

Taskforce to End Chronic Homelessness

Wichita – Sedgwick County, Kansas



Plan to End Chronic Homelessness in Wichita/Sedgwick County

October 5, 2009

Who is the Taskforce to End Chronic Homelessness (TECH)?

In 2006, the Sedgwick County and the City of Wichita joined together to form the Task Force to End Chronic Homelessness (TECH). TECH is comprised of a variety of community stakeholders and is charged with identifying the issues related to ending chronic homelessness and creating a plan that includes recommendations for addressing short and long-term community needs.

Who are the chronically homeless?

The term “chronically homeless” describes an unaccompanied person who has a disabling condition and has been continuously homeless for at least a year OR has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. According to the 2007 Point-In-Time survey, 93 individuals in our community met this criteria.

Why are we focusing on chronic homelessness?

The chronically homeless have been on the streets the longest, are most resistant to services, and suffer from multiple, complex problems. Due to these traits, the chronically homeless have the highest rates of use of shelter and community services. Nationally, the average annual cost per homeless individual ranges from \$28,045 to \$42,075. The chronically homeless place a large financial burden on community resources.

What is the Plan to End Chronic Homelessness?

The Plan to End Chronic Homelessness outlines the history of the chronic homeless population, describes best practices, and provides recommendations for solutions. To better understand the needs of the chronically homeless, the Task Force first identified ten gaps in service:

- ✦ The current drop-in center (United Methodist Open Door) has limited space and operating hours.
- ✦ There is not a centralized one-stop facility or number to call for the homeless to find help.
- ✦ Lack of permanent housing with supportive services.
- ✦ Transportation.
- ✦ Challenges to receiving governmental benefits in a timely manner.
- ✦ There is a need for sustainable annual funding.
- ✦ 25-50 additional emergency shelter beds.
- ✦ The chronically homeless need additional encouragement and support to seek and receive addiction treatment and services.
- ✦ The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is not used to full functionality.
- ✦ There is no community-wide standard or common definition for case management.

How much will the plan cost?

Cost estimates for the plan to end chronic homelessness include capital start up costs from \$2.83 million to \$4.23 million. Additional operating costs will be approximately \$1 million annually. The task force anticipates assistance from a variety of community organizations to fund the plan. (See back side “Sustainable Funding Sources” for more information.)



Sedgwick County
Manager's Office
525 N Main, Suite 343
Wichita, Kansas 67203
316-660-9393
www.sedgwickcounty.org

City of Wichita
Manager's Office
455 N Main, 13th Floor
Wichita, Kansas 67202
316-268-4351
www.wichitagov.org



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Five Strategies to End Chronic Homelessness

The task force plan is based on five strategies:

- ✦ Develop a one-stop Resource and Referral Center.
- ✦ Using the "Housing First" model, provide 64 permanent supportive housing units with services.
- ✦ Identify emergency housing options for 25 - 50 people until permanent supportive housing is available.
- ✦ Identify sustainable funding sources.
- ✦ Develop an Oversight Committee to oversee plan implementation.

One - stop Resource and Referral Center

Currently, our community does not have a place for homeless to go during the day. A One-Stop Resource and Referral Center should be in a convenient location and provide a "place to be." This site could also provide a needs assessment. A Resource and Referral Center would help people get into permanent supportive housing. Our current day center is only open during weekdays with a capacity to serve 50 people. There is a need in our community to extend service hours to include weekends and evenings and capacity to serve 150 people.

Update: The United Methodist Open Door has raised over \$1.9 million for the Resource and Referral Center. Major gifts include Spirit, INTRUST, Wichita Community Foundation, Weidmann Foundation, Star Goebal Family. A total of \$7.4 million is needed to fund the project. A contract has been written to purchase a property at 2nd and Topeka; the deal is scheduled to close on or before December 31, 2009.

"Housing First"/Permanent Supportive Housing

"Housing First" represents a shift from traditional methods of providing temporary shelter before locating housing. "Housing First" is a national best practice that provides immediate long-term housing with supportive services. In our community, there is a need to identify 64 scattered - site houses or apartments.

Based upon their ability to pay, residents will pay up to 30% of their income. As a result of "Housing First," other communities have greatly reduced the annual cost per chronically homeless individual.

Update: As of October 1, 2009:

- 55 individuals have been housed through Housing First City and County funds
- 9 individuals have been approved for City/County Housing First and are currently searching for an apartment



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Additional Emergency Housing Options

While "Housing First" seeks to eliminate the need for emergency housing options, there is a current need for 25 -50 additional shelter beds, above the 335 available. The plan suggests any additional emergency housing options should only be utilized when all other shelters are at capacity. This temporary solution should be phased out as permanent supportive housing becomes available.

Update: The emergency shelter closed at the end of March. Shelter numbers have been estimated at 120 per night, but varied greatly the first few months of the year, possibly due to warmer temperatures. Advocates to End Chronic Homelessness (AECH) report they are committed to continuing assistance for the next two years if needed.

Sustainable Funding Sources

It is estimated that our community spends more than \$10 million/year on homelessness. TECH's plan calls for capital costs ranging from \$2.83 to \$4.23 million and an additional \$1 million in annual operating costs. It is anticipated that funding will come from many sources. Those sources include: government, faith community, United Way, foundations, businesses, and individuals.

Oversight Committee

An Oversight Committee will help assure implementation of the plan and provide oversight. Also, the Oversight Committee will be responsible for increasing community awareness and raising financial/in-kind donations. The Oversight Committee will report regularly to the City Council, County Commission, and public.

The Oversight Committee has been meeting since July 7, 2008 to ensure full implementation of the plan. To read the minutes from Oversight Committee meetings, visit www.sedgwickcounty.org/homeless_taskforce.

2009 Point in Time Count Results

The Point in Time Count was held on January 28th, 2009. The count identified 384 homeless individuals according to the HUD (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) definition. Seventy one of the homeless individuals were considered chronic, a reduction of 22 from 2008.



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