

Homeless Assistance Case Studies

Compiled for the North Valley Housing Trust

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Introduction

To help the North Valley Housing Trust Fund research potential uses of funds, this document provides an overview of homeless assistance programs that are most applicable to Butte County. These homeless assistance programs have some common themes that reflect a general consensus on a philosophy and approach to helping the homeless that has gained momentum over the last 10 years across the country. All provide housing that is integrated with supportive services. The supportive services are individualized to the needs of each participant, through participant interviews with a case manager. Local agencies provide mental health counseling, addiction recovery, assistance in accessing public benefits, health care coordination, group therapy, life skills training, and job training and placement, among others. The goal of this holistic approach is for each participant to increase in self-sufficiency, measured in terms of obtaining permanent, stable housing, securing and maintaining employment, and other metrics. Successful implementation of this type of program requires extensive collaboration among community partners. Due to limited public funding, successful programs such as those described in this document engage churches, civic groups, nonprofits, philanthropic organizations, and business to bring adequate resources to bear on the problem. This general philosophy and approach has proven to be extremely successful in a variety of locations and circumstances as a means to transition the homeless to self-sufficiency.

Two of the three case studies are “housing-first” models, in which the homeless are moved into housing immediately and prior to long-term treatment and social services. This model has been employed increasingly in recent years due to demonstrated success across the U.S. and in Britain. Independent evaluations state that roughly four out of five chronically homeless that receive immediate housing stay off the streets for two years or longer. In Britain, the chronically homeless have reduced by two-thirds after using this program for 10 years. The housing-first strategy has been a significant contributor to the decline in the country’s chronically homeless in recent years.

Boise CATCH

The City of Boise initiated Charitable Assistance To the Community's Homeless in 2006. They started by involving local area churches, businesses, nonprofits and civic groups in conversations about how to help the homeless in their community. Many of these participating organizations say that the City acting as a catalyst is what has made the program possible and successful. The City of Boise pays for program administration so that all donations can go directly toward rental assistance and supportive services. A business, civic group or church agrees to sponsor a family and provide up to 12 months of rental assistance, as well as other funds, volunteer time, and items if offered. Local service providers work with the families to offer community-based services and track progress in building self-sufficiency. CATCH has housed and served over 100 families.

Features

- Provides rental assistance and supportive services exclusively to homeless families with children.
- Churches, civic organizations and businesses "sponsor" participants.
- The United Way has been a key funding source.
- Strong involvement from local churches and businesses.
- A CATCH Family Resource Center provides computers, Internet service and phones for job search, job training and education.

Results

CATCH has housed and served over 100 families. About 85% of participants pay their own rent after six months of receiving assistance. It received a National League of Cities Award for Municipal Excellence.

Advantages

CATCH has been extremely successful at engaging over 40 local congregations and businesses to partner in the program. Partners make strong connections with those they assist through sponsorships. CATCH has demonstrated measurable self-sufficiency results.

Disadvantages

Eligibility requirements exclude many homeless individuals without children and those with a recent criminal history or current drug addiction.

Applicability to Butte County

- Builds on foundation of collaboration and civic engagement
- Strong involvement from local congregations
- Focus on participant self-sufficiency and measurable results

Contacts

Jen Pascoe
CATCH Director
City of Boise
(208) 384-4087
CATCH@cityofboise.org

Reference Websites

Boise CATCH
<http://hcd.cityofboise.org/homelessness/catch/>

100,000 Homes

100,000 Homes is a nationwide campaign to house 100,000 homeless individuals, organized by a nonprofit called Community Solutions. This campaign is being implemented by 179 communities across the country using a uniform model that is adapted to local conditions by governments, nonprofits, volunteer groups and businesses. The campaign implements an aggressive housing-first strategy in which local teams: “register” the chronically homeless and document their needs; line up housing through government programs and private donations; and quickly move the homeless into housing. A long-term plan is then employed to help participants stay housed. Since it was initiated in 2008, 100,000 homes has housed 20,600 chronically homeless individuals.

Features

- Nationwide campaign and network, tailored to local resources and needs.
- Housing-first model for the chronically homeless.
- Catalyzes public/private partnerships.
- Requires private donations and significant volunteer time to be successful.

Results

100,000 Homes has housed 20,600 chronically homeless individuals. It estimates that an average of 91% of those assisted will maintain housing after one year. Over 200,000 volunteers have participated.

Advantages

The 100,000 housing-first model stretches resources by utilizing volunteers and private donations. Proactive direct contact with the homeless on the street brings rapid results. Communities can benefit from a national network and a proven model to maximize resources and save time.

Disadvantages

There is limited information about the long-term stability of the program, because it is new.

Applicability to Butte County

- Eight Northern California counties and cities have joined the campaign
- The model can be adapted to local strengths and challenges
- Public/Private Partnership Model
- Strong volunteer involvement

Contacts

Linda Kaufman
Field Organizer
100K Homes
(202) 425-0611 (ph)
lkaufman@cmtysolutions.org

Reference Websites

100,000 Homes
<http://100khomes.org/>

Homeward Bound

Homeward Bound of Marin was established in 1996 as a transitional housing program with a strong work-training component. The program is project-based rather than a housing-first model. Participants live for up to 18 months at a transitional housing facility where they prepare to secure employment and permanent housing. Participants are required to participate in educational and vocational training. A teaching kitchen is located on-site for residents to develop skills in the culinary arts and food service industry. They also participate in candy, catering and café businesses that generate income for the program.

Features

- Project-based transitional housing.
- Strong vocational training component.
- Successful fundraising from the private sector.
- Food business generates program income.

Results

- Successful completion of The Next Key Center, which opened in November 2008 with 29 studio apartments.
- Operates the Fresh Starts Culinary Academy.
- In development on a new 30-bed transitional housing facility for individuals recovering from substance abuse.

Advantages

Homeward Bound utilizes a successful and practical vocational training program that places participants in good paying jobs. The program prepares participants for long-term success through vocational and educational development.

Disadvantages

The program is expensive to start up and operate.

Applicability to Butte County

- Emphasis on job training and placement, using these programs to generate program income
- Utilizes charitable donations
- Develops partnerships with local employers

Contacts

Mary Kay Sweeney, PhD
Executive Director
Homeward Bound of Marin
(415) 382-3363 (ph)
info@hbofm.org

Reference Websites

Homeward Bound of Marin
<http://www.hbofm.org/>