

Concord Plan to End Homelessness
Meeting Notes
March 14, 2013

Committee Members Present: Nicole Schultz-Price, David Frydman, Patrick Tufts, Susan Howland, Cathy Kuhn, Jerry Madden, John Hoyt, Shannon Swett Bresaw, Jerry Kingwell, Maureen Ryan, Dan Andrus, John Duval, Jackie Whatmough, Maggie Fogarty, Jim Bouley

Others Present: Amy Lockwood (facilitator), Major Jerry Stinson, Jacob Wasag, Ellen Fries, Bill Davis

Reducing Homelessness – Basic Facts and Promising Practices

Maggie Fogarty of the Concord Coalition to End Homelessness presented information on Concord-area homelessness and factors that are known to increase homelessness. In short, both rates of homelessness and factors known to increase homelessness (such as unavailability of living-wage jobs) have been increasing over the last several years and are expected to continue increasing.

Cathy Kuhn, also of the Coalition, presented information about best practices in reducing homelessness today. Key facts included the fact that the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is moving away from system of transitional housing and back toward an approach of “Rapid Rehousing,” or moving people as quickly as possible from short-term shelters into permanent housing. HUD is less willing to fund the supports that are needed to keep some people housed; wanting instead to focus on the housing and relying for services on other agencies.

Questions and comments from the group included:

- Are there housing models for independent living out there that are less expensive to develop, and therefore could be rented less expensively?
- The new HUD model assumes some portion of homeless people will be diverted out of the homeless support system early on. How can we identify “non-system” resources for those people, for instance, family?
- We’d like to see more examples of “Communities of Opportunity.”
- The biggest road block we see for people leaving our shelters is economic – even employed people cannot afford market rents with low-wage jobs.
- We’d like to look more closely at NH rapid re-housing data. Where and how is this working?
- The places where significant progress is being made are places that made high impact changes in the approach to reducing homelessness, not tweaks.

Solving Problems through Collaborative Impact

Amy Lockwood led a discussion on addressing complex community issues through the Collaborative Impact model. The CI rests on the assumption that many sectors of the community must be involved to make impact on complex problems. A core goal is to get people and organizations from many sectors “all rowing in the same direction.”

Steering Committee members, many of whom have experience or training in the CI model, noted they believe Concord has some unique community characteristics that will lend themselves well to this approach.

The five core elements of a Collaborative Impact approach are:

1. Agreement on a common agenda and common goals
2. Shared measurement systems (how will success be measured?)
3. Mutually reinforcing activities
4. Continuous communication
5. Backbone support agency

Ending Homelessness in Concord: How will we do?

The group began a SWOT Analysis (analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) relative to the Concord community ending homelessness (see SWOT following these notes). The group will continue this brainstorm at the next meeting.

Project Scope and Timeline

Steering Committee members briefly reviewed a proposed timeline for completing a plan to end homelessness in Concord. The plan is in three phases: Steering Committee learning and developing an approach in May and April; Engagement with community leaders in all necessary sectors, and goal-setting, in June-August, and writing/ completing a plan document in September and October.

Execution of this plan as presented would take engagement of all committee members beyond regular meetings; at the next meeting the committee will discuss realistic expectations for involvement and will adjust the draft plan as necessary.

Issues to Discuss in Future Meetings

- Inventory of existing prevention or support services for homeless people in Concord

- Picture/ map of service providers for homeless and where they intersect – nonprofits, faith community, public agencies and departments, etc.
- What do other communities have in terms of tracking data on people in need and multiple services they may be accessing?
- Additional voices at the table to consider: schools, first person voice of the homeless

Next Steps

- Amy will develop notes and send them to the group.
- Amy will send scheduling emails to the group to establish April and May meeting dates.
- The subgroup of project sponsors – the Granite United Way, the Concord Coalition to End Homelessness, and the City, will meet to develop the next proposed meeting agendas.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats to consider in Concord's Effort to End Homelessness

Strengths

- Community size –
 - Small enough that people know each other; large enough that there are services for people
 - Small size promotes personal trust as part of the solution
- Concord is a hub
- Concord is a village
- It's an accepting community –for instance, response to refugee arrival here
- We don't say, "We can't handle it." Instead we rise to meet the challenge.
- Concord is a resettlement city – has some diversity
- Socially aware community
- Community has compassion
- Community "walks the walk" ie support of Friendly Kitchen (see Friendly Kitchen below also)
- There are services already here
- There is an engaged faith community
- There is commitment to ending homelessness at the top levels – police, fire, mayor, businesses and agencies
- There is a strong nonprofit culture of collaboration and cooperation

Weaknesses

- General underfunding in society
- Low vacancy rate in rentals
- No formal/ large scale program that offers stabilization funds
- Little transportation service
- Resource shortages especially for special needs populations like people with substance abuse issues
- Stigma related to special populations like people with mental health or substance abuse issues
- Lack of access to health care – one of primary contributors to homelessness nationally (this plan should contemplate possible increases to Medicaid access being proposed in the legislature now)
- The Friendly Kitchen story is a great example of the strength/weakness balance: some lack of tolerance at start of story, then groundswell of community support near end of story
- Lack of strong relationship between Concord and surrounding towns

- Lack of affordable housing stock
- High rents/ utilities
- No local data tracking of individuals who are using homeless-related resources
- Strength of services may be acting as a magnet to people from other communities, increasing what would already exist as a local homelessness issue
- Concord is home to the state mental hospital, men's prison, etc. – difficult to house populations are released into Concord
- Concord's small size can result in an individual getting on an informal black list – then very difficult to achieve housing and other resources

Threats

- Spring is coming – winter shelters will be closing soon
- Growing concern about negative interactions with homeless people impacting business:
 - Concern of relocating company around office space near tracks
 - Main St. merchant concern about recent drug activity down town (negative behavior associated with homelessness by merchants, may or may not have been homeless people)
- Public lack of distinction between homeless status and negative behaviors often associated with homeless people
- City leadership concerns about lack of supportive response from surrounding towns when their residents come to Concord for services
- State police are cleaning out homeless camps in Concord
- Federal resources are declining generally
- The sequestering will have negative impacts on services available to homeless people
- The state budget is very tight – social services of all kinds have been receiving less funding
- Discussion about improving the women's prison in Goffstown is serving as a catalyst for discussion about release of men's prison inmates to Concord

Opportunities (to be completed at next meeting)

- The city currently spends about \$200,000 on related services through the human services department – this could be deployed toward this problem
- Education and public relations geared toward breaking down stereotypes, distinguishing between negative behaviors and being homeless
- Engage downtown merchants – capture energy they have around reducing homelessness to reduce any negative impact on businesses