

City of Knoxville Office on Homelessness

Quarterly Report

July to September, 2014

Introduction

On April 1, 2014 City Council unanimously adopted *Knoxville's Plan to Address Homelessness*, a statement of this community's intent to work together to prevent, reduce and end homelessness in Knoxville. The Plan is centered on the idea that homelessness is not an acceptable circumstance for anyone living in this community. The plan builds out from that idea, with five broad goals, structured to take a comprehensive approach to the entire issue of homelessness.

The first goal, to provide leadership, collaboration, and civic engagement, includes the creation of the *Mayor's Roundtable on Homelessness* and the continuation of the city's *Office on Homelessness*, with the responsibility to coordinate with all of our community partners to implement the goals and strategies of the plan, and to engender ongoing communication with the community at-large on these efforts. This report is one part of that communications effort.

Because this is the first quarterly report, and we are only three months into the plan's implementation, it will be brief, but will outline a few of the efforts that are already underway.

The Mayor's Roundtable on Homelessness

Mayor Madeline Rogero met with the Roundtable on September 15, 2014 in the board room at KCDC, bringing together 33 people representing most of the agencies and ministries with a central role in addressing homelessness in Knoxville. The Mayor welcomed to the Roundtable a representative of the *Homeless Collective*, a group of currently homeless individuals who are working to assure that the people who experience homelessness in Knoxville have a voice in the community. The local press was also in attendance. The group discussed a number of efforts that are already underway.

Service Coordination

KnoxHMIS, the interagency housing and services database operated by the University of Tennessee, is implementing a new referral system within HMIS (the Homeless Management Information System). This will allow a social worker or case manager to use this system to refer clients to other resources within the community. This not only provides an efficient way to communicate the referral to a receiving agency, but it also allows feedback to the referring agency, closing the loop and letting the person making the referral know whether or not their client makes the connection as intended. Once fully implemented, this resource will improve both the effectiveness and accountability of the services offered in the Knoxville community.

The Knoxville-Knox County Homeless Coalition has begun the process for developing a community-wide set of service standards. They will be looking specifically at outreach, case management, and housing placement services. The purpose of the standards will be to improve accountability and to assure that any agency or organization providing these resources meet minimum requirements in the quality of that service, so that expectations are consistent, and outcomes more likely successful.

Housing

Helen Ross McNabb Center is currently developing 23 one-bedroom apartment units, indented to permanently house homeless military veterans. Positively Living is preparing to develop an additional five units of permanent supportive housing by redeveloping under-utilized space in their current building on Fifth Avenue. On September 30, 2014, City Council approved up to \$100,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds to support the creation of these units, which will permanently house chronically homeless persons with physical and/or mental disabilities.

Homeless Youth

Helen Ross McNabb Center has announced that it will be re-structuring its services for unaccompanied homeless and runaway youth. As part of the recent acquisition of Child and Family Tennessee, McNabb became the operator of a runaway shelter serving this population. Ultimately, it was determined that the costs of operating a licensed, single-site runaway youth shelter were prohibitive. Instead, with support from Knox County government, McNabb will continue to provide outreach and intake services for this population, with a focus on reuniting youth with their families. In cases where overnight stays away from home are required, youths will be placed with host families who have been thoroughly trained and vetted to provide this service.

Healthcare

Cherokee Health Systems is in the early stages of developing a respite care program to provide a 'medical home' for homeless individuals who have been hospitalized and no longer require a hospital inpatient level of care, but who still need an appropriate place and level of care for recuperation.

Remote Area Medical is establishing an ongoing vision clinic at Volunteer Ministry Center. This new partnership will supplement the dental clinic already operating at VMC, as well as expand RAM's role in its home community. With RAM offering these services on a routine basis, they grow beyond their traditional model of providing annual weekend 'expeditions' to provide medical, dental and vision services to those in need in this community.

Transitional Housing

Knox Area Rescue Ministries is bringing online 44 units of transitional housing that have been redeveloped within its existing building. These units provide housing and continuing resources to individuals who have been through KARM's *Launchpoint* program. These individuals have developed

their own individualized plan to get off the streets and reestablish themselves in the community. The transitional housing program will provide two to twelve months to allow the person to work through their plan and find housing, education, and employment as needed for each individual to get back on their feet.

Next Steps

In cooperation with the Office on Homelessness, the United Way will help coordinate an *ad hoc* Roundtable working group in the coming year to look at improving employment resources and initiatives for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Likewise, the Knox County Health Department will coordinate another working group to look at the issue of healthcare providers discharging patients into or back into homelessness. Finally, a third working group will be developed to look at better coordinating the discharge of homeless or at-risk individuals from the criminal justice system.

Conclusion

These are just some of the first steps in implementing *Knoxville's Plan to Address Homelessness*. There is still a lot of work ahead, but we are fortunate in Knoxville to have community partners who are up to the task and who are willing to partner with one another to serve all the people in Knoxville in the best way possible.