

City of Knoxville Office on Homelessness

Quarterly Report

January to March, 2015

Introduction

The Mayor's Roundtable on Homelessness met on March 12, 2015 and discussed several key issues, which will be summarized in this report.

Volunteer Knoxville

Alex Brownfield presented a new volunteer recruitment and management resource to the members of the Roundtable. Located online at www.volunteerknoxville.org, this system can help match volunteers with volunteer opportunities. Volunteer hours and value can be tracked in the system, volunteer background checks can be shared among providers, and opportunities can be scheduled and made available to volunteers. Volunteer Knoxville also provides training and technical assistance to participating organizations to help them better recruit, develop and manage volunteers and volunteer opportunities. For the community homelessness effort, this is an important new tool to help channel Knoxville's greatest resource – its people – into our coordinated efforts to address and solve this issue.

KnoxHMIS

KnoxHMIS is developing a "Community Dashboard" report that will provide a short list of indicators to help understand our successes and challenges as we implement the community homelessness plan. Once developed, that report will be included with regular reporting to the community from the Office on Homelessness.

Standards of Care

The Homeless Coalition is nearing completion of its recommendations to the Roundtable on a set of common standards for outreach, case management, and housing placements. These recommendations will be presented to the Mayor's Roundtable at its June meeting. The purpose of the standards is to have a common understanding and set of expectations across agencies for how these services will be provided. These standards will also be important as other individuals and organizations may consider providing these types of services in our community. Ultimately, the standards are meant to enhance our accountability to one another and to the people who we serve.

Family Homelessness

At the previous Roundtable meeting members of the Homeless Coalition presented a report on the challenges of addressing family homelessness. Mary LeMense from Family Promise, Beth Ogburn from VMC and Grant Standefer of Compassion Coalition have begun an *ad hoc* Roundtable task force to develop a response to the Coalition's report. Family Promise is already seeking to double its capacity to provide shelter and supportive services for homeless families.

TennCare Funding for Case Management

The Governor's proposed budget currently includes a proposed \$30 million cut in funding for Level II case management services for the mentally ill. Noting concerns already raised, the Governor's Office has stated that they are seeking additional input on the proposed cut. Roundtable members including the Mayor, the Homeless Coalition and others will be advocating that these funds be restored in the Governor's budget. Level II case management is critical to the system of community mental health services established in East Tennessee following the closure of Lakeshore Mental Health Institute. Loss of these case management services will result in increased homelessness among those struggling with mental illnesses.

Tennessee Interagency Council on Homelessness

Coordinated by the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS), the state of Tennessee is establishing a new Tennessee Interagency Council on Homelessness. Office on Homelessness coordinator Michael Dunthorn has been invited to represent the Knoxville area on the Council. This group will bring together representatives of local homelessness efforts with leadership from state government agencies, to develop and implement a state-level homelessness plan that dovetails with local plans like Knoxville's as well as the federal *Opening Doors* homelessness plan.

Conclusion

Implementation of *Knoxville's Plan to Address Homelessness* continues to move forward. This effort is providing a positive framework not only to collaborate on specific initiatives outlined in the plan, but also to coordinate a response when issues arise, like the proposed cuts to TennCare funding for mental health case management services. Together we are able to bring to bear not only a fuller understanding of the implications of the cuts, but also a broader response that comes not only from the agency that would be directly affected by the cuts, but by all the Roundtable partners who would feel the effect of the loss of that service in the community. We are hopeful that this will help change the Governor's budget recommendation. This represents a true benefit of the community partnership of the Roundtable.