



Governor's Statewide Interagency Council on Homelessness

Annual Report, 2006

Introduction

Governor Bob Riley created the Governor's Statewide Interagency Council on Homelessness with the signing of Executive Order #31 on August 11, 2005. The Governor's Statewide Interagency Council on Homelessness was formed to develop and implement a plan to prevent and end homelessness in Alabama. The Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (GFBCI) was designated the lead agency for the Council.

Since its inception, the Council has worked to develop intergovernmental and intercommunity collaboration through outreach, site visits, and the use of technical assistance. Council members have been a part of nationwide planning and strategy meetings including an In-State Policy Academy in Montgomery with participation by government and community leaders

In the June meeting of the Governor's Statewide Interagency Council on Homelessness the Council approved the *Blueprint Towards a Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Alabama*. The Blueprint serves as a guide to initiate the process of ending homelessness. The initial steps of the Blueprint are the collection of homeless data and the mapping of services. This information will assist the Council to identify best practices and

effective strategies to achieve the overall goal of ending homelessness in Alabama. Additional steps include the creation of a pilot housing program, continued collaboration with Alabama's Continuum of Care, and facilitating the creation of a statewide homeless management information system.

When creating the Governor's Statewide Interagency Council on Homelessness, Governor Riley recognized that in order to effectively address homelessness there must be collaboration



Governor Bob Riley signs Executive Order # 31 on August 11, 2005 at the Birmingham YWCA.

among government agencies, the private sector, non-profit organizations, and service provider networks. This spirit of collaboration is reflected in the diversity of individuals and organizations comprising the Council.

The State of Alabama has a tremendous resource in its community, non-profit, and faith-based organizations currently assisting the

homeless. Many of these programs serve as national models of compassionate, creative, and effective means of addressing the various causes that leave people without a home. We are fortunate to have such dedicated service providers aiding the homeless in our state. To highlight the positive work going on in Alabama everyday in the fight to end homelessness, three programs from across the state are showcased as examples of what can be accomplished with greater collaboration and communication.

United States Interagency Council on Homelessness

The mission of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness is to coordinate the federal response to homelessness and to create a national partnership of government and of the private sector to reduce and end homelessness in the nation.

The U.S. Council works to improve access to and coordination of federal investments among its Council member departments and agencies; ensure the effectiveness of federal activities and programs; engage and assist state and local governments, advocates, service providers, and customers in creating effective local solutions; and provide technical assistance and evidence-based best

practice information to partners at every level of government, as well as the private sector.

The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness and the Alabama Statewide Interagency Council on Homelessness are working together on three important issues.

Intergovernmental Collaboration.

As part of the U.S. Council's strategy to establish non-partisan, intergovernmental partnerships to end homelessness, specific initiatives have been fostered with state and local governments.

Intercommunity Collaboration.

To carry out the strategy of intergovernmental and inter-sector partnership, the U.S. Council has developed

community partnerships with the National Governors Association, U.S. Conference of Mayors, National League of Cities, National Association of Counties, United Way, Chamber of Commerce, International Downtown Association, National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, and the National Alliance to End Homelessness.

Technical Assistance and Support.

The Governor's Interagency Council on Homelessness has received a variety of Technical Assistance and Support from both national and state-level consultants. These consultants have played a vital role in the development of Alabama's Ten-Year Plan on Homelessness as well as a state-wide Homeless Management Information System.

Snapshot of Best Practices

Safeplace

Safeplace in Florence, Alabama is celebrating its 25th anniversary of providing services for survivors of family violence. Since its inception, Safeplace has grown into a comprehensive community organization



whose goal is to break the cycle of domestic violence. Safeplace is the chief administrator of the Northwest Alabama Continuum of Care Council and serves as a national model on how to provide effective and caring services to those who are homeless due to family violence.

Safeplace was created to serve the overwhelming number of homeless in Northwest Alabama due to domestic violence. Safeplace's success

began with a close working relationship with law enforcement. Over the years Safeplace has included outreach and training programs such as age appropriate education for school children, training for professionals, and workplace violence training; in addition to administering a certified court-mandated batterer's program.

Safeplace operates a toll-free 24 hour crisis line and offers emergency, supportive and transitional housing. As soon as a client enters Safe Place, a case manager assists the client with counseling, court advocacy and other referral services. Safeplace also offers education, employment assistance, as well as child care.

For more information on Safeplace please visit their website at www.nwalsafeplace.org. The crisis line is 1-800-550-9215.

Loaves and Fish Community Ministries

As the recipient of the 2004 International Association of Workforce Professional (IAWP)

Group Citation Award, the Loaves and Fish Community Ministries has proven to be a successful organization with their program 15 Place. The Loaves and Fish Community Ministries is a multi-service center in Mobile, Alabama that works to combat homelessness by partnering with the community to empower those that are homeless to work toward self-sufficiency.

15 Place is the collaboration of multiple state agencies creating a one-stop shop. Loaves and Fish Community Ministries works in conjunction with Franklin Primary Health Center, Inc., the State Department of Industrial Relations, the State Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, Mobile Mental Health, Catholic Social Services, Homeless Coalition of the Gulf Coast, Goodwill Easter Seals, and the Interfaith Hospitality Network. The services these agencies provide range from case management, employment counseling/referrals, mental health and substance abuse counseling, medical/dental care, assistance in obtaining permanent and transitional housing for the homeless to include the disabled and chronically homeless and veteran's benefit assistance.

Loaves and Fish Community Ministries also offers food, personal hygiene, and day care services. They provide a free lunch on weekdays and brunch on the weekends, served by various volunteer groups within the community. These nutritious meals are available to everyone in the community, not just the homeless population. According to Loaves and Fish Community Ministries Director, Lyn Manz-Walters, 30% of the people walking in for lunches are not homeless, but 10% of those would be if they didn't come in for free lunch. Bag lunches are provided for those going on work assignments. Personal hygiene kits, private shower and laundry facilities, an identification card, and a place to receive phone messages and mail are also available on a daily basis. Homeless persons may also access a van that will drive them to work, shelters, hospitals, and job interviews.

Continua of Care in Alabama

In Alabama, the principal administrators of homelessness services and planning are regional coalitions of Continuum of Care. Having a Continuum of Care is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in order to be eligible to receive grants targeted for the homeless.

Anniston, Calhoun, Gadsden, Etowah, Cherokee, and Dekalb Counties

Homeless Coalition of Northeast Alabama
105 South Ninth Street
Gadsden, AL 35903

Balance of the State

Alabama Rural Coalition for the Homeless
Harriet's House
P.O. Box 569
Demopolis, AL 36732

City of Birmingham/Jefferson County, Bessemer, Hoover, St. Clair, and Shelby Counties

Metropolitan Birmingham Services for the Homeless (MBSH)
2230 4th Avenue North
Birmingham, AL 35203

Florence/Lauderdale, Colbert, Franklin, Marion, Winston and Lawrence Counties

Homeless Care Council of Northwest Alabama
500 South Montgomery, Suite 102
Sheffield, AL 35660

Huntsville, Decatur, Madison County, Cullman County, and Morgan Counties

North Alabama Coalition for the Homeless
Crisis Services of North Alabama, Inc.
P.O. Box 368
Huntsville, AL35804

City of Montgomery/Montgomery, Elmore, Lowndes, and Bullock Counties

Mid-Alabama Coalition for the Homeless
P.O. Box 242201
Montgomery, AL 36124-2201

Mobile, Mobile County, Baldwin County

Homeless Coalition of the Gulf Coast, Inc.
2900 Old Shell Road
Mobile, AL 36607

Tuscaloosa, Tuscaloosa County

C.H.A.L.E.N.G. of Tuscaloosa
2902 Greensboro Ave
Tuscaloosa, AL 35401

Aside from state agency workers, a large portion of the staff consists of volunteers. Many of those volunteers are formerly homeless persons that want to regain their dignity and give back to the community. They also serve in other capacities such as working in the baggage storage area, answering phones, and staffing the laundry facilities.

Through HUD, Loaves and Fish Community Ministries receives employment assistance allowing them to employ a Street Team which is made up of homeless persons. The Street Team provides services to the community such as street cleaning, yard work, and hurricane preparedness.

In Calendar Year 2005, Loaves and Fish Community Ministries along with the collaborative agencies provided 31,302 hot nutritious lunches, 5,979 showers, 1,904 hygiene kits, 2,997 loads of laundry, 3,695 bag lunches for homeless persons going to work, and 1,641 separate trips with the van to take homeless persons to work, shelters, hospitals, and job interviews. However, the most important and impressive statistic is 214 formerly homeless persons are no longer living on the streets due to the multifaceted approach by the Loaves and Fish Community Ministries, Inc.

The YWCA of Central Alabama

For over 100 years the YWCA of Central Alabama has been living up to its motto of “eliminating racism, empowering women” through its work with homeless women and their families. The YWCA has a number of innovative childcare programs that provide both childcare and after school enrichment programs for homeless and low income families. The YWCA is the only daycare in the nation who

serves homeless children that is certified by the rigorous standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

In addition to daycare, the YWCA has a 48 room residency program with case managers available for women and their families to provide a safe haven. Transitional housing units are also available for women and their families making the difficult adjustment to becoming economically self-sufficient. While in the housing, residents can take part in its Survivors Overcoming Abusive Relationships (SOAR). SOAR is a volunteer group of domestic violence survivors whose mission is to provide a voice for battered women, and promote, advocate and work for the elimination of domestic violence.

On August 11, 2005 Governor Bob Riley signed Executive Order #31 at the YWCA of Central Birmingham creating the Governor’s Statewide Interagency Council on Homelessness. Alabama is fortunate to have such compassionate, and innovative programs such as those offered by the YWCA of Central Alabama.

Future of the Council

The development of the *Blueprint Towards a Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Alabama* sets clear goals for the Governor’s Statewide Interagency Council on Homelessness. In addition to implementing the plan, the Council will continue to receive staff assistance from the nationally recognized AmeriCorps VISTA Alabama Disaster Response and Recovery Team. Additionally, through the GFBCI, the Council will continue to support the Continuum of Care, assist local municipalities in the creation of their individual ten-year plans to end homelessness, and assist with the development of a statewide homeless management information system.