

This document includes items for Pennsylvania's plan to address the needs of the homeless and particularly the chronically homeless in Pennsylvania

Background:

Pennsylvania was one of ten states selected to participate in the May 20-22, 2003 Policy Academy in Chicago on Improving Access to Mainstream Services for People Experiencing Chronic Homelessness. The Departments of Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Veterans Affairs co-sponsored the event. The team of nine state and local officials received advance and onsite assistance and was expected to develop an action plan that explores new partnerships that focus on addressing chronic homelessness.

At the Policy Academy and in correspondence from the Secretary of Health and Human Services, it was recommended that Pennsylvania consider developing a state interagency on homelessness.. Pennsylvania is well situated to develop such a council utilizing existing organizations that serve its citizens.

This document proposes the vision, priorities, goals, strategies, and action steps necessary to provide the vehicle to meet the requirements suggested and provide a coordinated approach to serving the homeless citizens of Pennsylvania.

Vision Statement:

Pennsylvania envisions a state where there are no homeless people. Each person will have the support services needed to live as independently as possible in permanent housing of his or her choice. The mainstream services will be adequate, well-coordinated, consumer driven, and recovery-oriented. All housing and services will be offered with dignity and respect, and will provide hope.

The Commonwealth's Guiding Principals for Ending Homelessness:

- Assure that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania provides a continuum of services, coordinated and delivered by agencies, which offers homeless consumers choices in the manner and amount of assistance they will need to achieve and maintain their maximum level of independence.
- Seek creative ways to leverage and utilize current and new resources to assist the homeless population.
- Assure access to supportive services and affordable housing in all areas of the state.
- Assure that the quantity and quality of services and affordable housing meets the needs of the homeless population.

- Assure that the state departments and agencies, via the council, devise plans and strategies that address the needs of the homeless population and are consistent with the vision statement and guiding principals.
- Develop and maintain state and local intergovernmental relationships to coordinate and manage resources in order to assure access to the services to the homeless population.
- Develop local community partnerships with the private sector that include businesses, foundations, lenders, civic organizations, hospitals, and foundations to address local homeless needs.
- Assure the prevention of homelessness by assisting individuals and families to obtain or retain affordable safe housing..
- Assure that the state departments and agencies, via the council, devise plans and strategies that address outcomes, monitoring, and accountability.

Pennsylvania’s strategy has three priorities:

1. To designate an Interagency Council on Homelessness

The Council will include representation from all relevant state agencies and will have responsibility for policy formulation and coordination of all systems related to homelessness in the Commonwealth. The PA Housing Advisory Committee described below, will serve as the Interagency Council. The Regional Homeless Assistance Process (RHAP) Steering Committee also described below, will serve as its working arm and DCED and other state agencies will provide staff support. An important step will be to ensure that not only the four Regional Homeless Advisory Boards, but also the 16 entitlement communities (i.e. the larger communities not participating in the PA Regional Homeless Assistance Process) are represented on the Council and Steering Committee.

The Council’s anticipated purview will include a review of all relevant departmental policies, plans, and budgets to ensure consistency with the guiding principles listed above, including the following: Continuums of Care; Community Services, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse Block Grants; County MH/MR Plans; state and local Consolidated Plans; WIA Plans; PHFA tax credit allocation plans; and Homeless Assistance Program plans. The Policy Academy Team also recommends that the Council review agencies’ performance in advancing the state’s mission and conforming to the guiding principles.

The Interagency Council will be the focus for coordination and linkage of both existing and emerging initiatives addressing the homeless population including but not limited to: the PATH projects, Forensic Interagency Committee, MISA pilot projects, the Fairweather Lodge TA Project, and Workforce Investment Act Initiatives. It will also serve as the link to statewide advocacy organizations that address homeless issues

including the Pennsylvania Coalition to End Homelessness, the Pennsylvania Low Income Housing Coalition, and Community Support Program.

2. To promote alignment of state and local mission and activities around the state vision

A central part of the strategy includes the Interagency Council assessing the effectiveness of the current state and local housing and human service systems and to realign them to meet the above vision and guiding principles. By breaking down the “silos” through which resources are currently being funneled, Pennsylvania will be better able to ensure that resources go where they are most needed and most effective. In addition to key state departments and agencies, it is recognized that the support of county commissioners and other municipal officials will be critical to the success of this effort. Therefore, financial and other incentives, such as joint RFP’s, will be necessary to create the will for realignment. Once all key parties embrace the principle, the Council will charge them with identifying major legal and regulatory barriers and with formulating specific strategies to break them down.

3. To develop local responses to chronic homelessness

Given the size and diversity of Pennsylvania, the health of the local network of homeless housing and service providers will be a critical factor in successfully implementing the strategy. Since every region of the state is different, the state’s strategy to end chronic homelessness must be designed to support local participation while accommodating regional differences. The need for training and technical assistance, in order to build local capacity, especially in rural areas of the state where resources are limited, is also important. Currently, this is being done to a limited degree through the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS), which provides technical assistance in forming and building LHOTs and other local housing coalitions. OMHSAS also provides training for the state’s Mental Health Housing Specialists that work out of the County Mental Health/Mental Retardation Offices to expand housing options for people with mental illness.

Description of the PA Housing Advisory Committee:

The Pennsylvania Housing Advisory Committee (PHAC) will serve as the Interagency Council. Currently the membership must be at least 25, but no more than 35. There is a requirement for geographic dispersion among urban, suburban, and rural areas, as well as, diversity requirements. There are 16 statutory positions and within the other 9 to 19 positions, there must be representation from 11 specific areas. (In some cases, the representation from those 11 areas can be one person who wears more than one hat.) In the past members have been both recommended to the Governor's Office by DCED (or previously DCA) and appointed by the Governor’s Office without any recommendation from the Department.

The following is the list of mandated membership and required representation on the committee:

- Secretary of DCED (statutory Chairperson)

- Secretary of Aging
- Secretary of Health
- Secretary of Labor and Industry
- Secretary of Public Welfare
- Executive Director of PA Housing Finance Agency
- Four Members of General Assembly (one from each caucus)
- Member from each Regional Housing Advisory Committee (elected by each of the six regional committees)

The following representations must be covered by the other 9 to 19 individuals appointed by the Governor:

- Representative of local governments that are participating jurisdictions in the HOME Program
- Representative of local governments that are non-participating jurisdictions in the HOME Program
- Representative of county human service programs
- Representative of non-profit housing developers
- Representative of for-profit housing developers
- Representative of financial community (banks and other lenders)
- Representative of housing authorities
- Representative of redevelopment authorities
- Representative of organized labor
- Representative of technical assistance providers
- Representative of social service providers serving special needs groups

Description of the Steering Committee:

The Regional Homeless Assistance Process was initiated in 1996 to cover the 52 rural counties in Pennsylvania that comprised the “balance of the state.” The process began with the formation of the RHAP Steering Committee, with representation from the key state agencies involved with homeless issues including: the Department of Community and Economic Development, the Department of Public Welfare’s Office of Social Programs and Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency; and the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

Keeping with the Continuum of Care philosophy, four separate regional Continuums of Care were formed to cover the 52 participating counties: Northeast, Southwest, Northwest, and Central-Harrisburg, each of which formed a Regional Homeless Advisory Board (RHAB). In 2000, the Steering Committee was expanded to include the RHAB chairs of all four regions and in 2001, representatives of the PA Rural Development Council, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, and the PA Department of Health, Division of HIV/AIDS were added to the Steering Committee. In 2002-2003, representatives of the Department of Corrections, Department of Labor and Industry,

Office of Children, Youth and Families, the Philadelphia Office of the Managing Director, and the Pennsylvania DCED Regional Directors were added to round out representation among all relevant state agencies.

The RHAP Steering Committee manages the overall Continuum of Care planning process for all four regions. The specific roles of the RHAP Steering Committee are to:

- Formulate policy and share information;
- Review and develop procedures for the Continuum of Care application process;
- Facilitate the collection of data on homelessness; and
- Direct and provide technical assistance to the regional Continuums of Care and project applicants.

Attached are the priorities, goals and action steps for establishing the Pennsylvania Interagency Council and for developing a Ten Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness.

APPENDIX 1:

Priority One: To designate a Pennsylvania Interagency Council on Homelessness.

Goal 1: Designate the Pennsylvania Housing Advisory Committee as the Interagency Council on Homelessness.		
Action Steps	Responsible Person/ Organization	Target Dates
1. Obtain the Governor's Office's approval and direction to develop the interagency council	DCED and DPW	October 2003
2. Issue the executive order to designate the responsibilities to the Pennsylvania Housing Advisory Committee	Governor's Office	November 2003
3. Appoint council members and add representatives from the Department of Education, Department of Corrections, and representatives of entitlement communities and advocacy organizations that represent the homeless and formerly homeless individuals	Governor's Office	December 2003
4. Appoint the Secretary of Public Welfare as the lead cabinet member responsible for addressing homeless issues via the Executive Order.	Governor's Office	November 2003

Goal 2: Enhance the Role of the PA Housing Advisory Committee.		
Action Steps	Responsible Person/ Organization	Target Dates
1. Adopt the vision statement and guiding principals recommended by the Steering Committee as a	PHAC	February 2004

result of participation at the Policy Academy		
2. Present and discuss homeless issues at each of its meetings	PHAC	February 2004
3. Each department indicate its plan for coordination and funding and indicate its results and new initiatives to address homeless issues	PHAC	February 2004

Priority Two: To promote the alignment of state and local mission and activities around the state vision.

Goal 1: To promote alignment of state and local systems.		
Action Steps	Responsible Person/ Organization	Target Dates
1. Identify all resources serving the homeless and chronically homeless by state agency	Steering Committee	April 2004
2. Complete an analysis of current state and local systems addressing chronically homeless individuals	Steering Committee	September 2004
3. Identify barriers to system's integration and formulate specific strategies for realignment	Steering Committee	December 2004
4. Review and adopt cross departmental strategies to align resources	PHAC/Steering Committee	January 2005

Goal 2: To validate the applicability of national data on the chronically homeless to Pennsylvania.		
Action Steps	Responsible Person/ Organization	Target Dates
1. Define characteristics of the population to be studied	Steering Committee	September 2003
2. Develop methodology	Steering Committee	October 2003
3. Collect Medical	DPW	December 2003

Assistance (MA) data to identify high users by county		
4. Collect other data on chronic homeless individuals from sources such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Health Care for the Homeless sites and other rural health providers - HAP County Contacts - CAP agencies - The PATH program 	RHAB and HAP County Contacts	February 2004
5. Analyze data to compare with national statistics to determine if 10% of the chronically homeless are using 50% of the resources	Steering Committee	February 2004
6. Prepare a report on Pennsylvania's chronic homeless	Steering Committee	March 2004
7. Begin operations with the state HMIS	DCED	October 2004
8. Track the progress of current pilot projects that outreach and serve the chronically homeless	Steering Committee	January 2005

Priority Three: To develop local responses to chronic homelessness.

Goal 1: To improve discharge planning at both the state and county levels.		
Action Steps	Responsible Person/Organization	Target Dates
1. Implement the Forensic Homeless Prevention Pilot Project at the Muncy SCI and Allentown CCC;	RHAB with Pa Department of Corrections	September 2004
2. Work with county correctional facilities on strategies to improve discharge planning by	RHAB County Rep	December 2003

linking affordable housing providers to representatives of the criminal justice system		
3. Educate Steering Committee members about the use of Chaffey funds to develop programs for preventing youth who have aged out of the foster care system from becoming homeless	C&Y Chaffey Work Group	October 2003
4. Work with county Children and Youth and Mental Health programs to develop strategies to improve discharge planning or to develop housing programs from youth aging out of the foster care system	DPW	March 2004
5. Identify other key state discharge issues and develop strategies for 2005.	Steering Committee	May 2004

Goal 2: To promote and support local responses to chronic homelessness.		
Action Steps	Responsible Person/ Organization	Target Dates
1. Based on the data gathered in Priority 1 Goal 2, issue an RFP with joint funding for five new pilot projects (1 per region of the state and one in the City of Philadelphia) on homeless prevention, outreach and/or permanent housing	Steering Committee	December 2004
2. Provide training and TA to State Hospital Area Planning Teams in identifying and developing affordable	OMHSAS/DMA	October 2003-May 2004

and accessible housing options and appropriate services for people being discharged from state mental hospitals		
3. Provide information and assistance to rural areas to improve access to mainstream health care programs and services for the chronically homeless	DPW	September 2004
4. Prepare for and conduct a statewide Best Practices Conference to include the following topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update on Pennsylvania's Strategy on Chronic Homelessness and the Interagency Council - Training on street outreach and engagement techniques - Initiating and building Local Housing Options Teams - Best Practices in Addressing Chronic Homeless in Rural and Urban Areas - Discharge Planning Issues 	Steering Committee / DMA	March 2004
5. Provide technical assistance to support local homeless/housing taskforces		
6. Provide a forum for entitlement communities to coordinate and share best practices.		

