



A Place to Call Home

Washington County, Ohio's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness

I. Background

The Washington County Continuum of Care Committee has developed this plan to eliminate homelessness. While the community has many service providers providing services to homeless families and individuals, the need to be more effective and efficient with scarce resources has been a concern. During the planning process the Continuum of Care Committee met frequently.

During the planning process the Continuum of Care Committee:

- The Committee updated its Homelessness Service matrix
- The Committee openly discussed issues in two critical thinking sessions
- The Committee measured homelessness through two point in time surveys and through a gaps analysis
- The Committee conducted a Forum and increased public awareness
- The Committee invited broader participation in the Community
- The Committee prioritized homelessness populations for individuals and Families
- The Committee prioritized project activities and identified service providers

A. Washington County Continuum of Care Committee

James Baker	Washington-Morgan Community Action
Dawn Rauch	Washington-Morgan Community Action
Dennis Harrington	Southeastern Ohio Legal Services
Charmel Wesel	City of Marietta, Ohio
Ron Rees	Washington County MHAR Board
Christina Schafer	EVE, Incorporated
Jim Tilley	Caring Connection
Beth Sour	The Salvation Army
Chris Burge	Washington County Red Cross
Karen Martindell	Christ United Methodist Church
Marc McComas	Family and Children First
Ted Williams	Washington County Home
James Kennelly	Veterans Office
Cortney Cawley	Washington County Children Services
Scott Britton	Community Food Pantry
Candy Nelson	Washington County DJFS
Michael Paxton	Washington County DJFS
Jeremy Thomas	Washington-Morgan Community Action
Susan Tilton	Washington County DD Board

B. Background

Twenty-five years ago there was not widespread homelessness in America. Tonight approximately 750,000 men, women and children will be homeless, despite a two billion dollar a year infrastructure designed to deal with the problem.

While the seeds of homelessness were planted in the 1960s and 1970s with deinstitutionalization of people living with mental illness and loss of affordable housing stock, widespread homelessness did not emerge until the 1980s. Several factors have affected its growth over the last two decades. Housing has become scarcer for those with little money. Earnings from employment and from benefits have not kept pace with the cost of housing for low income and poor people. Services that every family needs for support and stability have become harder for very poor people to afford or find.

In addition to these systemic causes, social changes have exacerbated the personal problems of many poor Americans, leading them to be more vulnerable to homelessness. These social trends have included new kinds of illegal drugs and more single parent and teen-headed households with low earning power and thinning support networks. These causes of homelessness must be addressed. People who are homeless must be helped. The current system does this reasonably well for many of those who become homeless. But the homeless assistance system can neither

prevent people from becoming homeless nor change the overall availability of housing, income and services that will truly end homelessness.

Many people think of homelessness as strictly an urban phenomenon because homeless people are greater in number and are more visible in urban areas, but homelessness, including people who live in housing not meant for habitation, is pervasive in rural areas. The number of people who experience rural homelessness is unknown, but the last national count of homeless people found that 9 percent live in rural areas. In actual raw numbers, this translates into roughly 67,000 people on any given night. (Burt, 1996) Evidence suggests that if the number of people who experience homelessness in rural areas was viewed and counted more accurately, the number would be far greater.

C) Rural Homelessness

Advocates and researchers often refer to people who experience rural homelessness as the “hidden homeless.” Many people who experience housing instability in rural areas go unnoticed and uncoun­ted because rural homelessness takes shape differently than urban homelessness. Most rural homeless people live in doubled up situations with friends or family or in motels, in cars, campgrounds and other places not intended for habitation. This is largely because most rural areas do not have large emergency shelters systems.

While those doubled up households do not meet HUD’s definition of homelessness, people living temporarily with friends and family are essentially homeless and they experience similar problems with housing instability. Many researchers and advocates argue for expanding this view of homelessness to capture the unique situations rural homeless people face. If the view of homelessness included households who double up, the numbers of people who experience homelessness in rural areas would increase exponentially.

The same structural factors that contribute to urban homelessness, such as a lack of affordable housing and inadequate income to pay for housing, cause rural homelessness. Other predictors of homelessness, such as mental illness and drug abuse, while still present among the rural homeless, are not pervasive. However, people who experience rural homelessness do report higher rates of alcohol abuse and domestic violence than their urban counterparts.

Rural Poverty

Rural poverty has some unique characteristics. Areas concentrated with rural poverty can be identified throughout the South, West and the Midwest of the United States. The scarcity of jobs, goods, and services has caused an outward migration of rural populations to places with more opportunities. As a consequence, the rural communities with high rates of poverty are sparsely populated and their poverty populations are severely impoverished.

High rates of poverty and unemployment in rural areas also drive homelessness. Rural homelessness is most dramatic in areas that experience high rates of unemployment because of declining industries, for example farming, timber, mining, or fishing. (Aron and Fitchen, 1996) The lack of available jobs and steady incomes means that poverty rates are higher in rural areas; the poverty rate in non-metropolitan areas is 14 percent, almost 11.6 percent less than in metropolitan areas. It is not surprising that one in five children living in rural areas is below the poverty line. (USDA Economic Research Service, 2004)

The RHISCO Project area

Counting and estimating the number of people who experience homelessness is extremely difficult and costly, and even more so in rural areas. Statewide estimates from the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio report that 179,718 people experience homelessness in Ohio over the course of a year and 27,867 Ohioans are homeless on any given night. At this time, estimates from the seventeen rural counties that comprise the RHISCO Project area, the Rural Homeless Initiative of Southeast and Central Ohio, are becoming available.

Counts of homeless people in Southeastern and Central Ohio are being planned and executed presently. The poverty and unemployment rates in these areas suggest that homelessness is prevalent. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (See Table 1, below), poverty rates in the counties of Southeastern and Central Ohio range from 3.8 percent in Delaware County to as high as 27 percent in Athens County. The poverty rates in Appalachian counties tend to be higher than other counties. About half are higher than the national poverty rate of 14 percent. Unemployment rates in rural Ohio counties are also high, ranging from 7 percent to 20 percent. In Meigs and Morgan Counties, the unemployment rates reach 20 percent, 15 percentage points higher than the national average of 5 percent. (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005) People who live in poverty are at higher risk of homelessness. Although relatively few people of the region are homeless, the problem affects the entire community as a persistent and debilitating social issue.

D. Washington County

Underneath the vision of our beautiful historic river community, Washington County Ohio is a population of homeless persons that are drawn to the Community by the promise of service jobs, an array of community based services and permanent housing.

The local economy benefits from the community's history and its geographic location on the Ohio River and on an Interstate Highway. Over the last decade it lost hundreds of mining and industrial jobs and became a regional center for retail and medical. Washington County gained hundreds of service based jobs in retail and medical fields.

The Continuum of Care has met regularly for nearly a decade. The Committee directly supported housing for chronically mentally ill individuals, an emergency Shelter for Domestic Violence and a Shelter Plus Care project.

With the changes in the local economy a growing number of families appear to lack income and resources to pay for housing. At all times there a waiting list of 600-700 families requesting Section 8 Tenant based housing assistance.

The specialization of homeless populations challenges small communities to provide services. An increase in the number of individuals suffering from substance abuse and the increase in the number of ex-offenders represents two subpopulations that are unheralded.

The base of homeless prevention service providers are fully engaged in a daily ritual of too many homeless people and not enough resources. This plan is focused on improving effectiveness and efficiency and expansion of services to serve high property populations

II. Analysis

A. Inventory

The Continuum of Care Committee completed a service matrix of services currently being provided to residents of Washington County, Ohio. Washington County has three homeless shelters. EVE, Incorporated is a domestic violence shelter for men and women who have been victims of domestic violence. The Washington County Home is a transitional shelter for single adults, who are residents of Washington County. Cornerstone Emergency Homeless Shelter is operated by Cornerstone Ministries and offers emergency services to homeless individuals. Washington County has a variety of providers who provide temporary shelter or other services to homeless persons.

Service Providers

- Salvation Army
- Washington County Red Cross
- Caring Connection
- Family and Children First Council
- EVE, Incorporated
- Washington County DD Board
- Washington County MHAR Board
- Washington County Children Services
- Washington County DJFS
- First Presbyterian Church
- Church of Christ
- Southeastern Ohio Legal Services
- Washington County Veterans Commission
- Church of Christ
- Cornerstone Emergency Homeless Shelter
- Washington County Home
- Washington-Morgan Community Action
- Christ United Methodist Church

III. Demographics

A. U.S. Census 2000

Total population	63,251	100.0
SEX AND AGE		
Male	30,750	48.6
Female	32,501	51.4
Under 5 years	3,691	5.8
5 to 9 years	4,151	6.6
10 to 14 years	4,317	6.8
15 to 19 years	4,621	7.3
20 to 24 years	3,698	5.8
25 to 34 years	7,399	11.7
35 to 44 years	10,021	15.8
45 to 54 years	9,276	14.7
55 to 59 years	3,533	5.6
60 to 64 years	3,081	4.9
65 to 74 years	5,089	8.0
75 to 84 years	3,280	5.2
85 years and over	1,094	1.7
Median age (years)	39.1	(X)

HOUSING OCCUPANCY		
Total housing units	27,760	100.0
Occupied housing units	25,137	90.6
Vacant housing units	2,623	9.4
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	553	2.0
Homeowner vacancy rate (percent)	2.2	(X)
Rental vacancy rate (percent)	9.2	(X)
INCOME IN 1999		
Households	25,162	100.0
Less than \$10,000	2,502	9.9
\$10,000 to \$14,999	2,011	8.0
\$15,000 to \$24,999	4,322	17.2
\$25,000 to \$34,999	3,989	15.9
\$35,000 to \$49,999	4,320	17.2
\$50,000 to \$74,999	4,657	18.5
\$75,000 to \$99,999	1,891	7.5
\$100,000 to \$149,999	981	3.9
\$150,000 to \$199,999	215	0.9
\$200,000 or more	274	1.1
Median household income (dollars)	34,275	
Families	17,766	100.0
Less than \$10,000	978	5.5
\$10,000 to \$14,999	886	5.0
\$15,000 to \$24,999	2,567	14.4
\$25,000 to \$34,999	2,841	16.0
\$35,000 to \$49,999	3,499	19.7
\$50,000 to \$74,999	4,020	22.6
\$75,000 to \$99,999	1,706	9.6
\$100,000 to \$149,999	894	5.0

\$150,000 to \$199,999	169	1.0
\$200,000 or more	206	1.2
Median family income (dollars)	41,605	
POVERTY STATUS IN 1999 (below poverty level)		
Families	1,534	(X)
Percent below poverty level	(X)	8.6
With related children under 18 years	1,201	(X)
Percent below poverty level	(X)	14.6
With related children under 5 years	595	(X)
Percent below poverty level	(X)	19.6
Families with female householder, no husband present		
	803	(X)
Percent below poverty level	(X)	33.4
With related children under 18 years	732	(X)
Percent below poverty level	(X)	44.6
With related children under 5 years	323	(X)
Percent below poverty level	(X)	64.1
Individuals		
	7,002	(X)
Percent below poverty level	(X)	11.4
18 years and over	4,643	(X)
Percent below poverty level	(X)	9.9
65 years and over	896	(X)
Percent below poverty level	(X)	10.2
Related children under 18 years	2,292	(X)
Percent below poverty level	(X)	15.7
Related children 5 to 17 years	1,529	(X)
Percent below poverty level	(X)	14.0
Unrelated individuals 15 years and over	2,218	(X)
Percent below poverty level	(X)	23.4

B. Point in Time Surveys

Washington County's Continuum of Care conducted two Point in Time surveys.

The first Point in Time survey was conducted within the City of Marietta, Ohio using HUD's definition of homelessness on April 24, 2006. Services providers were asked to keep count of the number of homeless persons who requested services that day.

The second Point in Time survey was conducted on June 5th, 2006 and was a County Wide survey. For this survey the Continuum used an expanded definition of homelessness to include subpopulations that were not included in HUD's definition.

1. HUD's Homeless Definition

A Person is considered homeless only when he/she resides in one of the places described below:

- In places not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, abandoned buildings (on the street).
- In an emergency shelter.
- In transitional or supportive housing for homeless persons who originally came from the streets or emergency shelters.
- In any of the above places but is spending a short time (up to 30 consecutive days) in a hospital or other institution.
- Is being evicted within a week from a private dwelling unit and no subsequent residence has been identified and lacks resources and support networks needed to obtain housing.
- Is being discharged within a week from an institution, such as a mental health or substance abuse treatment facility or a jail/prison, in which a person has been a resident for more than 30 consecutive days and no subsequent residence has been identified and the person lacks the resources and support networks needed to obtain housing.

2. Expanded Local Definition (Inappropriately housed definition)

Independent adults with or without children with barriers, temporarily living with an unrelated families or with family members.

Barriers placing persons AT RISK of Homelessness

- inability to pay utilities
- inability to pay rent
- inability to pay rent deposits
- foreclosures
- living in substandard housing
- living in unsanitary conditions
- living in anti social environment
- living in overcrowded conditions
- lacking transportation or automobile broke down
- disability
- substance abuse
- inability to take care of personal needs
- criminal record
- record of abusing property or not paying rent

Point in Time Survey – City of Marietta, Ohio

Continuum of Care Homeless population and sub-populations

1. Count each client as sheltered or unsheltered

Combined Providers – City of Marietta, Ohio

	sheltered emergency	sheltered transitional	unsheltered
Total Homeless Individuals	8	2	4
Total Homeless families w children	1		

2. Count each client that has a family member that is part of a subpopulation

Subpopulations

chronically homeless	1		
severely mentally ill	1		
Chronic sub abuse	1		1
Veterans			1
persons w/ HIV/AIDS			
Victims of domestic violence	2	2	1
youth under 18 years	3		

Point in Time Survey – Washington County, Ohio

Continuum of Care Homeless population and sub-populations

1. Count each client as sheltered or unsheltered

Combined Providers – Washington County

	Sheltered emergency	Sheltered transitional	Unsheltered	At Risk
Total Homeless Individuals	20	62	7	10
Total Homeless families w children	1			7

2. Count each client that has a family member that is part of a subpopulation subpopulations

chronically homeless		5		
severely mentally ill		41		6
Chronic sub abuse	6	8	2	1
veterans		1		
persons w/ HIV/AIDS				
Victims of domestic violence	2			1
youth under 18 years	4			19
Inability to Pay Utilities				1
Inability to Pay Rent/ Eviction				3
Foreclosure				1
Lack of Transportation				2
Doubling/Tripling Up				9

C. Gaps Analysis

The Continuum of Care Committee completed a Gaps Analysis of current services provided in Washington County, Ohio.

2006 GAPS ANALYSIS

		<u>Estimated Need</u>	<u>Current Inventory</u>	<u>Unmet Need/GAP</u>
INDIVIDUALS				
Beds	Emergency Shelter	17	8	9
	Transitional Housing	134	124	10
	Permanent Supportive Housing	60	30	30
	Total	211	162	49
Supportive Services	Job Training	275	125	150
	Case Management	5405	3390	2015
	Substance Abuse Treatment	802	202	600
	Mental Health Care	9054	3054	6000
	Ex-Offenders (UNKNOWN)	5	4	1
	Inappropriately Housed			
	Housing Placement			
	Life Skills Training	204	191	13
	Other-Outreach			
	Other - Health Care	68	68	0
Other - Dental Care	68	68	0	
FAMILIES				
Beds	Emergency Shelter			
	Transitional Housing			
	Permanent Supportive Housing			
	Total			
Supportive Services	Job Training			
	Case Management			
	Substance Abuse Treatment			
	Mental Health Care			
	Ex-Offenders			
	Inappropriately Housed	6	0	6
	Eviction	1	0	1
	Housing Placement			
	Life Skills Training	5	0	5
	Other-Outreach			
Other - Health Care				
Other - Dental Care				

IV. Homeless Summit

The Washington County Continuum of Care hosted a Homeless Forum entitled *A Place to Call Home* on October 5, 2006. Key members of the community were invited to participate in an open forum to discuss the needs and issues surrounding homelessness in Washington County, Ohio and to raise public awareness. The Washington County Commissioners, Washington County Sheriff as well as the Mayor of the City of Marietta, Ohio attended and briefed the group on what they see are the issues affecting the homeless population in our county. Each service provider that attended was asked to speak about what services they provide to homeless persons in Washington County.

V. Homeless Strategy Statements

A. Prevention Strategies

The following agencies and services are connected to homeless prevention in Washington County:

Caring Connection: Rent Deposits and Rent Assistance, overnight stay in Motel

City of Marietta: Emergency Home Repair

***City of Marietta PHA**

-Rental Assistance

-Shelter Plus Care Program

**Operated by Washington Morgan Community Action*

Eve, Inc.: Transitional housing services for victims of Domestic violence

Local Churches: Rent Deposits, Rent Assistance and Food

Salvation Army:

-Rent Deposits and Rent Assistance

-Overnight stay in Motel

-Emergency Transportation

Washington County Department of Job and Family Services: Prevention, Retention and Contingency (PRC) Funds

Washington County Family and Children First Council: Housing Assistance to Families with Children

Washington County Children Services: Prevention services for families with children.

Washington County MHAR Board: Permanent community based housing

Washington County Home: Permanent Housing and Services for Adults

Washington County Veterans Services Administration: Housing Assistance to veterans and their dependents

Washington Morgan Community Action

- Representative payee program
- Emergency Home Repair and Housing Rehabilitation
- Home Delivered Meals for the Elderly
- Community Housing Improvement Program (CHIP) with the City of Marietta and Washington County
- Title V Senior Aides Program

Objective: Continue to support these homeless prevention programs

- 1) Advocate for increased funding for Rental Assistance
- 2) Advocate for transitional services the interrupt the causes of homelessness
- 3) Collaborate with law enforcement agencies to plan for services for discharged ex offenders
- 4) Home Repair Programs
- 5) Energy assistance programs
- 6) Representative payee program for Disabled clients

1. Workforce and Economic Development

Creation of jobs and a trained workforce is seen as a priority activity in eliminating homelessness. The Washington County One Stop Center is a model for effective coordination of services for workers seeking jobs and career training.

Washington County One Stop Employment Center: Access to employment and training opportunities. Partnering agencies include:

- Washington Morgan Community Action
- Washington County Department of Job and Family Services
- Washington County Career Center
- Washington State Community College
- Ohio Department of Job and Family Services
- Ohio Veterans Advocate
- Ohio Valley Employment Resources

2. Transportation

Expansion of Transportation services may be seen as a link to job creation and self sufficiency.

Objective: Encourage participation in the “locally developed transportation plan” that will be conducted early in 2007 by the Municipal Planning Organization (MPO: WWW Interstate Planning Commission) in support of additional transportation funding through “SAFETEA - LU”.

- 1) Advocate for local matching resources for public transit and private transportation services
- 2) Advocate for expanded flexible low cost transportation services.

3. Community Support and Advocacy

Expansion of Washington County 's support for homeless population is seen as an important effort to maximize resources for prevention.

Objective: Broaden community support for homeless services

- 1) Invite broader participation in the Continuum of Care Committee
- 2) Engage the whole Community in solving problems

4. Improved coordination among providers

Homeless families sometime need to travel from agency to agency before they can get help.

Objective: Outline specific ways to improve services and be more effective

- 1) Routinely discuss the actual experiences and service delivery problems
- 2) Each member should openly discuss service scenarios that would result in improved service delivery

5. Liaison Strategizing

Homeless service providers can learn from successful experiences and models of leadership

Objective: Have a community that is aware of Homeless needs

- 1) Participate in statewide and regional organizations that serve homeless providers
- 2) Invite Community Leaders to the table
- 3) Conduct Annual Stakeholders luncheon

B. Priority Project Strategies and Action Plans for Homeless Populations

The Washington County Continuum of Care has prioritized the two homeless subpopulations that should be given the highest priority.

-The first is "single parent households. Washington County has seen a rise in the number of single parent families, who are in need of housing.

-The second subpopulation are individuals suffering from chronic substance abuse.

1. Single Parents, who are in need of housing

Action Plan

1.1 Washington County through Eve, Inc. will develop programs that serve to eliminate homelessness among single parent households

- obtain funding for rent deposits and first months rent
- obtain funding for a short term loan program to pay for mortgage payments, rent in homes where the family is at risk of immediate loss of housing
- obtain funding for a homeless ombudsman program

1.2 Washington County will continue to provide support for EVE, Inc, an emergency shelter and transitional program for victims of domestic violence.

1.3 Washington County will continue to provide support for all service providers that provides services to homeless single parents

1.4 Washington Morgan Community Action in cooperation with the City of Marietta, as a Public Housing Agency will review its policies concerning Section 8 housing to ascertain that homeless families are always given a high priority for housing

2. Chronic Substance Abuse

Action Plan

2.1 Washington County will continue to support programs that provide interdiction services to homeless individuals suffering from substance abuse

2.2 Washington County will develop programs that serve homeless individuals suffering from substance abuse

- A special task force organized by the Mental Health and Addiction Recovery Board will work on the development of a “halfway house and program” that serves homeless individuals suffering from chronic substance

- Washington Morgan Community Action in cooperation with the city of Marietta Public Housing Agency and the Washington County Mental Health and Addiction Recovery Board will develop an expanded Shelter plus Care program

C. Additional Priorities for Homeless services

Action Plan

3.1 Develop a permanent housing strategy

- Washington County, the City of Belpre and the City of Marietta through each Community Housing Investment Strategies will identify activities to assist low income homebuyers to purchase a house
- Washington County communities will assist housing developers in locating sites for additional affordable housing

3.2 Operate programs that help vulnerable populations retain housing

- Home Repair Programs
- Energy assistance programs
- Representative payee program for Disabled clients
- Mortgage assistance

3.3 Operate Food and Nutrition programs that help low income families

- Senior Nutrition Programs
- Area Food Pantries
- Food Stamp Programs
- WIC Program

3.4 The Washington County Sheriff will be asked to appoint a task force who will explore the possibility of a half way house for ex offenders

VI. Local and Statewide Resources

Resources

Sisters of Saint Joseph's Foundation
Marietta Community Foundation
Osteopathic Heritage Foundation
Washington County Department of Job and Family Services
Ohio Department of Development
Ohio Department of Mental Health
Ohio Department of Aging
Federal Emergency Management Administration
U. S Department of Housing and Urban Development
Washington County Children Services