

Council on Homelessness 2007 Report



Charlie Crist
Governor

Robert A. Butterworth
Secretary

Cover Photo: Joannell Greubel

Joannell is the recipient of the Florida Coalition for the Homeless 2007 Outstanding Service to Homeless People award.

Joannell survived a childhood marked by severe abuse, neglect and abandonment. She was separated from her brother and turned to "self medication" and marriage at the young age of 17. Her drug abuse led to drug dealing and to the end of her thirteen year marriage. She attempted suicide repeatedly. She found herself living in her car, surviving by dealing drugs. Ultimately, her children had to live with other people and Joannell found herself on a very sad day saying good-bye to them through the glass at jail.

What would happen to Joannell when she finished serving her time? As God would have it, Joannell received a visit from a woman from Women's Aglow. This woman seemed not to care what Joannell had done before. She cared deeply about what Joannell would do next. This unconditional acceptance was something Joannell had never experienced. It changed her life.

She has worked with families in crisis, at-risk youth and homeless women and children for more than ten years. She sees each person as a unique individual with potential to live a joyful and self-sufficient life. She has a gift for helping her clients see that potential in themselves. She is patient and steadfast as she works with each woman and child to ensure that they recognize and can grasp each and every opportunity. If you truly want a better life, Joannell will move heaven and earth to help you find it.

Joannell works with the Bradenton Salvation Army today.

Council on Homelessness

2007



Submitted December 2007
To Governor Charlie Crist
Senate President Ken Pruitt
House Speaker Marco Rubio
DCF Secretary Robert A. Butterworth

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Florida's Council On Homelessness

Charlie Crist
Governor

Robert A. Butterworth
Secretary

Hui Fang "Angie" Su, Ed.D.
Chairperson

December 3, 2007

The Honorable Charlie Crist
Governor
PL05 The Capitol
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0001

Dear Governor Crist:

It is my honor to submit to you the 2007 Report of the statewide Council on Homelessness. The Council has reached out to the local homeless service agencies to hear their concerns and needs, and to address these issues in our recommendations.

The Council has communicated with Congressional authorizing committees on provisions that our local partners desire to have in the federal homeless programs. Similarly, this report expresses the concerns of the local homeless coalitions and agencies for state housing strategies, including a homeless prevention grant.

In 2007, the Council assessed its progress in achieving its 2002 Strategic Plan, and adopted an updated Strategic Plan. This revised action plan is intended to better focus the Council on the concerns of the community agencies which directly serve those who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless.

The Council is pleased to be able to continue to serve those vulnerable individuals and families who may not have a safe place to live.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Hui Fang Huang".

Dr. Hui Fang Huang "Angie" Su
Chairperson

CC: Jerry McDaniel
Karen Murphy

Overview

Homelessness continues to be a national and state problem, rooted in the lack of housing options at affordable costs. This is especially true for those households with low incomes, and those falling below the poverty level. Contributing to a person's risk of becoming homeless include:

- mental illness
- substance abuse and addiction
- breakup of families due to divorce or domestic violence
- loss of a job
- major health care costs
- natural disasters

The Council on Homelessness was established to help the state reduce homelessness. Toward that end, the Council develops policy recommendations for submission to the Legislature. In addition, the Council advises the state's Office on Homelessness on its work to coordinate state agencies and their resources to serve the homeless.

In accordance with section 420.622(9), Florida Statutes, the Council is submitting its annual report to the Governor, the Senate President, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Secretary of the Department of Children and Families.

Florida's Homeless Situation

Based on actual counts of the homeless during the last week of January 2007 by the local homeless coalitions, there were 60,168 persons who were homeless. These are persons who were sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation, sleeping in an emergency shelter facility, or staying in transitional housing after having been on the street or in an emergency shelter.

This count did not include those persons who are "doubled up" or sharing the housing of another person or family, or those who are staying in motels due to lack of other adequate housing. The 2007 data on the homeless count reflects a change this year in the counting methods. Under new federal mandates, the coalitions were instructed to use prescribed methods to count the street homeless and those receiving services from local agencies.

Florida's homeless population reflects a mix of both single adults and households with children. Two-thirds of the total homeless are single adults, with the remaining third being households with children. The count found that 21 percent of the total homeless population are children.

Our homeless population consists of a number of subpopulations, or categories of homeless conditions. For example, 16 percent are identified as "chronic" homeless. This is a person who has a disabling condition and has been homeless longer than a year, or has had several episodes of being homeless over the past three years.

Other categories of the homeless are as follows: NOTE: The categories are not mutually exclusive, and an individual may be counted in more than one category.

<u>Subpopulation</u>	<u>% of and # Sheltered</u>	
	<u>Homeless</u>	
Severely mentally ill	17%	3,827
Chronic substance abuse	22%	4,899
Persons with HIV/AIDS	3%	712
Veterans	14%	3,102
Victims of domestic violence	7%	1,687
Unaccompanied youth	4%	910
Total Sheltered Homeless		22,637

Based on the 2007 counts, 37 percent of the homeless were experiencing this problem for the very first time. On the other hand, a third of the homeless who were counted, reported that they have experienced four or more episodes of homelessness.

The underlying causes of homelessness are poverty and the lack of housing affordable to all households. The problem is most severe for those who have the

lowest incomes, and can least afford to pay for housing in the private market. The other factors that contribute to the individual becoming homeless include:

- loss of employment or other financial problems
- family problems, including breakup of the family
- medical or disability problems
- being forced to relocate from current housing
- natural or other disasters

Adding to the crisis is the increasing number of households who are behind on their mortgage or rent. In September 2007, Florida was ranked second in the nation in the number of mortgages in foreclosure. The number of families facing eviction for failure to pay their rent is also rising. The number of families applying to the Department of Children and Families in 2007 for emergency financial aid due to eviction is up by over 66% from 2005 levels.

Florida's homeless conditions and trends are not unique. The situation is the same across our country and too many people cannot maintain their own place to live.

Council's 2007 Actions

During 2007, the Council on Homelessness devoted its attention to these major topics:

- Reauthorization of the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.
- Updating the Council's strategic plan.
- Collaboration with other statewide advocates on strategic housing plans.
- Development of policy proposals to address homelessness.

Reauthorization of the federal McKinney-Vento Act

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act authorizes several federal homeless programs. Included in these programs are three major homeless housing programs within the Department of Housing and Urban Development. These are the Supportive Housing Program, the Shelter Plus Care program, and the Emergency Shelter Grant. Together, these programs generated over \$63 million in grants to Florida in 2006 to address the need for housing and shelter for our homeless citizens.

The federal authorizing legislation is up for renewal by Congress. Two bills have been introduced in the current session of Congress that would revise and reauthorize these critical programs to address homelessness. The Senate bill, S 1518, is the Community Partnership to End Homelessness Act of 2007. The House bill, HR 840, is entitled the Homeless Emergency and Rapid Transition to Housing Act of 2007. Different approaches are proposed in the two pieces of legislation.

The Council on Homelessness has worked extensively with the 27 local homeless continuum of care planning lead agencies to develop critical provisions needed in the federal law. These policies and program requirements reflect the consensus of our local homeless service partners. The Council on Homelessness has shared this local perspective with the appropriate authorizing committee chairs in Congress.

Our local partners identified guiding principles that should be reflected in the federal programs that serve the homeless. Central to these principles is the need to give flexibility to the local community to set priorities and to design local solutions to community needs.

The complete list of proposed changes to the federal legislation is attached in Exhibit 1 of this report. These ideas cover definitions of homelessness, funding levels for the federal programs, the role of the local homeless service plans to guide resources allocated, and local management of the services offered.

The Council wants to thank each of the state's 27 continuum of care planning lead agencies for their help in crafting this federal advocacy position paper.

Council's Strategic Plan

A second major work task for the Council this year was to update its Strategic Plan. Originally created in 2002, the Council's Strategic Plan had set forth the goal to reduce homelessness in Florida by 2006. The plan also set forth a series of actions to be undertaken to accomplish this end.

At the start of 2007, the Council assessed its progress in accomplishing its goal and action steps. Based on the data in the local continuum of care plans, the number of homeless persons reported reflected a slight decline. In 2003, the homeless population was estimated at 65,429 persons. The 2006 continuum of care plans reported a total homeless population of 62,229. This is 3,200 persons less than the 2003 estimate, or a four percent decline.

Major accomplishments noted by the Council since 2001-2002, included:

- 43.9% increase in the total inventory of beds available to serve the homeless from 2001 to 2006 [22,239 beds in 2001 to 32,004 beds in 2006].
- Reductions in the length of time a person is homeless for those experiencing short-term homelessness (less than a year being homeless). The data reflects that those who are homeless less than one month dropped from 21% in 2003, to 19% in 2006. For those experiencing homelessness longer than a month, but less than a year, the percentage dropped from 56% in 2003, to 46% in 2006.
- On the other hand, long term or chronic homeless populations have increased from 23% in 2003 to 35% in 2006.

The Council devoted significant time at its February and June meetings to updating its strategic plan. The Council's goal was revised to reflect more appropriately its role to help coordinate and align state resources with local service plans. The Council recognized that by itself, it could not reduce homelessness. The 2007 strategic plan is organized to address five areas of need.

1. Education
2. Enhance capacity of the Continuums of Care
3. Housing
4. Employment
5. Healthcare

The 2007 Strategic Plan adopted by the Council in June is provided in Exhibit 2. The Council's strategies include efforts to address the needs of the state's homeless veterans, youth aging out of or leaving foster care, and the persons being released from the state and local jails.

Collaboration with Statewide Advocates

In July, The Council reviewed and provided input to the Florida Supportive Housing Coalition's draft of a strategic plan for housing to serve Florida's special needs populations. The purpose of the plan is to provide a five-year framework to increase the provision of supportive housing to all households with a special need living in Florida.

The strategic plan was developed with the help of multiple statewide organizations and state agencies. Besides the Supportive Housing Coalition, other statewide advocates included:

- Florida Coalition for the Homeless
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Corporation
- Advocacy Center
- National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) Florida
- Florida Council for Community Mental Health
- Florida Alcohol and Drug Abuse Association

Five goals were outlined in the plan.

They are:

1. Develop supportive housing units commensurate with the need.
2. Create a statewide rental assistance program.
3. Modify service delivery systems so that they are person-centered.
4. Effectively coordinate service delivery systems with housing systems.
5. Increase public understanding of the benefits of supportive housing.

The Council on Homelessness supports the five-year strategic plan to increase the availability of housing to serve those in need, including the homeless.

The Council made several suggestions for consideration in finalizing the strategic plan. These comments included the following along with the resulting action in the finalized plan:

- Recommended elevating the responsibility for implementing the vision to the highest level of state policymaking. In response, the plan calls for a Cabinet level office to oversee the initiatives.
- The Council did not support adding this strategic plan to its mission. The final plan concurs with the Council's position.

- More focus is needed in the strategic plan on how it would be implemented. Implementation plans will be drafted in concert with state agencies and interested parties, including the Council.
- The plan needs to address the local housing program resources, as well as the state housing programs, given that 70% of the documentary stamp revenue goes to local programs. The initial plan focused on state level action. Future planning will take up the local housing resources.
- The plan should also consider how the rental assistance proposal might further the “Housing First” model. The plan was not intended to support one model over another. The Housing First model is but one option to address a person's need.
- Suggest expanding the proposal to preserve existing affordable housing projects to include homeless housing programs, like the federal Supportive Housing Program. The plan will address this suggestion in future revisions.

Based on this input, and that provided during the July 31 Housing Summit held by the Supportive Housing Coalition, the five year strategic plan was finalized and released in October 2007. The goals and strategies of the plan, entitled “Common Sense: A Strategic Plan to Provide Supportive Housing Throughout Florida,” are contained in Exhibit 3.

Policy Recommendations

A fourth area of action by the Council was to provide advice to the Office on Homelessness, and to develop policy proposals to reduce homelessness. As part of the Council’s ongoing role to provide advice and recommendations to the Office, the Council’s Application Committee helped with guidance on state grants. The Committee, working with the local continuum of care agencies, developed recommended changes to the grant application instructions for the state’s Challenge and Homeless Housing Assistance grants. These recommended changes were approved by the full Council, and were implemented by the Office in the 2007-08 grant application cycle.

The Council also reaffirmed its recommendation for the distribution of the staffing grants to the local homeless coalitions. The Council recommended that the staffing grants be limited to one award for each of the 27 continuums of care. Further, the Council recommended that the award go to those coalitions that also serve as the lead agency of the continuum planning effort. The Office on Homelessness followed the Council’s recommendations in allocating the funds budgeted for FY 2007-2008 for the local homeless coalitions.

In addition, the Council has developed recommendations for the Governor and Legislature to consider in the 2008 session. These proposals address:

- Local Homeless Prevention Grant
- Call for Florida Research on Family Homelessness
- Coordinated Efforts to Address Youth Leaving Foster Care

Local Homeless Prevention Grant

Services and resources to prevent housed persons from becoming homeless or returning to homelessness is one of the components of a homeless continuum of care model. All of the Florida continuums of care contain homeless prevention services. These services are provided by an array of non-profit and public agencies. Emergency aid to cover overdue rent, utilities or other major household bills is cost effective. Most homeless prevention aid provided is less than \$2,000 to help the household retain its home or apartment.

There is one authorized state prevention program – The Emergency Financial Assistance for Housing Program within the Department of Children and Families. This state aid is in addition to local prevention programs, and operates independent of local aid.

The Council is recommending that the Legislature build upon the successful models of the Challenge Grant and Homeless Housing Assistance Grant, and authorize a local homeless prevention grant to the continuums of care. The new program could be funded with the existing appropriation for the Emergency Financial Assistance for Housing Program.

The Council recommends that the Homeless Prevention Grant be authorized with the following components:

- Local flexibility to allow funds to be used for rent, utility costs, or other expenses creating the household's financial crisis
- Allow the aid to be provided over a short period of time, as needed, to resolve the emergency
- Allow the state aid to cover case management costs
- Require the program to track the clients assisted to determine if the household avoided becoming homeless
- Require an individual case plan for the household to set how much aid will be provided, the mix of state and local funds, and what costs will be covered
- Allocate the prevention grant by formula to each of the continuums of care
- Criteria to be considered in a formula allocation could include cost burdened households (those paying over half of the income on housing), eviction data for the area, or housing stock lost due to disasters

- Allow for reasonable administrative costs for the local program (up to five percent)
- Encourage linkage of the state’s homeless prevention grant to other community housing plans
- Decrease assistance levels to the household over time to encourage the transition back to independence

The change to a local prevention grant is expected to better leverage state money with local resources and speed up the provision of assistance to the person or family facing eviction. The proposal will require new statutory authorization to allow the grant to be implemented. If authorized, the Council recommends that the budget authority for the Emergency Financial Assistance for Housing Program be reallocated to the local homeless prevention grant.

Call for Research: Costs of Family Homelessness

There is abundant research across the nation on the costs associated with long term, chronic homeless individuals, and the potential cost savings of placing the chronic homeless into permanent supportive housing. Such studies have driven a federal policy to focus on creating permanent housing to serve the chronic population.

The local continuums of care in Florida have identified family homelessness as a significant part of the need. Yet, there is little research available to document the costs of family homelessness, or the cost effectiveness of housing interventions applied to families.

The Council, therefore, is issuing a call for Florida’s colleges and universities to consider a comprehensive research initiative on family homelessness.

The research questions identified by the Council and the local homeless continuums are summarized below.

1. How effective are the following interventions on family homelessness in achieving the goal of sustained, affordable permanent housing?
 - Emergency aid to prevent eviction
 - Short term assistance to secure housing (front end costs)
 - Transitional housing and services
 - Permanent housing and services
 - Other housing assistance (Section 8, public housing)
 - Emergency shelter
 - Supportive services, not linked to housing
 - School district provided services

2. What family characteristics shall be studied as potential variables impacting the cost and success of the intervention?
 - Situational or episodic homeless versus chronic homeless
 - Single parent versus two parent families
 - Household size
 - Those with or without children
 - Race/ethnicity
 - Educational levels of parents
 - Disabilities of adults or children
 - Availability of extended family support

3. What do we want to know?
 - Did the intervention change the family's use of public crisis services?
 - Compare the cost of public services for the families receiving intervention to the public costs of serving the family in the years prior to the intervention
 - Does the money saved from the reduced use of crisis services equal or exceed the cost of the intervention?

4. Other Research Questions
 - What is the income level/employment level of the family?
 - What other mainstream benefits did the family receive?
 - What is the family's access to transportation to work and services?

The Council recommends that this research be supported by private sources, such as foundations or research grants, as opposed to state funding.

Collaboration on Youth Leaving Foster Care

The Council's Discharge Planning Committee has evaluated the current practices to help transition the youth who age out of foster care into independent living. The federal government expects the homeless continuums of care to implement discharge planning protocols for this population group, given the high risk of these young persons becoming homeless.

Two issues were identified for further discussion with the Independent Living Advisory Council:

1. Is there sufficient funding for transition and independent living services for all youth aging out of foster care?

2. Should the state target housing programs/funding to specially serve youth exiting state care?

Based on the consultation with the Independent living Advisory Council, two specific budget requests for Fiscal Year 2008-2009 are recommended for the Department of Children and Families.

- \$16,829,507 for Independent Living Service Needs
- \$2,000,000 for transitional housing targeted for youth exiting foster care under the Homeless Housing Assistance Grant program

Both of these legislative budget requests have been included in the Department's FY08-09 submission to the Governor. If funded, the issues would help ensure that youth who exit foster care will receive transition services, help with ongoing education, and greater transitional living options.

Council Continues Support for the 2006 Recommendations

The Council also is including its recommended legislative proposals from its 2006 Report for consideration and action. The Council's primary proposal from last year recommended that the state's definition of a homeless person be revised. The change to the definition is intended to align the state's definition in section 420.621 with the broader definition contained in federal law. Specifically, this federal definition applies to the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program, and would cover those persons who are sharing the housing of others due to loss of their own housing, economic hardship or other reasons.

The Council's 2006 legislative proposals are contained in Exhibit 4. The Council requests that these proposals be given reconsideration and action.

Evaluation of Executive Director

The Florida Council on Homelessness was created in 2001 to develop policies and recommendations to reduce homelessness in Florida. The Council consists of fifteen members, representing seven state agency heads or their designees, four members appointed by the Governor, and four members representing statewide organizations and homeless advocacy groups. The Council's mission is to develop and coordinate policy to reduce the prevalence and duration of homelessness, and to work toward ending homelessness in Florida.

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, 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.

Pursuant to section 420.622(9), Florida Statutes, the Council on Homelessness shall evaluate the performance of the executive director of the Office on Homelessness in fulfilling the statutory duties of the Office. The Chairperson, Dr. Angie Su sent out a memorandum on October 25, 2007 requesting that the members of the council submit a performance appraisal for Mr. Tom Pierce. Council members were invited to submit their comments and input to the Chairperson for her use in drafting an overall evaluation statement. Council members used a scale with a recommended numerical grade of 1-5. A grade of 5 means "Performance for exceeds expectations"; a grade of 4 means "Performance often exceeds expectations"; a grade of 3 means "Performance consistently achieves expectations"; a grade of 2 means "Performance sometimes meets expectations and needs improvement"; and a grade of 1 means "Performance is consistently below expectations." In addition, council members may provide written comments if desired. Nine council members submitted reviews; Mr. Pierce received a grade of 5 from five council members, a grade of 4 from three council members and a grade of 3 from one council member. The Council members noted Tom's performance as great, outstanding, and exemplary. Council members praised Mr. Pierce as being knowledgeable, effective, efficient, productive, focused and able to balance the needs of the various sub-groups to work and think independently yet keeping the members focused on the tasks at hand. One member noted Mr. Pierce's ability to coordinate efforts among

key stakeholders to get their input on programs aimed at assisting the homeless, “He empowers local homeless coalitions to serve as extensions of his office by allowing them to be his eyes and ears around the state.” Another member stated that Mr. Pierce has effectively and efficiently administered and distributed consumer and continuum of care program funding, guided the development of the Council’s strategic plan as well as lead the statewide effort to implement new HUD homeless data collection and management requirements.

Overall, Mr. Tom Pierce has fulfilled the duties as the Executive Director of the Office on Homelessness at an exemplary level. There were no areas of improvement cited.

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Exhibit 1

Council on Homelessness Recommendations Reauthorization of McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

In anticipation of legislation being introduced in Congress to reauthorize the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the Council on Homelessness developed a series of recommendations for changes to the federal law. The council solicited the views of the 27 local continuum of care planning agencies on what changes are needed to the law authorizing the homeless housing grant programs at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Two bills have been introduced and are being heard in committee. These are S. 1518, the Community Partnership to End Homelessness Act of 2007, and H.R. 840, The Homeless Emergency and Rapid Transition to Housing Act of 2007.

The Council on Homelessness has submitted the following proposals to the Congressional committees hearing the authorization bills.

Guiding Principles:

- ◆ The legislation should allow greater flexibility for local determination of priority uses of the grants based on the continuum of care plan.
- ◆ Statutory authority should be granted to the local board of the continuum of care to have discretion to allocate funding to whatever housing project is needed, regardless of prior HUD grant awards to specific projects.
- ◆ There is very little support for consolidating the three HUD homes housing programs into one competitive program [Supportive Housing Program, Shelter Plus Care, Section 8 SRO].
- ◆ Similarly, there is no support for a mandated priority for projects to serve chronic homeless persons.

Definitions:

- ◆ The legislative definition for homeless person under the HUD homeless housing programs should be modified to expand the term to include those who are staying with others temporarily because they have nowhere else to go (i.e. doubled up), and those who are staying in motels due to lack of alternative housing.
- ◆ There is no support for including a statutory definition of chronic homeless person.

Continuum of Care Programs: The legislation should:

- Allow for administrative costs for the lead agency if they are the HUD grantee, with caps of 8 or 10%. The administrative costs would be shared with the project sponsors.
- Provide a bonus for new permanent housing with greater flexibility to assist all homeless persons, and that the bonus be large enough to fund a new project.
- Allow the proposed consolidated grant to cover all activities included in the continuum of care plan, including prevention, outreach, sheltering, supportive services, as well as transitional and permanent housing.

- Allow local continuums to determine the appropriate level of funding for supportive services based on project need.
- Retain the current eligibility for supportive services that is in the law presently.

Continuum of Care Competitive Process

- ◆ The Council finds that the current Super NOFA process used by the Department of Housing and Urban Development lacks the necessary accountability for the allocation of over a billion dollars a year. The Council strongly recommends that the legislation require the Department to adopt federal regulations, after proper public comment periods, to set forth the section and award criteria, and to provide for local appeals of those decisions.
- ◆ The current process of issuing a Notice of Funding Availability does not allow for public input to the grant selection criteria by those most impacted, namely the continuums of care and the housing project sponsors. Too much discretion and not enough accountability exists in the current procurement and award process.

Renewals

- ◆ The legislation should require the Shelter Plus Care projects to be renewed non-competitively.
- ◆ The legislation should also provide for all permanent housing projects to be renewed non-competitively.
- ◆ The law should provide authority for HUD to ensure that all renewal projects are funded.
- ◆ The legislation should provide a “hold harmless” provision to ensure that each continuum of care can maintain the homeless housing projects already assisted.

Matching Funds

- ◆ The legislation should provide greater flexibility to include other sources of match commitments beyond cash match. The bill should keep the current match requirement for Shelter Plus Care projects. There was little support for the proposed 25% cash match for the consolidated continuum grant.

Appropriation Authorization

- ◆ The legislation to reauthorize the federal homeless assistance should authorize an appropriation level per fiscal year of at least \$2,500,000,000.
- ◆ Further, the legislation should contain authorization for the Department of Housing and Urban Development to fund project renewal grants from other budget accounts than the homeless continuum of care appropriation. Congress needs to address the reality that the current level of appropriation is barely capable of sustaining the funding needed to renew the homeless housing projects already developed. For example, the 2006 competitive continuum of care awards to Florida allowed for the renewal of 225 projects, and the funding of only 12 new homeless housing projects. The continuums in Florida project that the funding needed to continue to renew existing projects exceeds \$65 million in 2007.

Role of the Continuum of Care

- ◆ The legislation should place responsibility on the continuum of care for the planning process, and to have a formal, open selection process for determining which projects shall be included in the grant application.
- ◆ There is little or no support for requiring the continuum of care to be responsible for discharge planning or for ensuring access to mainstream services.
- ◆ The lead agency of the continuum should be the responsible entity to submit the application for the competitive grant on behalf of all projects with the continuum.
- ◆ Separate, stand alone applications are not recommended.
- ◆ The legislation should give the flexibility to allow for local choice on whether the lead agency or governing board of the local continuum of care should be the grantee for all projects funded. This is especially critical for smaller and rural continuums that are likely to have limited staff and capacity to manage and monitor a number of sub grant agreements.

Governing board

- ◆ The legislation could not specify the makeup of the local governing board of the continuum. Rather, the membership makeup and other policies relative to the governing board should be left up to the local continuum of care to determine.

Eligible Uses of Federal Grants

Emergency Shelter Grants: The legislation should:

- ◆ Retain prevention activities as an eligible use
- ◆ Allow administrative costs for all grantees, not just for government recipients.
- ◆ Continue this program as a separate, stand alone formula grant.
- ◆ Legislation is not supported to roll this grant into any consolidated continuum of care grant.

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Exhibit 2

Council on Homelessness 2007 Strategic Plan

Goal

To coordinate and align state resources with the local continuums of care to support the delivery of the services to assist those individuals and families who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless.

Homeless

The Council recommends that the current state and federal definition of homeless be revised to include those persons who may be sharing the housing of others due to the lack of their own housing, or those living in motels or other temporary housing due to the lack of alternative, adequate accommodations.

Strategies

1. Education
2. Enhanced Capacity of the Continuums of Care
3. Housing
4. Employment
5. Health Care

Strategy: Education

To better inform and educate the continuums of care, the general public, and state and local leaders on homelessness.

<u>Action</u>	<u>What is to be done?</u>	<u>Who's responsible?</u>	<u>Done When?</u>
Florida Research on Cost of Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote Florida specific research on the costs of family homelessness to a community, and the potential savings of supportive housing including the "Housing First" model. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Investigate other research studies - Convene meeting with state university system representatives to assess the feasibility, and outline research objectives. - Develop specific research proposal and budget request. 	Council	August 2007
		Office, FCH, FSHC	August 2007
		Council, Education Committee with State University Council Education Committee	September 2007
Marketing Message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene focus groups of the continuums to develop a statewide message to tell the story of homelessness. • Develop a marketing strategy to get this message out. (example: Public Service announcements). • Create a recommended budget issue to support the marketing strategy. 	Council Council Council with Office	October 2007 (statewide conference)

Strategy: Education (Continued)

Action	What is to be done?	Who's responsible?	Done When?
Fact Sheets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and provide fact sheets to the local continuums of care on policy recommendations to enable these local partners to inform community leaders. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the policy fact sheets needed. Develop and distribute fact sheets. 	Council Office	2008-2009
Create state data warehouse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define the data elements to be captured from the continuum plans and local HMIS. Determine the type of state information system needed to generate the desired reports. Data collection 	Council Office Office	2009
School Based Education Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the need for education in K-12 system on the issues of homelessness. Share or develop school-based programs to address those needs (e.g. Miami-Dade program on crimes against the homeless). Develop recommended budget issues to support such school-based programs. 	Council/Dept of Education Continuum of Care Council	2009
Integrated Community Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify community examples where alliances are working across program lines to serve common clients at risk of homelessness. Develop policy recommendations to promote such integrated community alliances and service delivery within state agencies. Develop incentives within the state homeless resource programs to promote integrated community alliances [with Family Safety, Mental Health, Substance Abuse, Domestic Violence and Workforce Boards]. 	Continuum of Care Council Council	2009

Strategy: Enhanced Capacity of the Continuums of Care

To increase staff capacity in the lead agencies of the continuums of care, and enhance the service capacity in Florida's smaller and rural continuums.

Action	What is to be done?	Who's responsible?	Done When?
Technical Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a list of issues or areas of focus for local continuum of care training, education and technical assistance. Create a proposed technical assistance delivery program for the continuums, along with a budget recommendation. Convene meeting to assess how the Catalyst Program at Florida Housing Finance can address continuum of care needs. Discuss with HUD how to link to their technical assistance efforts 	Council CoC Capacity Committee	2007
		Council	March 2008
		Council committee	2007
		Council committee	2008

Strategy: Enhanced Capacity of the Continuums of Care (Continued)

Action	What is to be done?	Who's responsible?	Done When?
Enhance Staff Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research level of need and allowable administrative cost allowed in other programs. • Assess how existing grant partners could fund more administrative costs and staffing. • Develop consensus on administrative cost level for continuums • Develop legislative recommendations 	<p>Office with FCH</p> <p>Council CoC Capacity Committee Council with Continuums</p> <p>Council CoC Capacity Committee</p>	<p>2007</p> <p>2007</p> <p>2008</p> <p>2008</p>
Fund Raising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect and disseminate methods used to raise local support for the homeless coalition and continuum of care. • Promote peer to peer [agency to agency] exchange on successful fund raising programs. 	<p>Council</p> <p>Office and Florida Coalition</p>	<p>On-going/ Monthly calls</p>
Continuum of care plan guides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the federal Exhibit 1 plan elements in comparison to the state law on continuum planning to identify areas for enhanced guidelines. • Convene meeting(s) with the lead agencies to assess potential state guidelines to supplement the federal directives. • Submit proposed guidelines for review and recommendations from the Council. • Issue planning guide for continuum of care. 	<p>Office</p> <p>Office</p> <p>Office</p> <p>Office</p>	<p>October 2007</p> <p>2008</p> <p>2008</p> <p>2008</p>
Rural Needs Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene a focus group of continuums of care that serve rural areas to identify the critical needs in rural homelessness. • Research successful models of service to rural communities and their homeless. • Develop specific state initiatives to meet the identified rural needs. 	<p>Council with FCH and FSHC</p> <p>Office</p> <p>Council</p>	<p>2009</p>
Council MOUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing Council-State Agency Memoranda of Understanding to assess strengths and weaknesses. • Evaluate resources available for homeless services available within the agency. • Develop new Memoranda of Understanding to include strategies or commitments to share state resources to serve the homeless at the community level. • Execute new Memorandum of Understanding with Council. 	<p>Council</p> <p>State Agency Members of Council</p> <p>Council and State Agency Members</p> <p>DCF, DCA, DOH, DOC, VA, WFI and FHFC</p>	<p>2009</p>

Strategy: Housing

To work with other housing related commissions, advisory bodies, or partners to address state attainable housing policies.

Action	What is to be done?	Who's responsible?	Done When?
Homeless Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the Office and the continuums of care to develop a state program to support local homeless prevention efforts. • Develop legislative proposal, along with a budget proposal for Department of Children and Families • Submit homeless prevention recommendation to Secretary, Governor and Legislature. 	<p>Council with Office, FCH, FSHC</p> <p>Council</p> <p>Council</p>	<p>July 2007</p> <p>August 2007</p> <p>December 2007</p>
Discharge Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address for the following homeless subpopulations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Veterans - Youth aging out of foster care - Disabled - Ex-offenders released from Corrections • Convene work group to focus on youth • Develop proposals to improve planning for youth existing state care. 	<p>Council Discharge Plan Committee</p> <p>Council, DCF, Community Based Care Agencies, Ind. Living Advisory Comm, NGA Policy Academy</p> <p>Work Group</p>	<p>August 2007</p> <p>2007</p> <p>2007-2008</p>
Council Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop working relationships with other state commissions, advisory bodies or councils to develop and recommend state housing policies. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affordable Housing Study Commission - Mental Health and Substance Abuse Corporation. - Florida Association of Housing and Redevelop Officials 	<p>Council</p>	<p>2007- ongoing</p>
Develop positions on housing issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove the cap on Housing Trust Fund revenues. • Increase supply of housing units available to all income groups. • State funding for rental assistance payments. • Public housing plans and preference policy. • State assisted project's mixed income policy. • State policy to reduce local regulation to limit housing based on NIMBY objections. 	<p>Council with Partners developed above</p>	<p>2008-2009</p>

Strategy: Housing (Continued)

Action	What is to be done?	Who's responsible?	Done When?
Post – Disaster Housing Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request submission/presentation from the Division of Emergency Management on the state's post-disaster housing plan. 	Council/DCA	2007-2008
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore with the Division how the Council and local continuums might be involved in this post-disaster housing planning. 	Council/DCA	2008-2009
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop policy recommendations to assure that the existing homeless sheltering network does not become the housing of last resort for disaster victims. 	Council	2008-2009
Supportive services linked to housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate feasibility of state funding sources. Develop recommendations with the Council's housing partners Submit recommended proposals to Governor/Legislature 	Council Council Council	2007-2008

Strategy: Employment

To work with other state agencies, boards or commissions to enhance employment opportunities and income for the homeless.

Action	What is to be done?	Who's responsible?	Done When?
Employment MOU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convene meeting with the Agency for Workforce Innovation, Workforce Florida, and Department of Education to assess current employment training, vocational training, education and job placement services available to the homeless. Research unmet needs in these education and employment services, with input from the continuums of care. Develop a new memorandum of understanding to promote better employment and income results for the homeless. 	Council Council with CoCs Council, AWI, WFI, DOE	2008-2009

Strategy: Health Care

To promote greater access to health care services for the homeless to assure wellness of the individual.

Action	What is to be done?	Who's responsible?	Done When?
Medicaid Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite Medicaid staff to meet with the Council, and educate the Council on current policies and rules governing. • Convene meeting with the Agency for Health Care Administration to discuss current Medicaid policy on the limits on the disabled individual to earn income beyond SSDI. • Discuss options for new state policy to promote additional income for the disabled person without losing Medicaid benefits. • Recommend policy changes to state/federal legislation. • Eligibility of adults without dependent children. • Eligibility retention if gain employment/income: explore concept of "buy in option" for Medicaid premium coverage. • Coverage for stop smoking aids. 	<p>Council</p> <p>Council/AHCA</p> <p>Council and AHCA</p> <p>Council</p> <p>Council and AHCA SAMH Corp workgroup</p>	<p>2007</p> <p>2007-2008 2007</p>
Enhanced Access: Mental Health and Substance Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies to promote Safe Havens • Promote funding for Mental Health Courts at community level. 		2008-2009
Access to Urgent and Critical Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and remove barriers that limit eligibility for indigent care. 		2009
Discharge Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek partnership with state hospital and recommend policies to encourage participation in local continuum of care discharge planning. 		2009
Respite and Recuperative Care Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore ways to promote such special need housing or care facilities. 		2009
Dental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for increased dental care services, programs and funding. 		2009
Primary Care Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the barriers that limit the ability of the homeless to receive primary care. • Develop recommendation to remove those barriers. 	<p>Continuums</p> <p>Council with Continuums</p>	2009

Council on Homelessness, June 4, 2007

Exhibit 3

Common Sense

A Strategic Plan to Provide Supportive
Housing Throughout Florida



Executive Summary

In 2007 the Florida Supportive Housing Coalition convened a workgroup to develop a five-year strategic plan to increase the availability of supportive housing in Florida. Workgroup members included the Coalition board, members of multiple statewide partner coalitions and representatives from various state agencies including the Department of Children and Families, Department of Elder Affairs, Department of Health, Agency for Persons with Disabilities and Florida Housing Finance Corporation.

The objective of the plan is to increase the provision of quality affordable and universally accessible supportive housing for the purpose of promoting self-determination, community integration and economic self-sufficiency for special needs populations throughout Florida. The plan focuses on statewide goals and strategies to achieve this objective.

The population to be served consists of low income households requiring professional supports in order to maintain their housing and/or increase their independent living skills. These households include, but are not limited to, families challenged by or at risk of homelessness, persons with disabilities, youth exiting foster care, victims of domestic violence, frail elders, and certain veterans.

The plan uses a broad framework to accomplish five goals:

1. Develop supportive housing units commensurate with the need.
2. Create a statewide rental assistance program.
3. Modify service delivery systems so that they are person-centered.
4. Effectively coordinate service delivery systems with housing systems.
5. Increase public understanding of the benefits of supportive housing.

5 Goals

Introduction

Workgroup Participants

Chair:

Shannon Nazworth
Ability Housing of Northeast Florida, Inc.

Participants:

Bill Aldinger
Florida Housing Finance Corporation

Letty Ballard
Department of Children & Families

Maria Pellerin Barcus
Housing Partners of Florida LLC

Deb Blizzard
Agency for Persons with Disabilities

Ken De Cerchio
Department of Children & Families

Lisa DeVitto
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Corporation

Wayne Dreggors
Seminole Community Mental Health

Mark Engelhardt
University of South Florida

Edi Erb
Homeless Coalition of Hillsborough County

Gary Fink
Housing Partnership, Inc.

Mike Fitch
Advocacy Center

Mark Fontaine
Florida Alcohol and Drug Abuse Association

Olga Golik
Citrus Health Network

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Purpose: The purpose of the plan is to provide a five-year framework for comprehensive public and private action to increase the provision of supportive housing for all households with a special need in Florida.

Vision: The vision of this plan is for every Floridian requiring supports in order to maintain their housing and/or develop their independent living skills to have the services they need linked with a quality affordable place to live.

Principles: Supportive housing is affordable independent housing integrated with a comprehensive, individualized service delivery system that allows people to live successfully in the community with stable permanent housing.

Services include the spectrum of non-clinical supports that may be required by a participant in order for that participant to maintain their housing and/or increase their independent living skills. Utilization of services is the choice of each participant.

Supportive housing is the proven solution for stabilizing and housing people with special needs, including individuals and families challenged with homelessness, people with physical or developmental disabilities, frail elders, victims of violence, people with a mental illness, youth exiting foster care, people living with AIDS, the formerly incarcerated, certain veterans and people overcoming addictions.

The strategic plan is based upon the following core beliefs:

- Access to safe, decent, and affordable housing of one's choosing is a basic right.
- Systemic and social changes over the past thirty years have left the most vulnerable among us homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- Responding proactively to the needs of the homeless and others can lead to a more efficient use of our state's resources, in addition to improving our communities and the lives of the individuals served.
- An integrated service response linked to stable permanent housing is a cost-effective stabilizing strategy that promotes self-sufficiency.

Providing supportive housing to all those who need it not only positively impacts the individuals and families served; it also makes significant positive change to the social and economic structures of our state and our communities.

Goals & Strategies

Workgroup participants continued...

Janet Hamer
Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta

Freyja Harris
Florida Coalition for the Homeless

Susanne Homant
NAMI Florida

Steve Howells
Advocacy Center

Jack Humburg
Boley Centers, Inc.

Karen Koch
Florida Council for Community Mental Health

Joe May
Department of Health

Marsha Popkey
Lee County Department of Human Services

Clint Rayner
Department of Children & Families

Linda Riddle
Department of Children & Families

Lavonia Sampson
Florida Supportive Housing Coalition

Debbie Williams
Department of Elder Affairs

The Supportive Housing Strategic Plan is based upon the following:

Supportive housing is cost effective

Providing services in the community is less expensive than providing them in a facility-setting including those in the criminal justice system. In addition, there are peripheral costs to the criminal justice and healthcare systems when services are only provided in facility-settings.

Most households requiring supportive housing have extremely low-incomes. Creating housing which is affordable to persons with such low incomes does require increased subsidy. However, this higher upfront cost is offset by recurring annual savings to service, healthcare and criminal justice systems.

Supportive housing provides better outcomes

Services provided in an affordable home of one's own provide better personal outcomes than services provided in a facility-setting.

In addition, supportive housing stabilizes individuals thereby reducing relapse and/or recidivism for the majority of households served.

Least-restrictive settings are a right

The U.S. Supreme Court, in the Olmstead Decision, ruled that living in the least restrictive setting required by one's disability is a right. However, many individuals with disabilities cannot be released from expensive and overly-restrictive facility-settings because they can not find an affordable place to live.

With this knowledge the workgroup identified the following goals as a framework for increasing the provision of supportive housing in Florida.

Goals:

1. Develop supportive housing units commensurate with the need.
2. Create a statewide rental assistance program.
3. Modify service delivery systems so that they are person-centered.
4. Effectively coordinate service delivery systems with housing systems.
5. Increase public understanding of the benefits of supportive housing.

Exhibit 4

Council's 2006 Recommendations

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.

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Exhibit 5

Council Participants 2007

<u>Council Member:</u>	<u>Represented by:</u>
Department of Children and Families	Steve Holmes Brandon Butterworth
Department of Community Affairs	Paula Lemmo
Department of Health	Gail Underwood
Department of Corrections	Pam Denmark Eugene Morris
Department of Veterans' Affairs	Sandy Bowron
Workforce Florida, Inc.	Curtis Austin Larry Champion
Florida Housing Finance Corporation	Bill Aldinger
Florida Coalition for the Homeless	Rayme Nuckles
Florida Supportive Housing Coalition	Maria Barcus
Florida Association of Counties	Bart Banks David Rogoff
Florida Rural Development Council	VACANT
Governor's Appointees	Sherry Burns Dr. Angie Su Elmira Leto Bernadette Woody

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