



Council on Homelessness 2006 Report



**Jeb Bush
Governor**

**Lucy Hadi
Secretary**

Cover story

Gerald Knott might have stayed at the Sulzbacher Center for the Homeless once or twice in the past, but he preferred the streets, although it made for a hard life. During his twenty years living on the streets of Jacksonville, he was arrested over 180 times for misdemeanor offenses. Repeatedly victimized by street violence, he spent weeks in and out of the emergency rooms of Jacksonville hospitals. Today, thanks to "Home Safe," a new Emergency Services and Homeless Coalition program, partnering with Gateway Community Services, River Region Human Services and the Sulzbacher Center, focused on providing permanent supportive housing for the chronically homeless, Gerald is housed and learning to live again with the aid of his case manager, in an apartment he can call his own. At this time, Gerald has been successfully housed for seven months, his longest time in one place—and off the streets—in more than two decades.

Photo courtesy of I.M. Sulzbacher Center for the Homeless, Jacksonville

COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS

2006 Report



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to

Governor Jeb Bush

Senate President Ken Pruitt

House Speaker Marco Rubio

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Overview

Homelessness continues to be a national and state issue, rooted in the lack of housing at affordable costs, especially to those households with extremely low incomes and those below the poverty levels. Other factors that continue to contribute to individuals and families becoming homeless include mental illness, problems related to substance abuse, the breakup of families due to divorce or domestic violence, major health problems and resulting costs, and the impacts of natural disasters.

The Council on Homelessness was created to help guide the work of the state's Office on Homelessness, and to develop policy recommendations for submission Legislature for proposals to reduce homelessness in Florida. To guide its efforts, the Council adopted these core principles:

- The role of the state is coordination, aligned with the local continuum of care planning process, to link state resources to support the continuum of care and to leverage federal resources.
- For the Council and state to be effective in reducing homelessness, the local homeless service network must be effective.
- Service plans and strategies must recognize the differences between urban, suburban and rural areas, as well as reflect the diversity of Florida's population.

Since the creation of the Council on Homelessness, and the state's Office on Homelessness in 2001, Florida has made great strides in strengthening the state's partnership with the local homeless service networks.

Key accomplishments include:

- Expanding local homeless continuum of care plans to 62 counties, up from just 31 counties in 2001.
- Investment of state homeless grants to help implement all 27 continuum of care service plans.
- Continue to leverage more federal homeless continuum of care grants than Florida's pro rata need each year since 2001.
- Increased the number of housing beds available to serve the homeless by nearly 10,000 beds, up by 43% in five years.
- Shifted the focus in housing the homeless away from emergency sheltering to returning the homeless quickly into permanent housing, linked with supportive services.

The Council remains committed to seeking additional strategies to reduce the problem of homelessness. Toward this end, the Council and the local homeless partners strongly support the state adopting a common definition of homeless that applies across all agencies and programs. The Council continues to strengthen the state-local partnership by addressing barriers that limit access for the homeless to state programs and benefits.

Further, the Council remains focused on helping the local continuums of care to be successful in accessing federal resources, and advocating for policies to allow those federal programs to be flexible to meet local needs and priorities.

Florida's Homeless Situation

In 2006, the estimated homeless population in Florida on any given night is 85,907. This estimate is based on the data reported from 28 local homeless coalitions covering the state. These estimates are based on a variety of sources, including actual street counts, service agency reports on clients being served, homeless management information systems records, and other estimating methods.

Over the last two years, a significant factor in the cause and number of homeless persons is the impact of major hurricanes. The resulting damage to and destruction of housing stock has reduced the housing options for many low-income residents. The increased cost of available apartments and homes requires a greater share of the household's earnings. Further, the influx of "new" homeless, those individuals and families who were forced to evacuate from neighboring states, places additional demand on the limited supply of homes. On this latter issue, an estimated 5,179 evacuees from Hurricane Katrina remain homeless in Florida.

Florida's homeless population reflects a mix of both single adults and family households. The growing trend continues to reflect more family households being homeless. In 2006, 34,363 persons, or 40% of the homeless are in family households. Children under the age of 18 are estimated to total 19,759 and make up 23% of all homeless persons. Elderly persons over the age of 60 now make up 8% of the homeless, with 6,873 persons.

Homelessness was a new or first experience for 37% of the overall homeless population. On the other hand, one-third of the persons reported being homeless four or more times. The length of time that the individual or family remains homeless varies considerably, depending on the circumstance causing the loss of their housing and the resources available to overcome their problems.

Length of Time Homeless	% of All Homeless Persons
Less than 30 days	19%
From 1 month to 3 months	20%
From 3 months to 12 months	26%
Over 12 months	35%

Florida's homeless conditions mirror the national trends on who is homeless. In response to this problem, Florida's commitment to be a partner in serving the homeless is producing positive actions.

Outcomes Being Achieved

Enhanced Homeless Continuum of Care Planning

Central to the state's partnership commitment is the emphasis on local homeless continuum of care service plans. These community visions for how to address local homeless needs would guide the use of state resources targeted to serve the homeless.

Since 2001, local continuum of care planning efforts have grown significantly. From 23 continuum of care plans covering just 31 counties in 2001, Florida now has 27 continuum of care plans covering 62 of our 67 counties. Further, the state's homeless Challenge Grant has been used to fund the implementation of every one of the 27 continuums. In addition 23 of the 27 continuums have received grants to build housing for the homeless, resulting in over 2,000 units of housing being developed.

Florida Success in Competing for Federal Grants

With improved continuum of care planning, and the availability of more state funding, Florida's continuums of care continue to compete exceedingly well in the national competition for federal homeless housing grants. Every year since 2001, the competitive grant awards under the Department of Housing and Urban Development's continuum of care programs have exceeded Florida's pro rata share.

Year	Florida's Pro Rata Share	Total Continuum Awards
2001	\$37.5 million	\$48.7 million
2002	\$37.4 million	\$41.2 million
2003	\$40.5 million	\$51.4 million
2004	\$40.3 million	\$59.1 million
2005	\$39.9 million	\$58.1 million

This record reflects very well on the overall strength of our local continuums of care to successfully apply for and receive federal aid to house the homeless.

Strong Growth in Beds to Serve the Homeless

With the infusion of state aid to develop housing for the homeless, and with the successful receipt of federal grants, our continuums have increased the supply of housing beds to serve the homeless by 9,765 beds since 2001. This is an increase of 43.9 percent by 2006.

Inventory of Beds for the Homeless				
Year	Shelter	Transitional	Permanent	Total
2001	7,967	10,589	3,683	22,239
2006	9,594	13,297	9,113	32,004
Increase	1,627	2,708	5,430	9,765
% Increase	20.4%	25.6%	147.4%	43.9%

This growth in new beds exceeded the Council's 2003 Strategic Plan goal of increasing the number of beds by 2006 by 25% over the 2001 levels.

Shift Toward Permanent Housing

As can be seen in the chart above, the greatest change has been in the area of permanent housing. This reflects the national trend to move away from traditional sheltering to a "housing first" model,

whereby the homeless person is re-housed quickly back into a permanent housing arrangement. Central to this approach is the linkage of supportive services to the individual or family that is placed back into permanent housing. This supportive housing model has been identified as a very cost-effective best practice. Florida's continuums of care are embracing and successfully implementing this model. The development of the 5,430 new permanent housing beds is a major step forward toward reaching the Council's goal of creating 12,000 supportive housing units by 2012.

Increased Performance in Homeless Prevention.

As a result of streamlined review processes, and focus upon timely responses to families facing housing emergencies, the Emergency Financial Assistance for Housing program has dramatically increased the level of homeless prevention aid. The result is a 62.5% increase in the families preserved, who remain housed together, and not on the street. A total of 7,882 families were assisted in the last year, as compared to 4,899 in the prior year. The effective use of short-term housing assistance payments results in significant cost savings. By avoiding homelessness, the program saves an estimated \$59.8 million in emergency shelter bed costs.

Council's 2006 Actions

This section will describe the major areas of focus and action by the Council this year. Where specific recommendations were made to the Office on Homelessness, the corresponding action taken by the Office shall be noted.

State Definition of "Homeless"

In February, the Council's Data Collection committee brought forth a recommendation that the Council support a change to the statutory definition of "homeless." The current definition in section 420.621(4) F.S., follows the federal definition as applied to the Department of Housing and Urban Development homeless grant programs. However, the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act provides a second, and broader definition of "homeless" applicable to the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program, and its administration in every school district.

With the support of the local homeless coalitions and homeless continuums of care, the committee recommended that the definition of "homeless" be revised in state law to use the broader of the two federal definitions. This change would:

- Ensure one common definition be used and applied to all state agency programs.
- Simplify the ability of local homeless coalitions and continuums to count the number of homeless persons.
- Ensure a more accurate assessment of the extent of homelessness.
- Enhance the ability of the local homeless providers and the local school district to share information on the homeless populations, and their service needs.
- Assure that families with children can be served by all providers without the family having to become street homeless to qualify for services.

The Council voted to recommend this legislative change to the state law. The specific language of the change is provided in Appendix 3 to the report. This recommendation was transmitted by the Office to the Secretary of the Department of Children and Families for inclusion in the agency's legislative package for 2007.

Local Partner Capacity Building

In keeping with the Council's core principles guiding its strategic plan, helping to build the capacity of the local homeless service agencies is critical to the state's success in addressing homelessness. The following actions were undertaken to strength the local partners.

- State Policy on Recognizing Local Homeless Coalitions.
State law sets forth in section 420.623 F.S. the roles and responsibilities of local homeless coalitions. One of these responsibilities is to develop or assist with the development of the local homeless continuum of care plan.

To more closely align the local homeless coalition with the continuum of care planning role, the Council adopted a recommendation that the Department of Children and Families, and the Office on Homelessness allocate only one coalition staffing grant per each continuum of care planning area. This is intended to ensure that the limited staffing grants support the coalition that is either the lead agency of the continuum of care, or the organization most closely involved in the planning effort. The Council also intended to separate the discussion on which entities are recognized as local homeless coalitions from

the process of allocating the staffing grants. The Office on Homelessness implemented those policy changes in allocating the FY 06-07 staffing grant funding to just 27 homeless coalitions.

- **State Grant Application Policy.**

The Council's Application Committee worked closely with the lead agencies of the continuum of care to review the Challenge Grant, and the Homeless Housing Assistance Grant application instructions. This review included basic policies on maximum grants, criteria to be used for competitive ranking, and other provisions in the award process.

The Council approved a comprehensive list of recommendations for inclusion in the FY 06-07 grant competition. The Office developed the application instructions to incorporate those recommendations, and the final grant application instructions were approved by the Council.

These grant process changes were implemented with the FY 06-07 solicitation of grant applications, which resulted in grant awards made in August (Challenge Grants) and September (Homeless Housing).

- **Transfer Policy Academy Strategies to Local Continuums.**

The Council participated in two federal-state Policy Academies addressing specific homeless sub-populations: the chronic homeless, and homeless families with children. The Council developed specific action plans to address each of these sub-populations. A basic strategy adopted by the Council was to transfer the best practices learned to the local continuums of care where the services are provided. Accordingly, two training events were offered to the local continuums. The first was a training on how to develop supportive housing for the homeless, and the state and federal financing programs available. Six local continuums of care sent local planning teams to this training and consultation with federal housing consultants. The second training was on discharge planning. Florida had one slot allocated for this national learning workshop. The Council selected one lead agency from a continuum in Florida to attend and represent the state.

- **Applications for Disability Determination and Social Security Benefits.** An area for on-going attention of the Council is to improve access to mainstream program benefits. For our chronic homeless clients who have disabling conditions, an essential resource is the SSI/SSDI program benefits for persons determined to have work-related disabilities. Broward County has piloted, in concert with the Council and the Policy Academy, an initiative to improve the application documentation for homeless persons seeking disability determination. The pilot has reported good results from the intensive local planning and training efforts. Based on those results, this training is now being offered to other continuums. The Office on Homelessness has supported the cost of sending two more persons to be trained in the program. Success in securing a positive decision on the homeless person's disability upon initial application results in faster access to disability income benefits and health insurance to enhance the person's ability to move toward greater self-sufficiency.

- **Preparation for 2007 Count of Homeless**

To assist the local coalitions and the continuums in preparing for the federally mandated 2007 homeless count, the Council's Data Collection committee and the Office on Homeless have revised and updated the core survey instrument for use

statewide. The original survey tool, in both the long and short forms, has been updated to ensure that the forms capture all needed information for the continuum of care plan, plus align with the required data fields for the homeless management information system. The 2007 count is to be undertaken during the last week of January. The Council's intent is that this Florida standard survey tool will promote greater consistency in the data across the 27 continuums.

State Partnerships

The Council has executed memoranda of understanding with two more state agencies in 2006. The agreement with the Department of Corrections focuses upon the common need to improve discharge planning for the estimated 33,000 persons who will be released from state correctional facilities this year. The second memorandum with the Florida Housing Finance Corporation addresses the issue of housing special needs populations like the homeless, furthering the emphasis on housing the extremely low income households, and continuing to promote the model of supportive housing. Existing agreements remain in effect with Workforce Florida, and with the Department of Community Affairs.

The Council has also remained involved in ensuring that the state's homeless prevention assistance program effectively meets the demands. The Council's Barriers Committee tracks monthly data from the Emergency Financial Assistance for Housing Program on applicant demand levels, families assisted, budget authority utilized, and the need for supplemental resources. For FY 05-06, the program demand warranted the approval of nearly one million dollars above the original budget of \$1.6 million. In the first four months of the FY 06-07, the program demand is nearly double last year's applications. The base budget of \$1.6 million is expected to be fully expended by November. The Council is recommending that this program budget be increased to help families pay overdue rent in order to stay housed and avoid homelessness.

Given the impacts that the major hurricanes have had on Florida and its neighboring states, the Council on Homelessness helped to organize, and participated in a Gulf Coast Summit on Hurricanes. The summit's session on homelessness provided examples of how communities responded to the influx of evacuees, especially dealing with the need for shelter once the Red Cross shelters closed. Another key practice identified and promoted is the need for a hurricane evacuation plan to pre-plan for how the homeless in shelters or on the streets can be safely evacuated out of landfall areas. This was the first effort ever to bring Florida, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana officials together to address common issues and needs.

Federal Partnership

The Council has begun to develop position papers on legislation that has been filed to reauthorize the federal homeless programs under the McKinney-Vento Act. In August, the Council took input from the local coalitions and continuums on their concerns with the provisions contained in the House and Senate bills. The Council is prepared to survey all coalitions and continuums on their support for the array of changes contained in the legislation. The intent is for the Council to use the local opinions to drive its position papers. These advocacy efforts will result in sending this input to the authorizing committees in Congress and to the Florida delegation. This effort will be finalized early in 2007, in time for the start of the new session of Congress.

Council Recommendations

Finally, the Council worked to develop its specific recommendations and proposals for action by the Governor and Legislature. These cover specific budget actions, as well as statutory changes like the revision of the definition of "homeless." Those proposals are summarized in the next section of this report.

Council's 2006 Recommendations

FY 2007-2008 Budget Proposals

The Council has monitored, evaluated and justified budget increases for selected homeless programs, and is supporting maintaining increased spending approved in the FY 2006-2007 budget for two programs. The specific budget recommendations are summarized here, and detailed in Appendix 2.

1. Increase the funding for the Emergency Financial Assistance for Housing Program, a homeless prevention resource, by \$1,000,000 to respond to increased demand from families facing a housing crisis.

FY 06-07 Budget	\$1,800,000
Recommend FY 07-08	\$2,800,000
Increase	\$1,000,000
Source	General Revenue

2. Restore the homeless Challenge Grant budget to its original FY 2001-02 budget level of \$3,838,799 to mitigate the reduction in federal funding for services linked to supportive housing projects for the homeless.

FY 06-07 Budget	\$2,116,025
Recommend FY 07-08	\$3,838,799
Increase	\$1,722,774
Source	General Revenue

3. Maintain the current budget level for the Homeless Housing Assistance Grant at \$7,000,000 to continue to create new housing units to serve the homeless.

FY 06-07 Budget	\$7,000,000
Recommend FY 07-08	\$7,000,000
Increase	\$ 0
Source	Local Government Housing Trust Fund

4. Maintain the FY 06-07 funding level for homeless contracted services to enable \$625,000 to be used for local homeless coalition staffing grants.

FY 06-07 Budget	\$700,000 *
Recommend FY 07-08	\$700,000
Increase	\$ 0
Source	General Revenue

* excludes Community Budget Issues

The Council also supports the recommendations of the Governor's Ex-Offender Task Force that would restore capacity at the Department of Corrections for transition planning for those inmates expected to be released back into the community. The Council endorses the recommendations related to expanding basic education, vocational training, and substance abuse treatment capacity at Corrections. The improvements to post-release community reintegration, family restoration, and avoidance of homelessness by better linkage with workforce services, and other community resources are strongly supported.

2007 Legislative Proposals

The following changes to state law are recommended for Legislative action in the 2007 session. Appendix 3 details the justification for each proposal.

1. Revise the definition of “homeless” or “homeless person” in section 420.621(4), Florida Statutes, to align this definition with the federal definition applicable to the Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program.

Recommended Definition:

“Homeless Person” refers to an individual who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. The term includes:

- (i) Individuals who are sharing the housing of other persons due to the loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to a lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement.
- (ii) Individuals who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designated for or ordinarily used as a sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- (iii) Individuals who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train station, or similar settings; and
- (iv) Migratory individuals who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

The term does not refer to any individual imprisoned or otherwise detained pursuant to state or federal law.

2. Amend section 420.622(2), Florida Statutes, to update the membership of the Council on Homelessness to:
 - (a) Delete the Florida State Rural Development Council that no longer exists.
 - (b) Add to the Council the Secretary of the Agency for Health Care Administration to fill the member deleted.
 - (c) Correct the name of the Florida Supportive Housing Coalition.
3. Amend section 420.622(5), Florida Statutes, to authorize that the Homeless Housing Assistance Grant be appropriated as a fixed capital outlay item, consistent with its intent to construct housing for homeless occupancy.
4. Adopt state legislation that replicates the federal McKinney-Vento Act whereby state surplus property be disposed first to organizations that commit to reuse the property as housing for the homeless.
5. The Council supports authorizing legislation that would give all counties more authority to create local taxing initiatives, provided the revenue generated shall be targeted to and restricted to fund local mental health and homeless services.

Evaluation of Executive Director

Tom Pierce has performed at a superior level this year, fulfilling the statutory duties of the Office on Homelessness as directed by the Council. He has proven himself a gifted administrator who works within available resources to oversee the grant programs assigned to the Office, a process which has great external impact around the state. His office is viewed statewide as a key resource as well as a central clearing house of information and assistance on homelessness; the programmatic expertise of the Office is respected and called upon by others nationwide.

The Office on Homelessness provides a broad range of support to a wide-ranging constituency. Technical assistance is provided to local continuums of care, and the Office convenes and facilitates meetings and workshops throughout the year and throughout the state. The Office coordinates with state, local and private agencies and providers to produce a financial plan for the state's system of homeless programs. In addition, the Office researches funding sources at all levels to increase resources to programs serving the homeless. This information, as well as information about available resources and services, is gathered and disseminated by the Office to local coalitions and providers as well as other state agencies. The Office develops accountability measures and makes recommendations to foster best practices. Through the Council, and with input from the Coalitions and others, the Office advocates for issues relating to homelessness at every level of government—including a federal policy agenda. The Office provides guidance and assistance to the Council in order to facilitate effective policy-making by Council members.

To briefly explain the methodology for this review: each Council member was asked to submit a performance appraisal of Mr. Pierce, with a recommended numerical grade (1-5) and comments if desired. Seven council members submitted reviews, all very favorable and none with a grade lower than "4". One member noted Tom's "professionalism, enthusiasm, and expertise"; another cited consistent and "outstanding leadership" and called him a "valuable asset" for the Council. Another noted the continuing success of EFAHP under Tom's leadership, including his successful efforts to score additional funding for the program. One member cited Tom's ability to address concerns and questions "immediately" and effectively. A newer member had glowing remarks but abstained from the evaluation due to the newness of her seat on the Council.

Two areas of improvement were suggested: the first being to do a better job on developing outcome and accountability measures in order to better evaluate programs. The other suggestion was to better communicate opportunities for local agencies, continuums, etc. to take part in initiatives (such as SOAR) or opportunities (policy academies). Additional staff was suggested to facilitate these ends.

Appendix 1
Homeless Population by County
2006

<u>DCF</u> <u>DISTRICT</u>	<u>COUNTIES</u>	<u>HOMELESS</u> <u>POPULATION</u>	<u>DCF</u> <u>DISTRICT</u>	<u>COUNTIES</u>	<u>HOMELESS</u> <u>POPULATION</u>	
1	Escambia	2,911	7	Orange	6,500	
	Santa Rosa	2,527		Osceola	1,300	
	Okaloosa	2,026		Seminole	1,500	
	Walton	155		Brevard	1,600	
2	Bay	1,051	8	DeSoto	644	
	Calhoun	0		Glades	50	
	Gulf	0		Hendry	448	
	Holmes	0		Lee	2,078	
	Jackson	0		Charlotte	3,314	
	Washington	0		Collier	513	
	Franklin	0	9	Palm Beach	1,002	
	Gadsden	139		10	Broward	3,314
	Jefferson	0			11	Miami-Dade
	Leon	739	Monroe			981
	Liberty	0	12			Flagler
	Madison	0		Volusia	2,505	
	3	Taylor	0	13	Citrus	498
Wakulla		0	Hernando		452	
Alachua		1,217	Lake		395	
		Bradford	149		Sumter	68
Dixie		77	14	Marion	2,149	
Gilchrist		86		15	Hardee	749
Levy		201			Highlands	436
Putnam		797			Polk	801
Union		79	15	Indian River	741	
Columbia		208		Martin	759	
Hamilton	50	Okeechobee		296		
Lafayette	26	St. Lucie		813		
Suwannee	134	Suncoast		Hillsborough	8,598	
4	Duval	2,877	Suncoast	Manatee	6,722	
	Baker	0		Pinellas	4,385	
	Clay	(reported with Duval)		Pasco	3,677	
	Nassau	0		Sarasota	7,253	
	St. Johns	997				
Statewide Estimated Homeless Population				<u>85,907</u>		

Source: Local Homeless Coalition Estimated Daily Populations 2006 Annual Report on Homeless Conditions in Florida, Department of Children and Families, June 2006

Appendix 2

Council on Homelessness Budget Recommendations for FY 2007-2008

Recommendation No. 1

Increase the funding for the Emergency Financial Assistance for Housing Program by \$1,000,000 to respond to the demand from families facing a housing crisis.

<u>FY 06-07 Budget</u>	<u>Recommend FY 07-08</u>	<u>Increase</u>
\$1,800,000	\$2,800,000	\$1,000,000 (General Revenue)

Emergency Financial Assistance for Housing. This program provides limited financial help to families with minor children, who are facing eviction, or loss of housing due to fire, wind or flood disasters, or who are homeless. State aid helps with back rent or mortgage payments, or with aid for security deposits.

The demand for this program has exceeded the budget for the last two years. In FY 04/05, the program had fully committed its direct assistance for \$1,600,000 by the end of May 2005 after assisting 3,902 families. Another 600 families applied after the budget was exhausted, and had to be denied assistance.

In FY 05/06, the original budget for direct assistance was fully expended in early January 2006. A budget amendment was approved at that time to supplement the funding with \$998,550. That additional funding was expended by mid-May 2006. A total of 6,548 families were assisted. Another 540 families had to be denied, having applied after the budget was expended. Overall, in FY 05/06, 11,385 families sought this state aid this year.

The rise in demand for state help is due to great part to the impacts of the hurricanes the past two years. With the loss of housing destroyed by these storms, the overall supply of housing is down, and costs have risen significantly for rent. The added burden of storm evacuees from other southeastern states has further contributed to the demand for state assistance for housing emergencies.

The base budget for the program is funded equally from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) federal grant, and by a transfer from the Local Government Housing Trust Fund. As the TANF grant is not expected to be increased, and the Housing Trust Fund revenues are subject to a cap in FY 07-08, the Council is recommending General Revenue as the source to increase this program to address prevention of homelessness.

Recommendation No. 2

Restore the Challenge Grant spending authority to its original FY 2001-2002 budget level of \$3,838,799.

<u>FY 06-07 Budget</u>	<u>Recommend FY 07-08</u>	<u>Increase</u>
\$2,116,025	\$3,838,799	\$1,722,774 (General Revenue)

Challenge Grant. This homeless assistance grant was created in FY 2001-2002 to help implement local homeless assistance continuum of care plans. As such the grant supports a wide array of local homeless services, ranging from prevention assistance, to outreach and referrals to service providers, emergency sheltering, supportive human services, as well as transitional and permanent housing.

This grant program was reduced in spending authority in FY 03-04 due to budget constraints experienced across the state budget in General Revenue. This grant is fully funded from General Revenue.

The demand for this state grant has grown since 2001. First, the state has doubled the number of counties now covered by the local homeless assistance continuum of care planning to 62 counties, up from just 31 in 2001. The demand for homeless services has also risen, as the state’s homeless population has increased to 85,907 persons on a daily basis in 2006. In addition, due to reduced federal funding for supportive services linked to homeless housing, these housing providers are now turning to the Challenge grant to pick up the lost federal money. In 2005, Florida projects lost of \$637,000 in grants for critical supportive services.

Since this program was created in 2001, each of the 27 local continuums of care in Florida have received a Challenge Grant to help implement local homeless service priorities. With funding the last two-years at \$2,116,025 per year, the program assisted 21 continuums serving 23,000 plus persons in 2005, and 22 continuums serving 34,600 persons in 2006.

The increased funding will result directly in more homeless persons being served. All Challenge Grant dollars go to direct services, with no administrative or planning costs charged. Given the flexibility of this state aid, the local homeless providers are able to use this source to fund services not covered by federal grants, and to support the prevention of homelessness that has so few funding options.

Recommendation No. 3

Maintain the spending level for the Homeless Housing Assistance Grant at the FY 2006-07 budget of \$7,000,000.

<u>FY 06-07 Budget</u>	<u>Recommend FY 07-08</u>	<u>Source</u>
\$7,000,000	\$7,000,000	Local Government Housing Trust Fund Transfer

Homeless Housing Assistance Grant. Created in 2001, this grant is used to build or repair housing for occupancy by homeless persons. The housing may be transitional in nature, or it may be permanent housing that the homeless person or family occupies. All housing assisted with the state grant must be reserved for occupancy by the homeless for a minimum of ten years.

For the first five years of the program, the state budgeted \$5,000,000 per year. The program is funded by a transfer from the Local Government Housing Trust Fund. In FY 2006-2007, the program received an increase of \$2,000,000 in the budget for a total of \$7,000,000 from the housing trust fund.

In the first five years of funding, the Homeless Housing Assistance Grant has help build 1,607 units of housing for the homeless. The current year spending authority is expected to assist in building at least 315 units of housing.

Based upon the 2006 local homeless continuum of care plans, the number of unsheltered homeless persons creates an unmet need for 11,292 transitional housing beds, and another 18,619 permanent supportive housing beds. This level of unmet need for housing to serve the homeless warrants maintaining this grant at the \$7,000,000 spending level. Each grant dollar committed in the program leveraged another \$1.72 in other funding committed to help finance the units built in 2006. The program would expect to leverage over \$12 million dollars with the budgeted grant level of \$7.0 million.

This budget level should be maintained by the transfer of Local Housing Trust Fund revenues, even if the cap on the documentary surtax goes into effect in FY 2007-2008 to limit revenues in the state and local affordable housing program trust funds at \$243 million.

Recommendation No. 4

Maintain FY 06-07 funding levels for the homeless contracted services budget, to enable \$625,000 to be used for local homeless coalition staffing grants.

<u>FY 06-07 Budget</u>	<u>Recommend 07-08</u>	<u>Source</u>
\$700,000	\$700,000	General Revenue

Contracted Services/Coalition Staffing Grants

In 2001, the Legislature authorized a state grant of up to \$25,000 to support staffing of the local homeless coalition, subject to appropriations. In the FY 2001-2002 budget, \$625,000 was approved for this purpose in the Office on Homelessness budget. This is contained in the “contracted services” line item, along with funding for contracted technical assistance and research, with a total budget level of \$700,000.

In FY 2003-04, this spending was reduced to \$380,981 for all contracted services, given the limit on General Revenue that year. This reduced the local homeless coalition grants to \$343,756. With the budget approved in FY 06-07, the contracted services line item was restored to the original level of \$700,000, from General Revenue. This restores the coalition staffing grants to the \$625,000 level.

The intent of the coalition staffing grant is to help ensure that these homeless coalitions have the capacity to carry out their statutory purposes, delineated in section 420.623, Florida Statutes. These include, but are not limited to:

- Assist in developing local homeless continuum of care plans.
- Inventory all local resources for homeless services.
- Assess existing services and programs, and identify unmet needs.
- Facilitate the delivery of multi-agency services to the homeless.
- Collect and compile information on the homeless population.

The Council recommends that the spending authority for the Office’s contracted services line item be maintained at \$700,000, of which \$625,000 be used for the local homeless condition staffing grants.

Recommendation No. 5

The Council supports the recommendation of the Governor's Ex-Offender Task Force to restore the transition planning capacity at the Department of Corrections. The Council supports the following recommendations of the Ex-Offender Task Force:

- #3. Florida Department of Corrections (FDC) should use a validated instrument for evaluation and assessment at reception for both security classification and reentry programming needs and develop an inmate program handbook describing available FDC inmate programs, and the rules and guidelines governing selection and eligibility and termination from programs.
- #4. FDC's capacity for basic and functional literacy, GED preparedness and vocational education should be expanded.
- #5. FDC's capacity for the treatment of substance abuse and of co-occurring disorders should be expanded.
- #6. FDC should improve and expand job training through the maximization of third-party resources.
- #7. FDC should help inmates increase family contact and reduce financial strain on inmates' families.
- #8. FDC should expand work release by outsourcing additional work release facilities.
- #9. FDC should begin pre-release planning with inmates starting on their first day of incarceration and develop individualized reentry plan for each inmate.
 - Assist inmates being released from prison in obtaining Social Security cards and state identifications cards or drivers licenses.
 - Assist disabled inmates in applying for disability and Medicaid benefits prior to their release.
 - Develop an inmate discharge handbook that contains the inmate's individualized reentry plan and the programs and services available in his home community.
- #11. The State should create a "transition authority" by statute that coordinates a seamless planning process and continuum of services from FDC custody to the community to facilitate the successful reentry of people leaving FDC custody.

Impact on Homelessness.

With the state releasing over 26,000 men and women from prison each year, the ability of these former inmates to find permanent housing back in the community directly impacts on homelessness. The capacity of Department of Corrections staff to work with the inmate prior to release to prepare for re-entry to the community and to have a personal discharge plan can improve the successful re-entry. Of course, as critical as the plan is the availability of housing that the former inmate can access. The Council commends the Governor for creation of this Task Force and its work to improve re-entry of the men and women to our communities.

Appendix 3

Council on Homelessness Proposed Legislative Initiatives for 2007

Recommendation No.1

Revise the definition of “homeless” or “homeless person” in section 420.621(4), Florida Statutes, to align this definition with the federal definition applicable to the Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program.

Suggested Revision

Replace the current definition “Homeless” in section 420.621(4), FS, with the following definition.

“Homeless Person” refers to an individual who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. The term includes:

- (v) Individuals who are sharing the housing of other persons due to the loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to a lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement.
- (vi) Individuals who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designated for or ordinarily used as a sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- (vii) Individuals who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train station, or similar settings; and
- (viii) Migratory individuals who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

The term does not refer to any individual imprisoned or otherwise detained pursuant to state or federal law.

Current Situation

The term “homeless” is defined in both federal and state law. The federal McKinney -Vento Homeless Assistance Act defines the term “homeless” or “homeless person,” as well as the term “homeless children and youths.” Florida Statutes defines the term “homeless” in section 420.621, and this definition follows the federal definition. These are the current definitions.

“Homeless” or “Homeless Person”

Section 420.621, F.S., and McKinney - Vento Act (42 USC 119)

“Homeless refers to an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, adequate nighttime residence, or an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is:

- a) A supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodation, including welfare hotels, congregate shelters and transitional housing for the mentally ill;
- b) An institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or
- c) A public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

The term does not refer to any individual imprisoned or otherwise detained pursuant to state or federal law.

“Homeless children and youths”
McKinney - Vento Act (42 USC 119)

“Homeless children and youth” refers to individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. The term includes:

- (i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to the loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to a lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
- (ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- (iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- (iv) migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this part because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii)

Of the two definitions, the “homeless children and youths” is the broader of the two. The inclusion of persons who are sharing the housing of others (sometimes referred to as doubled-up), as well as those staying in motels due to the lack of adequate living accommodations, significantly expands the definition of a “homeless person.”

The two definitions are used for different purposes and programs. The term “homeless person” governs the federal homeless housing grant programs, including the following:

- Emergency Food and Shelter Program
- Emergency Shelter Grants
- Supportive Housing Program
- Safe Havens for Homeless Individuals
- Shelter Plus Care Program
- Moderate Rehabilitation Assistance for Single-Room Occupancy Dwellings

The “homeless children and youth” term applies to the Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program, as part of the No Child Left Behind initiative.

In Florida, the “homeless persons” term applies to all state assisted programs for the homeless. The federal definition for “homeless children” governs all Florida school districts and the Department of Education in carrying out the federal law and the Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program.

Proposed Change and Rationale

To promote greater consistency and to ensure that families with children and youths who are lacking adequate living accommodations qualify for state homeless assistance, it was proposed that the current statutory definition of “homeless” be amended in section 420.621, F.S., to reflect the broader definitions encompassed in the “homeless children and youths” term.

Feedback on this proposal from the local homeless coalitions and service providers was strongly supportive. Reasons cited were:

- The broader term will include all persons who are lacking a permanent, adequate place to live.
- Eliminates the need to apply different standards for eligibility for different programs and services locally.
- The proposal would make it easier for families with children, and unaccompanied youth to be served without having had to be first on the street, or placed in an emergency shelter.
- Recognize the unique problem in rural areas of the state where shelters are non-existent and where the homeless families have no choice but to double up with other households.
- Simplify data collection efforts and avoid multiple estimates of the homeless population.
- Strengthen the relationships between the local homeless service providers and the local school districts by ensuring that a common client is being addressed.

Based on this input, the Council on Homelessness voted on February 24, 2006 to recommend that the definition of “homeless” in the section 420.621,F.S., be amended as follows:

“Homeless person” refers to an individual who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. The term includes:

- (i) Individuals who are sharing the housing of other persons due to the loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, travel trailer parks, or camping grounds due to a lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
- (ii) Individuals who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designated for or ordinarily used as a sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- (iii) Individuals who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- (iv) Migratory individuals who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

The term does not refer to any individual imprisoned or otherwise detained pursuant to state or federal law.

Recommendation No. 2

Amend section 420.622(2), Florida Statutes, to update the membership of the Council on Homelessness to (1) replace the Florida State Rural Development Council that no longer exists, and (2) correct the name of the Florida Supportive Housing Coalition. The Council recommends that the State Rural Development Council be replaced by the Secretary of the Agency for Health Care Administration, or his or her designee.

Suggested Revision

Amend Section 420.622(2), Florida Statutes, as follows:

The Council on Homelessness is created to consist of a 15-member council of public and private agency representatives who shall develop policy and advise the State Office on Homelessness. The council members shall be: the Secretary of Children and Family Services, or his or her designee; the Secretary of Community Affairs, or his or her designee; the Secretary of Health, or his or her designee; the Executive Director of Veterans' Affairs, or his or her designee; the Secretary of Corrections, or his or her designee; the Director of Workforce Florida, Inc., or his or her designee; one

representative of the Florida Association of Counties; one representative of the Florida ~~Coalition for~~ Supportive Housing ~~Coalition~~; the Executive Director of the Florida Housing Finance Corporation, or his or her designee; one representative of the Florida Coalition for the Homeless; ~~one representative of the Florida State Rural Development Council~~ the Secretary of the Agency for Health Care Administration, or his or her designee; and four members appointed by the Governor. The council members shall be volunteer, nonpaid persons and shall be reimbursed for travel expenses only. The appointed members of the council shall serve staggered 2-year terms, and the council shall meet at least four times per year. The importance of minority, gender, and geographic representation must be considered when appointing members to the council.

Background

The Council was initially created in 2001, with the 15 members specified in the statutes. The Council held its initial meeting in October 2001, and has continued to meet on a regular basis since that time.

The Florida State Rural Development Council participated in the Council until it ceased to exist in 2004. This membership slot on the Council remains vacant until a new member is specified in the enabling statute.

The Council on Homelessness is recommending that the new member be the Secretary of the Agency for Health Care Administration, his or her designee. The appointment of this Agency to the Council is important for two primary reasons. First, the Agency for Health Care Administration manages the Medicaid program, which is an important health care benefit for persons who are homeless. Input on policy issues relative to improving access for the homeless to Medicaid benefits is desired, as the Council continues to focus on ensuring that these mainstream program benefits do serve the needs of persons who are homeless. The second issue supporting the involvement of the Agency on the Council is to enhance discharge planning of homeless persons from health care facilities. The goal is to establish protocols to ensure that homeless persons are not discharged from health care facilities to the street, but rather to shelters or housing where they can continue to recover and stay safe.

The second change is to simply make the technical correction to align the statute with the proper legal name of the Florida Supportive Housing Coalition.

Recommendation No. 3

Amend section 420.622(5), Florida Statutes, that authorizes the Homeless Housing Assistance grant to specify that funds appropriated for this housing construction program be budgeted as a fixed capital outlay item.

Background.

Since created in 2001, the program funding has been appropriated as a grant and aid category in the budget. This has required that the grant funded housing construction activities be completed by the end of the fiscal year. The recommended fixed capital outlay appropriation would allow for more time to complete the housing construction using the state funds. This will allow the project sponsor more flexibility to mix and match the state source with private financing and federal housing financing, thereby furthering the program objective to leverage other funds. Appropriating the program funding as fixed capital is consistent with other state funded building programs, including the state's affordable housing initiatives.

Recommendation No. 4

Adopt state legislation, replicating the federal McKinney-Vento Act provisions regarding surplus property, to provide for preference in the disposition of state surplus lands to organizations that commit to reuse the property as a homeless housing site.

Recommendation No. 5

Local Funding Option for Homeless Services

The Council supports authorizing legislation that would give all counties more authority to create local taxing initiatives, with the revenue generated targeted to and restricted to fund local mental health and homeless services, in addition to and above existing revenue sources.

The Council supports such optional revenue sources to help support critical services for the homeless.

Appendix 4

Council Participants–2006

<u>Council Member</u>	<u>Represented by:</u>
Department of Children and Families	Kara O'Brien
Department of Community Affairs	Sean Lewis
Department of Health	Richard Polangin
Department of Corrections	Pam Denmark Mark Lazarus
Department of Veteran's Affairs	Barbara Harker
Workforce Florida, Inc	Mike Switzer
Florida Housing Finance Corporation	Steve Auger Bill Aldinger
Florida Coalition for the Homeless	Rayme Nuckles
Florida Supportive Housing Coalition	Maria Barcus
Florida Association of Counties	Karen Hawes Bart Banks
Florida Rural Development Council	VACANT
Governor's Appointees	Sherry Burns Dr. Angie Su Elmira Leto Bernadette Woody