is evaluated equally and the intake form is to be established by a partnership of all continuum agencies. A Release of Information will be asked for of each client in order to better communicate within agencies so that all needs can be shared and better served.
3. ***Education and training to maintain stable housing available to all***
It was evident from our July 11, 2006 meeting that all agencies and front-line workers are not aware of what resources, programs and housing are available. Along with this, there was confusion regarding how to access this information and the eligibility criteria. As part of the implementation of our PLAN, the implementation liaison will work with all human service agencies to provide training and share information with directors and front-line workers on a regular basis the first year of the plan. Thereafter, a schedule will be set for follow-up training and contact. This will be agreed upon by the agency directors and Implementation Coordinator.

Strategies:

1. *Open Door Policy for all in need*

At this time, all clients are referred to the Department of Human Services (DHS) to receive a denial of assistance. Many programs require this denial before giving assistance. It is a frustrating first step for people. We will review the guidelines for public assistance and understand the eligibility criteria. We will work with the intake coordinator at the Family Assessment and Resource Center so that they may be able to make that first step a positive outcome rather than a denial.

2. *Workgroup formed to review models focusing on service delivery*

While we have primarily decided on the need to create a Center with an intake coordinator, it is possible that this may not always be the best approach. A workgroup of volunteers from the Continuum of Care will review other delivery models and programs. A report will be shared with the Continuum and Community Collaborative. This research will also be published for other agencies to consider modeling after.

Outcomes:

1. *Successful, independent and supported families/individuals*

Success will be defined by each individual client's ability. However, success must include certain criteria for all. This criteria will include some form of safe, stable housing being available to those in need at all times and an increase in the client's ability to make realistic decisions in targeted areas of their lives. It is recognized that some clients may only need help once during a crisis period of the lives and after the crisis has passed be able to lead constructive, independent lives. However, this is not always the case. Our focus must be on changing our system to better serve the clients.

Actual Budget Used For A Family Of Four In Barry County

Rent/Mortgage Payment	550	
Car Loan	280	
Car Insurance	120	
Car Expenses (gas, etc.)	100	
Groceries (\$100.00 wk)	433	
Utilities	110	
Telephone	35	
Medical (prescriptions/OTC)	30	Health insurance - Medicaid
Loan Payment	25	
Entertainment	75	
Weekly Cash (\$50.00 wk)	<u>216</u>	

Total Income Needed: **1974**

The needed hourly wage is \$14.79 working 40 hours each week, 4 weeks each month. This includes a 20% margin for taxes.

The above is a budget set for a family helped in the past 12 months. As you can see, both parents working for minimum wage will begin the month already behind in their budget. This budget reinforces the need for businesses and educators to work together to create qualified workers who can increase profit for employers who can in turn increase wages to allow families similar to above a chance to maintain stable housing.

Acknowledgements

In order for any project to be successful it must have dedicated, committed people behind it. We began this process in March 2005. It has taken many hours, meetings, and collaborations to end up here, with a document we feel confident in presenting to our community and leadership of Barry County.

The agency and people listed below each played a vital role in this Plan's creation. We would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to one and all.

Barnabas Ministries	Frank and Sally Zelenock
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Barry Community Foundation	Jennifer Richards
Barry Community Mental Health	Sara VanGrouw
	Carrie Robinson
Barry Community Resource Network	Lyn Briel
Barry County United Way	Lani Forbes
	Bonnie Hogoboom
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Child Abuse Prevention Council	Karen Jousma
Community Action Agency	Sheila Horrell
	Beverly Newton
	Sarah Doll
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	Rhonda Ostrander
Green Gables Haven	Christine Hiar
	Nyla Round
Love, Inc.	Steve Reid

A special thank you to Rob and Adrienne Pluchinsky who willingly attended our first Homeless Crisis Intervention Workshop and helped the committee better understand the roadblocks to success in this project.

Thank you also, to the Directors of Barry County Community Mental Health, The Department of Human Services, Barry County United Way and the Barry Community Resource Network Chair. Without your agreement to collaborate this Plan would not be in existence.

Attachment A1.

Survey of Homeless/Displaced Students

HUD has mandated that information be gathered on chronically homeless individuals. In Barry County we are also including those persons that we know are homeless and meet the McKinney-Vento definition. We will separate these counts when reporting our data to MSHDA.

We have many students not able to live in their own home. They may be living with friends, relatives or in a shelter. This living situation often includes either a portion or their entire family. Gathering brief information on each of these students will help us in our process to access the needs of these students and their families. We will use this data to assist with grant applications and to identify housing gaps and needs in our County.

Please fax (269.945.4536) or call (269.945.4010) in your information to me, Attention: Sharon Boyle. Please call me if you have any questions. Thank you for helping the Barry County Continuum of Care with this Point-In-time count.

Student's 1st name initial: _____

Grade: _____

How long have they been out of their home: _____

Are they staying with: friends _____ relatives _____ shelter (dv, ARK, emergency) _____

Attachment A2.

Contact's first and last name initials _____

	Adults	Children	Family Units	Amount Needed
1st Month's Rent				
Eviction Notice Assistance				
Mortgage Foreclosure Assistance				
Utility Assistance				
Emergency Shelter needed				
Food Assistance				
Clothing				
Transportation				
Homeless at this time				

Please use this form to track the individuals and families that you either meet or receive calls from on the day of the Point-In-Time count. Please fill in the amount needed if you can determine this. Please use a sheet for each contact. Each contact will be identified with first and last name initials to avoid duplication.

Attachment B.

Homeless in Barry County is.....

1. *Is there homelessness in Barry County?* Yes – 195 No - 53

If yes, where can they be found?

84-living outside, campgrounds, cars or wandering around, playground,
public areas, behind businesses

parking lots and

30-everywhere

28-living with friends/relatives

14-living in a shelter or Green Gables Haven

11-not sure

4-at the schools

3-mostly big cities

2-Barnabas Ministries

1-Fresh Food Initiative

2. *What causes homelessness?*

191-loss of employment

114-personal crisis

98-medical

23-financial resources

17-substance abuse/addiction

14-lack of family/community support

8-mental disability

6-unwilling to help themselves

3-domestic violence

3-lack of education

3. *What type of Assistance or help is most needed by Barry County residents?*

61-affordable, subsidized housing

51-employment opportunities/job training

45-food assistance

44-general financial assistance

23-emergency shelters or housing for men and families

17-medical assistance

16-utility assistance

14-Other

10-transportation

7-financial assistance directed at housing

5-counseling

3. *What type of Assistance or help is most needed by Barry County residents?*

continued

5-clothing

4-education

3-mentoring/personal support and encouragement

3-public awareness

2-childcare assistance

1-tax breaks

4. *If someone is homeless do you know where they should go to receive assistance? Please list agencies.*

- 81-Department of Human Services/Social Services
- 31-Love, Inc.
- 30-do not know
- 21-shelters-Green Gables Haven
- 14-schools, Mel Trotter, CASA, Mental Health, court system, rehab, crisis center, Catholic Services, Project HOPE, Goodwill and other
- 13-Community Action Agency
- 13-churches
- 13-Barry County United Way
- 9-Commission on Aging
- 5-Salvation Army
- 5-Barnabas Ministries
- 4-Health Department
- 3-American Red Cross
- 3-Michigan Works
- 3-does not matter/no one will help
- 2-friends

5. *Without assistance programs in Barry County do you think homelessness would increase?*

Yes-235 No-15 No Answer-7

6. *Have you ever considered yourself homeless?*

Yes-79 No-173 No Answer-4