



The DuPage Plan to End Homelessness

Blueprint for Moving Forward 2008

In evaluating the DuPage County Plan to End Homelessness, successes, challenges, and suggestions regarding CoC operations were identified. When the Plan was developed in 2003, the CoC demonstrated their commitment to work together over the next 10 years toward the goal of ending homelessness. This mid-point evaluation provides an opportunity to not only re-evaluate progress and action steps in the Plan, but also to examine the Plan as a whole, and the supporting CoC operations, communications, and planning processes.

The DuPage CoC applied many best practices in the development of its Plan to End Homelessness. The nine components of the Plan closely align with the four areas emphasized by the National Alliance to End Homelessness: plan for outcomes, close the front door to homelessness, open the back door out of homelessness, and build the infrastructure. There are many emerging practices being used across the country that DuPage has not yet incorporated into their work. This update serves as a good opportunity to reexamine best practices and emerging models elsewhere and to determine whether or not to apply them in DuPage.

DuPage stakeholders felt that on the whole, the Plan covered the right areas of homeless services and prevention. When asked what else they would do to end homelessness if they had the resources, survey respondents had several ideas:¹

*"**Interim housing and services** to assist homeless individuals in reducing the barriers that cause homelessness (mental illness, substance abuse, change in employment, etc.)...and offer **onsite health care services** for those we serve."*

*"Expand **outreach in underserved communities**. Create a robust **employment center** with focus on job development, placement, and training/preparation for at-risk adult job seekers."*

*"Provide more **subsidized housing vouchers** so that clients can move from our transitional housing to permanent supportive housing."*

*"We would like to see that the presence or needs of **homeless juvenile wards of the state** or former wards, who typically have specialized health care needs, often mental health care needs, would be assessed."*

*"Expand **permanent supportive housing** so all chronically homeless individuals who were eligible could be afforded the opportunity to call a place a home."*

*"Provide more **supportive services** to those who are homeless or at risk."*

*"We would provide **substance abuse treatment services with transitional housing** for women with children...We would develop **a transitional housing program** that would bridge the gap between people in primary care treatment or hospitals who are waiting to enter residential care."*

*"People who are at the greatest risk of homelessness need **services prior to becoming homeless**. Homelessness is usually not the result of one event. It happens when conditions come together at the same time. Address those conditions for those at greatest risk to prevent the homeless situation from happening."*

¹ Quotes throughout this section are from CoC members who completed the evaluation survey.



Recommendations

A. Update Plan to More Effectively Assign Responsibility and Communicate Goals

One of the key strengths to the successful implementation of a Plan to End Homelessness is assignment of responsibility for the Plan components. Moving forward the DuPage CoC has the opportunity to realign Plan components and responsibilities in ways that align more closely with CoC committee purpose and operations. Realignment may also help stakeholders understand how the Plan as a whole works and how it interacts with the homeless system.

1. **Review and Update Plan Goals:** It is often easier to communicate system goals to key audiences than specific components or interventions. Refresh goals and use in presentations.
2. **Revise Plan Structure:** the following are proposed component recommendations:
 - Reorder the components. In presenting the Plan, leading with the CMIS system is a challenge to keep audiences engaged. Instead, move the core service delivery areas to be front and center.
 - In order to clarify goals and responsibilities, it is recommended that the action steps for the Shortening Homelessness component be divided across a number of components (primarily services and housing) instead of standing on their own. The vision of Shortening Homelessness should still be strongly embedded in the plan.
 - Combine the Timely Re-housing Component with the Creation of Permanent Housing Component as there is considerable overlap in goals, tasks, and key stakeholders. Retain the vision of Timely Re-housing throughout the plan.
 - Add a specific component on Funding to align with CoC committee structures and functioning. Funding is vital to the Plan's success, and the need for resource generation needs to be more explicit. Have each committee submit funding priorities annually.
 - Organize the components into two functional areas:
 - Fundamental Homeless System Service Delivery Components (Homeless Prevention, Outreach & Engagement, Housing, Employment/Other Income, and Services)
 - Key Homeless System Foundation and Resources (Needs Assessment Data, Funding, and Systems Change)
3. **Assess Committee Responsibilities:** While each committee has accomplished a great deal of work on their assigned component(s), many members expressed concern about their scope of work. Membership on the CoC, and on special committees, is essentially a volunteer position, and stakeholders were concerned about members being stretched too thin.
 - Given the time consuming SuperNOFA responsibilities of the Needs Assessment and Grants Funding Committees, reevaluate their ownership of so many components of the Plan, and assess opportunities to have them focus on funding priorities.
 - Investigate assignment of responsibility for housing goals. The creation of permanent housing, development of housing models, and placement of homeless persons into appropriate housing are central goals in the Plan, and many committees' work plans relate to these goals. However, there is no committee where these goals all fit together, and there are limited mechanisms to share information across committees, except at the Leadership Committee. Thought was given to creating a housing committee that would have representatives from different committees and work on the big housing picture, but there were concerns that this was too great an obligation for members who are already stretched thin. Leadership decided to spread across three existing committees and improve communications through a dashboard of housing benchmarks and progress.

Because there is both considerable overlap between the work of various committees and limited methods for formal communication between committees, the Leadership Committee should be formally assigned with oversight of the full Plan. This oversight will not only allow centralized ownership, but will also allow for evaluation efforts to come from and be supported by the Leadership Committee.

Table 27 has the proposed components, order and assignment of responsibility relative to the initial plan. Suggestions are based on discussions at committee meetings, interviews with key stakeholders, and an analysis of challenges faced in the first 5 years of Plan implementation and are designed to align with the operational structure and nature of the DuPage CoC.

Table 27 - Updated vs. Initial Plan: Proposed Components, Order and Responsibility			
Updated Component	Assignment of Future Responsibility	Initial Component	Initial Committee Ownership
1.Homeless Prevention: assist persons at risk to maintain their housing through emergency assistance and eviction prevention	Homeless Prevention Provider’s Committee, Grants Funding Committee	2. Emergency Prevention	Grants Funding & HPP
2. Outreach & Engagement: conduct outreach to shorten homelessness, and community outreach to build awareness and support	Community Outreach Committee Leadership Committee	4. Outreach to Unsheltered	Community Outreach & DuPage Federation
3.Housing: generate long –term housing solutions (supply, vouchers, models) and a way to navigate the system in order to re-house everyone in a timely way	Needs Assessment Committee Grants Funding Committee Community Outreach Committee	6. Timely Re-housing 9. Creating Permanent Housing	Needs Assessment Committee Grants Funding & DuPage Federation
4. Employment/Other Income: provide access to mainstream benefits, employment, and other income	Mainstream benefits: DuPage Federation Employment: P.A.D.S. & partners including Workforce Development, WorkNet, and West Suburban Job Network	8. Increasing Income	Community Outreach & DuPage Federation
5. Services: provide and link to case management, mental health, substance abuse, and health care services to shorten homelessness and increase housing stability	Mental health: DuPage Federation Substance abuse: Community Outreach Committee Needs Assessment Committee	7. Support Services	Grants Funding & DuPage Federation
6.Needs Assessment Data: utilize the Homeless Management Information System (CMIS), and the homeless count to influence system decisions	Needs Assessment Committee CMIS Users Group	1. Needs Assessment Data	Needs Assessment & CMIS Users Group
7. Funding: seek funding from the HUD Continuum of Care, Illinois Dept. of Human Services Homeless Prevention and ESG funds, DuPage County Community Development Block Grant and others	Grants Funding Needs Assessment Committee		
8. Systems Change: promote discharge planning, and housing advocacy to prevent homelessness and shorten the length of time people spend homeless	DuPage Federation on Human Services Reform DuPage Housing Action Coalition	3. Systems Prevention	Community Outreach & DuPage Federation
Merge with services and housing		5. Shorten Homelessness	Needs Assessment



B. Update Key System and Plan Processes

The achievement of the following recommendations will be worked toward within the limits of available time and funds.

1. Build Public Awareness of the Plan: Ownership, Outreach, and Marketing

Successful Plans have the public support of elected officials and regularly report progress to the community to share success and raise awareness.² Official involvement and marketing of the Plan were two themes that came up in meetings and interviews during the evaluation process.

"Create a vision for municipalities and Chambers of Commerce. Encourage workable solutions they can implement. While not meaning to be, these groups are pretty uninformed of need."

"Help municipalities adopt visions, such as: each community needs to care for its own; people should be able to live where they work."

Suggestions of actions for the Leadership and Community Outreach Committees to improve Plan public awareness included:

- Invite media to events to release reports on successful outcomes and progress.
- Host legislator and executive director breakfasts.
- Investigate funding for an ad campaign on the face of homelessness in DuPage County.
- Use the "America's Road Home Statement of Principles and Action" for endorsement of the 10 Year Plan by the Mayors, Managers, and DuPage County officials.
- Develop a marketing plan for the Plan to End Homelessness.
- Develop Plan spokespeople.
- Create a simple presentation for outreach to:
 - Business groups (e.g. Chambers of Commerce, Rotary, housing developers, banks)
 - Philanthropic groups (Lions clubs, foundations)
 - Churches and community groups
 - Congressional offices and municipalities

2. Institute Annual Evaluation, Planning and Reporting

A key strength to the successful implementation of a Plan to End Homelessness includes measurable goals. Moving forward DuPage County has the opportunity to refine its goals, data collection, and reporting in order to show progress made in addressing homelessness in a timely way. Initially some components were set up for better measurement than others, and stakeholders had mixed opinions on how well outcomes had been measured and reported. To help ensure that the Plan remains a living and dynamic document, strategies were discussed and are recommended to facilitate regular opportunities for evaluation and strategic planning:

- Have each committee conduct an annual evaluation and strategic planning to update component action steps. Each committee could devote one meeting per year to filling out a logic model/plan for the next year's work. This would give the committee an opportunity to measure progress in the last year, and then plan for the year ahead, with clear activities and outcomes to make objectives concrete and measurable. Have all committees use the same template. At this time each committee should also assess membership and determine if recruitment of new stakeholders is necessary.
- Create an annual report card to document Plan progress. This is a user-friendly short report that highlights big picture successes within certain categories and provides a snapshot of the prior year's work. The Leadership Committee would have oversight of this.

Annually bring media attention using the report card format to inform the community of successes, partnerships, unmet needs and challenges that still exist

² United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. (n.d.). *Good...to better...to great: Innovations in 10-Year Plans to End Chronic Homelessness in your community*. Washington, DC: Author.

3. Cultivate CoC Membership and Engagement of New Stakeholders

A common theme in stakeholder interviews and strategic planning sessions was the value of collaboration with other agencies. Through the Plan, formal relationships have been built with discharging institutions and advocacy groups such as the DuPage Housing Action Coalition. Stakeholders agree that the Plan has increased collaboration, that these collaborations continue to be valuable.

- It is recommended that future efforts should encourage an even more diverse group of stakeholders to come to the table. Possible new partners include:
Local funders and foundations Chicago CoC (work on advocacy)
For profit housing developers Additional consumers
Elected officials, mayors, managers Additional Faith based groups

Several CoC members discussed the importance of planning for the future of the CoC, specifically how to plan for leadership succession when current leaders retire and/or leave the CoC.

- It is recommended that the CoC investigate committee leadership options such as revolving chairs, or creating vice-chair positions to cultivate new leadership.

"Recruit individuals who see the big picture to participate."

"It would be helpful to have more active members from the financial institutions, and housing developers."

The twice-yearly full membership meetings provide a valuable opportunity for members to meet and learn more about the work of the different CoC committees, progress toward the goals laid out in the Plan, and ongoing opportunities to improve service delivery.

- It is recommended the CoC use these meetings and the CoC website for a variety of purposes:
 - Legislative updates: DHAC members requested a standing portion of these meetings to update the CoC on advocacy, current legislation, and ways to get involved.
 - Orientation to the CoC and the Plan: hold a 30-minute orientation/update on the CoC and the Plan prior to one full membership meeting annually to inform new members.
 - Add agenda items to the full meeting allowing for updates from each committee.

"I would like to see more regular communication from the committees to the general membership."

"Improve feedback about the various committee activities and how each committee is aligning with the other."

Members of the Continuum of Care appear committed to the Continuum and the Plan. 77.1 percent of survey respondents attend half or more of all scheduled CoC meetings. 26.3 percent would not change anything about these meetings, 12.3 percent would make meeting content more relevant to their work, and 10.5 percent would make the meeting process more efficient.

- The CoC should explore new member information sessions and ways to solicit input from members as to agenda content for full CoC meeting.

"For new members to the Continuum, have a full information session on the processes of the Continuum, why it exists, what its purpose is, who it reports to, etc..."



4. Integrate the Plan to End Homelessness with Other Key Plans in the County

There are a number of planning processes happening in DuPage County.

- The CoC should have representation at other planning tables to ensure that the needs of people who are homeless are represented and to inform the Plan to End Homelessness.

"We have goals for CDBG regarding homelessness, but these goals are not necessarily in alignment with the DuPage County Plan to End Homelessness."