

### **Best Practices: Meeting the Needs of Homeless Families**

The following summaries have been taken from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)'s listing of John J. Gunther Blue Ribbon awardees. Through the John J. Gunther Blue Ribbon Practices in Community Development awards, HUD recognizes the most notable and innovative practices in community development nationwide. More Detailed information about these and other programs can be found on the HUD Website at: <http://www.hud.gov/ptw/menu.html>

According to the Website, "HUD has been on a mission the past several years to identify the best projects, management tools, techniques, and innovations that communities across the country have to offer. The idea is to make these "Blue Ribbon Practices" into management tools by finding the best in the field, and having them serve as models, consultants, leaders and teachers to those who need help making their projects work.

Here are some highlights of effective programs to address the needs of homeless families.

#### **Chatham-Savannah Continuum of Care**

<http://www.hud.gov/ptw/docs/ga17.html>

State: Georgia  
Field Office: Atlanta  
Issues: Homeless Adults and Families

The City of Savannah's goal was to provide a comprehensive approach to better serve homeless persons. The Chatham-Savannah Continuum of Care provides a comprehensive and coordinated system that includes prevention, outreach and assessment, emergency shelters, and transitional and permanent housing.

#### **Harris County Collaborative for the Homeless**

<http://www.hud.gov/ptw/docs/tx14.html>

State: Texas  
Field Office: Fort Worth  
Issues: Housing

Harris County sought to address the fact that the local resources available to assist the homeless were grossly inadequate to meet the growing demand for housing and services. In 1990, Harris County and the City of Houston funded the creation of the Coalition for the Homeless to address the issues identified in the study of the homeless, including the need to develop a comprehensive service delivery system to assist the homeless.

## **Continuum of Care Expansion Base Closure**

<http://www.hud.gov/ptw/docs/ca0198.html>

State: California  
Field Office: San Francisco  
Grantee: Alameda County  
Category: Continuum of Care

In response to the closing of several local military bases and in response to provisions of the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, homeless providers in Alameda County formed a collaborative to secure property for homeless usage at closing bases. This Collaborative allows the local homeless providers to speak with a single voice and assists in the local reuse authorities by enabling them to negotiate with a single entity to comply with the Base Closure Homeless Assistance Act of 1994. This collaborative grew out of a common vision that the conversion of military bases in the East Bay must result in a greater Continuum of Care for homeless persons throughout the County.

## **Computerized Homeless Information and Referral Process**

<http://www.hud.gov/ptw/docs/co0398.html>

State: Colorado  
Field Office: Denver  
Grantee: State of Colorado  
Category: Continuum of Care

The Computerized Homeless Information and Referral Process (CHIRP) currently provides homeless and human service providers with the following four types of services:

- Provider Listings: A comprehensive data base of service information about all the different human and homeless services available in the Denver metro area.
- Communication Platform: an on-line electronic communication platform providing participating providers with access to e-mail, conferencing, discussion areas, and real time chat functions.
- Shared Intake and Assessment: The Homeless Intake System (HIS) software program that allows providers to conduct shared intake and assessment for their consumers.
- Collection of Demographic and Service Capacity Information: Intake and Assessment software provides the ability to collect demographic information regarding the homeless population.

## **Homeless Coalition Activities**

<http://www.hud.gov/ptw/docs/la0398.html>

State: Louisiana  
Field Office: New Orleans  
Grantee: City of New Orleans  
Category: Continuum of Care

The City of New Orleans has a very active homeless coalition led by UNITY for the Homeless, Inc. Successful projects include the Volunteers of America (VOA) Tulane Avenue Single Room Occupancy (SRO) program, which houses formerly homeless persons who are in active recovery from substance abuse, and the Legacy Project, an organization designed to create a development that will coordinate and centralize emergency services and housing for the homeless.

## **Boston Continuum of Care**

<http://www.hud.gov/ptw/docs/ma01.html>

State: Massachusetts  
Field Office: Boston  
Issues: Housing, Homeless Adults and Families

The City of Boston's Continuum of Care (COC) Strategy addresses the need to coordinate the delivery of critically needed housing and services. COC Strategy has relied on the continuous involvement of a broad network of homeless shelter and services providers and advocates through the entire process of planning and implementation of homeless programs.

## **Rehabilitation and Affordable Housing Programs**

<http://www.hud.gov/ptw/docs/tn11.html>

State: Tennessee  
Field Office: Knoxville  
Issues: Affordable Housing, Homeownership Opportunities, Housing Rehabilitation

The City of Knoxville addresses the need for affordable housing. Some of the strategies employed to expand the supply of standard, affordable housing include increasing the supply of housing through rehabilitation of existing housing units; increasing the housing supply through new construction; providing rental assistance to alleviate an excessive housing-cost burden; promoting affordable homeownership opportunities for low- and moderate-income families, including families residing in Federally assisted housing; ensuring permanent housing opportunities for homeless persons linked with services and transitional housing as necessary; and, creating supportive housing for persons with special needs.

## **The Homeless Shelters Program**

<http://www.hud.gov/ptw/docs/wv0498.html>

State: West Virginia  
Field Office: Pittsburgh  
Grantee: State of West Virginia  
Category: Continuum of Care

The West Virginia Homeless Shelters Program was established to expand shelter opportunities for the homeless and the state's existing Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG) Program. It addresses the homeless needs of the state through one program that uses available federal and state funding, which provides the access non-profits seek to secure assistance for emergency shelters, transitional housing, supportive housing, and essential social services.

## **Provision of Decent Housing**

<http://www.hud.gov/ptw/docs/pr04.html>

State: Puerto Rico  
Field Office: Caribbean  
Issues: Affordable Housing, Housing Rehabilitation

The City wanted to provide a full range of housing options to its citizens through the development of decent and affordable housing, preservation of its housing stock through rehabilitation, and direct homeownership and rental assistance. The City of Ponce has developed a strong partnership by obtaining commitments from community stakeholders in the development of affordable housing and strengthened its relationship with community housing development organizations in the production of housing, effectively meeting its housing objectives and goals by providing a full range of housing options to its citizens.

## **County Homeless Trust**

<http://www.hud.gov/ptw/docs/fl0998.html>

State: Florida  
Field Office: Florida State Office  
Grantee: County of Miami-Dade  
Category: Continuum of Care

The Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust was created to coordinate homeless strategies and fund outreach assessment, emergency shelters, transitional shelters, permanent supportive housing and permanent housing programs for the homeless. The County's Blue Ribbon report identified three homeless clusters in Dade County; the "situationally homeless", the "episodically homeless", and the "chronically homeless" with distinctions between crisis poverty and those with chronic disabilities. To address the varying needs of these homeless clusters, the Plan establishes a three-

stage continuum of care; outreach, temporary care, primary care and/or advanced care, which provides people who require more rehabilitation than would be available through primary care an opportunity to transition from homelessness with a safety-net more amenable to their longer-term needs.

### **Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless**

<http://www.hud.gov/ptw/docs/la03.html>

State: Louisiana  
Field Office: New Orleans  
Issues: Housing, Homeless Adults and Families

The Continuum of Care wanted its focus to be on homelessness as a multifaceted problem that surpasses the basic need for shelter. The Continuum of Care plan was to include multiple stages of care beginning with immediate shelter and moving toward transitional and eventually permanent housing.

### **Midlands Area Consortium for the Homeless**

<http://www.hud.gov/ptw/docs/sc0498.html>

State: South Carolina  
Field Office: South Carolina State  
Grantee: City of Columbia  
Category: Continuum of Care

In concert with local, non-profit groups, the City of Columbia participated in the development of a comprehensive system to increase the availability of services and housing for the region's homeless population. The Midlands Area Consortium for the Homeless (MACH) was formed to serve as the planning and coordinating mechanism for the region's homeless service providers. MACH acts as a coordinating mechanism that facilitates communication and collaboration among the Midlands service providers to more efficiently use scarce resources that maximize services for the region's homeless population.

### **Coordinated Homeless Services**

<http://www.hud.gov/ptw/docs/il0898.html>

State: Illinois  
Field Office: Chicago  
Grantee: Community of Urbana-Champaign  
Category: Continuum of Care

The Cities of Urbana and Champaign have coordinated their energies to address the needs of homeless individuals and families and assembled the components of a comprehensive

Continuum of Care system after much planning and coordination. This union resulted in the development of a system of homeless housing and services that includes intake and assessment services, emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent housing, and appropriate supportive services.

### **Housing the Homeless Continuum of Care**

<http://www.hud.gov/ptw/docs/pa03.html>

State: Pennsylvania  
Field Office: Philadelphia  
Issues: Housing

The County personnel wanted to address the impediments to providing support services and housing assistance to the homeless. They also wanted to identify any logistical challenges associated with coordinating and establishing the roles of the service providers, the public/private sector, and all community stakeholders involved in the system. Rather than increasing the number of shelters, the foundation of the County's strategy is to increase the flow of people moving from shelters to transitional housing, to permanent housing and self-sufficiency.

### **The Glendale Homeless Coalition**

<http://www.hud.gov/ptw/docs/ca6198.html>

State: California  
Field Office: Los Angeles  
Grantee: City of Glendale  
Category: Continuum of Care

The City of Glendale is addressing homelessness through a community-based strategy aimed at developing a comprehensive and coordinated Continuum of Care. An annual needs assessment and service inventory conducted by the coalition provides the basis for a strategy aiming to sustain existing programs within the continuum that have demonstrated effectiveness. The Glendale Service Center, a one-stop approach to homeless services. Currently, at the center, seven social service agencies (including local hospitals and the welfare department) provide street outreach, intake and assessment, intensive case management, benefits assistance, health and mental health services, and housing placement, was developed.