

Keeping Alaskans Out of the Cold



STATE OF ALASKA
REPORT TO GOVERNOR FRANK MURKOWSKI
RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS

OCTOBER 2005



Clare House provides temporary, emergency 24-hour shelter and case management for women and women with children.



The Office of
Governor Frank H. Murkowski



Homelessness is a wrenching problem that confronts an estimated 14,000 Alaskans a year, according to this report.

My goals in establishing the Interagency Council on Homeless were to find ways to address the problem, encourage public discussion, and increase Alaskans' understanding of the complexities surrounding homelessness.

The Interagency Council looked at the many causes of homelessness in Alaska. It is no surprise that the primary reason is a change in economic status and the inability to pay increased housing cost.

The council recognized that many government and nongovernment organizations, including community and faith-based groups, are involved in helping. Yet, with all this effort, the problem persists. As a result of their efforts, the council made a number of recommendations for action that can help move toward the elimination of homelessness in Alaska.

My belief is that the best way to help someone meet the basic necessities of life is to have opportunities for job training and hence permanent employment. That is why my priority is creating employment opportunities for Alaskans by stimulating private sector investment through development of Alaska's natural resources.

I am grateful to the Lieutenant Governor, the commissioners, and other executives who served on the panel and produced this report. I thank in particular all of the citizens who participated, presented testimony, and made recommendations to the council.

I encourage Alaskans to read this report to gain insight into the complex problems surrounding homelessness in Alaska and look forward to further work on the recommendations.

Sincerely yours,

Frank H. Murkowski
Governor

October 13, 2005

Governor Frank Murkowski
Office of the Governor
PO Box 110001
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0001

Dear Governor Murkowski

On behalf of the interagency Alaska Council on Homelessness, I am pleased to transmit to you this report and recommended strategies for addressing homelessness in Alaska. As you know, the members of the council include eight department commissioners, the executive director of the Alaska Mental Health Trust, and two ex-officio members: the Lieutenant Governor and the director of the Alaska HUD office. It was my honor to serve as the chair.

Over the past 17 months, we held a number of public meetings, discussions and hearings to develop this information. Council members were well qualified for the assignment. Each is knowledgeable about the complexities of the state's homeless problem, and each addressed it from a different perspective, based on his or her professional background.

We all agreed that homelessness is a costly and serious problem. It has the potential to become critical in times of a major economic downturn or, conversely, in times of another boom like the state experienced during the 1970s. Council members also agreed that the most cost effective strategy for the state is to prevent homelessness and thereby avoid dealing with its many consequences.

Although dozens of recommendations for a state strategy were discussed, council members agreed to pare the list to a realistic handful considered affordable and ones that could be acted upon relatively quickly. You will find in this report the following recommendations:

1. Support programs that assist low income families to preserve, maintain and weatherize homes and multi-family housing, so the families can continue living in their homes and not become homeless.
2. Expand renter education programs statewide so that new renters, including young people first leaving home and rural residents relocating to urban communities, have an understanding of their obligations as a renter and of the consequences of not paying rent on time or neglecting maintenance needs.

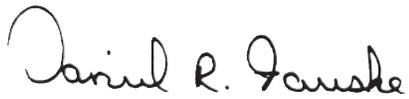


3. Create a working group of representatives from the departments of Health and Social Services, Public Safety and Corrections, the Alaska Mental Health Trust, and local community partners and stakeholders to identify policies and procedures that would provide individuals a well coordinated transition from institutionalization to independent living. Currently, about 5,000 Alaskans are released each year from a state hospital, a correctional facility or a foster care setting into homelessness status.
4. Increase the inventory of affordable housing and thereby ease the burden on community-funded shelter services by reducing homelessness. Accomplish this objective by bringing together a working group comprised of policy makers, local partners, and representatives of housing builders, financiers and providers, land use planners, Native corporations, and community and faith-based organizations to identify housing priorities and regions of the state most in need. The working group would be available to provide counsel and recommendations to the state executive and legislative branches of government.
5. Appoint a steering committee to assist the Governor and Legislature to establish an affordable housing trust that would help the state fund programs that increase the inventory of affordable housing and accomplish the recommendations to end homelessness, identified in this report.

With delivery of this report, the Interagency Council on Homelessness considers its assignment completed, and unless otherwise directed, dissolves. As the administration evaluates these recommendations and contemplates implementation, those of us who served stand ready to provide counsel and assistance, and to serve on working groups that may be formed.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve on the council. It has been a rewarding and enlightening experience for all of us. We hope that the recommendations in the report are of help to you as your administration continues to address the complex problem of Alaska's homeless population.

Sincerely,



Dan Fauske
Chair

A new 18,500-square foot Brother Francis Shelter opened in May 2005 in the same location, 1021 E. Third Avenue in Anchorage.



Introduction

It is estimated that 14,000 people experience homelessness in Alaska at some time each year. That's the equivalent of all the people in communities such as Ketchikan or Kodiak or the Bethel region living without housing. Homelessness is a complex problem surrounded by many issues in addition to housing. It is one of the most challenging domestic matters facing Alaska and the nation.

The costs of homelessness in Alaska are enormous – both in terms of human suffering and economic impact. Annually, more than \$14 million are spent on homeless services in Alaska, and include assistance with housing, health, education, social services and public safety. A 2003 study of chronic homelessness in Fairbanks, conducted by the University of Alaska Center for Alcohol and Addiction Studies, revealed that more than \$40,000 per person was spent in public intervention over a 20-month period.

Statewide strategies to address homelessness were first developed through the Alaska Coalition on Housing & Homelessness. Established in 1989, the Coalition is a partnership of faith-based and community organizations, public agencies and concerned citizens. Urban communities also have established similar networks of local partnerships, and mayoral task forces in several Alaskan communities have studied homelessness over the past 15 years. Despite these efforts, homelessness has continued to grow throughout Alaska.

Faith-based and community organizations over the years have fulfilled a critical role in providing assistance to Alaskans in need. In recognition of this, Gov. Murkowski in 2002 called upon Lt. Gov. Loren Leman to lead a task force that examined issues and ways in which the various organizations might be able to improve delivery of services and how the government might reduce hurdles that hinder this delivery. “This task force surveyed current needs in Alaska and determined that the concern voiced most often was the lack of adequate safe and affordable housing.” (Alaska Faith Based and Community Initiatives Task Force Report, February 2004.)

In April 2004, Governor Murkowski furthered his commitment to address the needs of Alaskans by joining 44 other states in appointing an interagency council on homelessness. The Alaska Council on the Homeless is comprised of eight state commissioners (from the departments of Health and Social Services; Corrections; Public Safety; Transportation and Public Facilities; Education and Early Development; Labor and Workforce Development; Military and Veterans Affairs and Commerce, Community and Economic Development) and representatives from the Governor's office, Lt. Governor's office, the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA) and the U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development (HUD). The governor designated the CEO of the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, Dan Fauske, to chair the Council and to provide the resources and staff time necessary for the Council to assess the problem and develop strategies.

A two-tiered strategy was adopted by the Council. First, the Council looked internally at the role state government should take. Following that, the Council explored ways to bring together other partners and stakeholders to identify actions that the state, federal, and local governments, along with non-profits, faith-based and private organizations, could take to end homelessness in Alaska.

The Council held a series of six meetings and formal public hearings to gather information and to formulate strategies. All meetings included the opportunity for public comment. Active participation

was also sought from a number of identified partners, including the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, the Social Security Administration, Alaska Coalition on Housing & Homelessness, Alaska Policy Academy team on Homeless Families and Youth, the Anchorage Mayor's Task Force on Homelessness and representatives of the faith and community-based providers. Meaningful insights were also shared by people who had personally experienced homelessness.

This report examines homelessness in Alaska and offers potential strategies for further consideration. The report, along with other state and local planning documents, will assist stakeholders and policy makers to create a comprehensive statewide action plan to end homelessness.

Overview of Homelessness in Alaska

How does homelessness impact the state?

Homelessness is a costly problem that threads its way throughout state systems. While only a few discrete programs are specifically related to homelessness, the needs of homeless people, families and children intersect among numerous state services. For example, homeless children will often require financial, nutritional and medical support from the Department of Health and Social Services or from state-sponsored social service partners. Additionally, these children will intersect with the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED). Not only does homelessness affect school performance, but it may also cause a reduction or channeling of federal funds for purposes outside the classroom. For example, schools are penalized for poor academic performance, and additional costs are borne by school districts to provide specialized tutoring and to transport homeless children to their home schools, no matter where they currently live in the district. During the 2004/2005 school year, the DEED reported 3,023 children were homeless or residing in inadequate housing at some time during the school term.



Covenant House staff and friends from Homeward Bound at a vigil for homeless youth.

More than 3,000 Alaska children were homeless or in inadequate housing during the school term.

State and state-supported agencies address other needs of homeless families, as well. Without adequate housing, family stability becomes precarious. Work, child care and transportation may become tenuous, due to the uncertainty of where the family will be living from one day to the next. State job reemployment services assist these families in rebuilding economic stability, while government supported shelters and case managers are often called upon for transitional support purposes. Homeless families are a priority for public and subsidized housing, and often seek help with securing permanent housing from AHFC or regional housing authorities.

A stay at Alaska Psychiatric Institute costs \$732 per day; a trip to a detox center costs \$270 per day; incarceration costs \$111 per day. By contrast, a supportive housing program costs \$70 per day.

The impact of chronic homelessness upon state services is also significant. The underlying issues that result in chronic homelessness lead to crisis and public safety interventions that are especially costly to the State. The cost for a stay at Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API) is \$732 per day. A trip to detox is \$270 per day and incarceration is \$111 per day. Prevention of homelessness is cost-effective. By contrast, placement in a supportive housing program is estimated to be only \$70 per day, and can provide early intervention to avoid these additional human and financial costs. Placements in supportive housing may also lead to reductions in the secondary costs of homelessness to the many state, federal and community-based resources.

How is homelessness defined?

The definition of homelessness varies among different federal funding sources. The definition from the McKinney-Vento Act is the most inclusive, and is used in determining eligibility for various health and education programs. The U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) provides a different and more restrictive definition. HUD defines homeless as: “an individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is

- (a) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill);



An estimated 14,000 Alaskans experience homelessness at some point each year.

- (b) an institution where the person is within one week of discharge with no identified residence or resources to obtain a residence; or
- (c) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.”

The HUD definition is not a perfect fit because it does not address several specific issues surrounding homelessness, such as homeless students or overcrowding caused by shared housing. However, the best available data on homelessness according to HUD’s definition of those who are homeless is gathered annually for HUD’s Continuum of Care process. Consequently, unless otherwise noted, the data presented in this report utilizes HUD’s definition and should be treated as a conservative estimate of number and characteristics of the population.

How many homeless are there?

At least 3,500 Alaskans are identified as homeless, based upon point-in-time surveys regularly conducted by AHFC twice each year. This total represents only those who happened to interact with a homeless enumerator on that particular survey day. In communities where shelters or other related services are unavailable, homeless persons are not likely to be counted. According to a study by the Urban Institute, (Martha R. Burt, Oct. 1, 2001) “during a year’s time, four or five times as many people experience homelessness as are homeless on any particular day.” Annual service reports from Alaska providers support this estimate, thus indicating that in the course of a year, approximately 14,000 Alaskans experience a period of homelessness.

What are their characteristics?

28 percent of Alaska’s homeless are families with children.

32 percent of Alaska’s homeless are “chronically homeless.”

Homeless Alaska Natives and African-Americans are over-represented compared to their proportion of the population.

There are many subpopulations among those who experience homelessness. These subpopulations include single men and women of all ages, single mothers with children, single fathers with children, two-parent or “blended” families with children, disabled persons, runaway or abandoned youth, victims of domestic violence and veterans. Over the last two years, the AHFC Homeless Survey reveals that approximately 28 percent of the reported households were families with children. Homelessness for many of these families may be the result of a sudden economic downturn from causes such as illness, injury, divorce or job loss. According to the Summer 2004 AHFC Homeless Survey, 32 percent of the homeless were “Chronically Homeless.” HUD defines the chronically homeless as “single individuals with a disabling condition who have been homeless for a year or more, or



Homeward Bound’s Mission is to provide the homeless chronic alcoholic with the tools needed to travel the journey home.

who have experienced at least four episodes of homelessness within three years.” In at least 50 percent of the chronic homeless cases, the “disabling” condition was mental illness and/or substance abuse.

Alaska Natives are over-represented among Alaska’s homeless. They represent 36 percent of the homeless counted over the last 10 years of the survey, but are only 19 percent of the state’s population. African-Americans are also over-represented, accounting for 8 percent of the homeless reported compared to 3 percent for the overall population in Alaska.

According to shelter providers around the state, some of the most difficult people to house are those recently released from institutions with no resources or family support and essentially nowhere to go. In a survey of inmates conducted in January 2005 by the Alaska Department of Corrections, 373 (35 percent) of the 1,067 respondents stated they either had no place identified to reside upon release, or they were certain they would enter a homeless shelter and/or live on the streets. Reports from Alaska Psychiatric Institute also indicate a 5-10 percent discharge rate each month to homelessness.

What services are currently in place?

Alaska has 1,229 emergency shelter beds, 817 transitional housing beds, 450 targeted permanent supportive housing beds.

The fundamental components of a “continuum of care” for homelessness include prevention, outreach/assessment/intake, supportive services, emergency shelter, transitional housing and permanent housing. Alaska’s current HUD-defined “Continuum of Care” inventory consists of 1,229 emergency shelter beds (including 376 secure beds for domestic violence victims), 817 transitional housing beds, and 450 permanent supportive housing beds that specifically target homeless persons.

A critical component for housing retention is the provision of supportive services that reinforce housing stability and break the cycle of homelessness for people with complex problems. Testimony from formerly homeless people overwhelmingly confirmed the value of case management, particularly during the early stages of a housing crisis when someone to help “navigate the system” is vital. Existing “housing first” programs report that private landlords are more willing to accept persons with clouded housing histories when a case manager is available to call should problems arise. The Council also recognized employment assistance, transportation, and child care as other essential elements for housing retention.

How are homeless services currently funded?

\$14 million is spent on homeless services in Alaska annually.

A combination of private and public funds is used to assist Alaska’s homeless. Annually, Alaska spends more than \$14 million for services ranging from housing, health, education, social services and public safety, as tabulated from the 2004 Continuum of Care

applications for Anchorage and the remainder of the state. Many of the emergency shelters and food pantries serving the general public were developed by faith-based organizations such as the Salvation Army, Catholic Social Services, Lutheran Social Services and St. Vincent de Paul. These agencies generally rely on private donations and government support to keep their doors open. Pitted against a community’s need for public safety, education and transportation, these shelters struggle every year to keep a line in their local government budget.

Numerous federal programs also contribute funding for services to the homeless. HUD’s Emergency Shelter Grant provided \$83,573 for Anchorage and \$119,198 for the remainder of the state for the federal fiscal year (FFY) 2004. Federal funding for domestic violence shelters, under the Victims of Crime Act, totaled \$867,100 in FFY03.

Federal funding plays a greater role in longer-term homeless assistance, most notably through the Stewart B. McKinney Act. Under this act, a combination of formula and competitive awards is made each year by the federal government to assist the homeless in Alaska. Formula awards include funds to the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development to provide continuity in the education of homeless children. In July 2004, 12 agencies throughout the state competed under HUD’s Continuum of Care process to renew 17 projects that were



Clare House serves as a temporary haven through which homeless women and children are assisted on their paths toward independence and self-respect.

originally funded in the mid- to late 1990s. These projects ranged from transitional housing for victims of domestic violence to scattered-site housing for homeless persons with mental disabilities. The most recent FFY04 award totaled \$3,574,089. To meet HUD's matching requirements, AHFC has annually awarded about \$1 million to Continuum of Care grantees.

As the recipient of a number of federal formula funds, the State of Alaska is in a position to make a concerted effort to address homelessness. Federal funds awarded through block grants all come with provisions that allow states wide discretion to determine priority programs and beneficiaries, including homeless persons. The State can also play a key role in ensuring that federal grant funding which specifically targets homeless persons such as PATH (Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness), Healthcare for the Homeless and Homeless Education are used in association with other State and local homeless programs to maximize benefits.

A growing concern among agencies in the homeless service sector is securing funding for operating and program expenses. Most of the private foundations operating in Alaska and many of the federal programs limit their awards to capital (building) projects or one-time program start-ups. The harsh reality of homelessness is that people in this situation are not in a position to pay for the services they need. Without a united effort from all sectors, Alaska cannot expect to break the cycle of homelessness.



Clare House served 452 clients in FFY04; 60 percent were children.

Strategies to End Homelessness

Major strategies emerged, including education, early crisis intervention, housing preservation and increase of affordable housing stock.

The Council conducted two fact-finding meetings and held a public hearing to examine the causes of homelessness. A list of 21 needs and issues was extracted from reports and plans generated by such groups as the Alaska Coalition on Housing & Homelessness, the Faith-Based & Community Initiatives Task Force, Continuum of Care applications and the Mental Health Trust Authority.

Throughout the planning process, Council discussions centered on the role the State of Alaska should or could play in ending homelessness. Council members were provided with strategies and recommendations contained in plans from other states and in local plans to assess best practices. In addition, the Council reviewed the draft plan created by the Alaska Policy Academy Team on Homeless Families and Youth, as well as the recently completed "Ten-Year Plan on Homelessness" for the Municipality of Anchorage. The Council also heard a presentation from the Chair of the Mayor's Task Force on Homelessness and the executive director of the Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. Also, a public hearing was conducted on April 26, 2005, so people could respond to a draft report that proposed recommendations to address homelessness, and, in some cases, to offer additional recommendations.

After assessing all the information, the Council narrowed its focus to a few central themes. Three major areas emerged as change points to ending homelessness:

1. Sufficient affordable housing;
2. Well-coordinated transition from institutionalization to independent living and
3. Homeless prevention and housing retention.

Affordable Housing

16,000 new affordable housing units are needed.

National research has shown that the supply of affordable housing is directly related to the incidence of homelessness.

According to AHFC's 2005 Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan and the 2005 Alaska Housing Needs Assessment, about 300 to 350 units of affordable housing are added annually in Alaska. But an estimated 16,000 new housing units are currently needed to meet population growth, relieve overcrowding and replace substandard housing. An annual average of 1,000 housing units are weatherized, repaired or modified for accessibility, but more than 20,000 units currently are in need of major repair. An estimated additional 25,000 units require weatherization improvements and/or accessibility modifications.

20,000 units are in need of major repair, and 25,000 units require weatherization improvements and/or accessibility modifications.

Alaska also faces challenges on the other side of the housing affordability equation – affordable rents. Alaska has relied upon a variety of federal and state programs to lower rental costs to make housing more affordable. Unfortunately, “affordable” rents are often more than the amount very low-income Alaskans can manage and various federal rental subsidy programs, as well as funds for public and Indian housing, are being significantly reduced.

Thirty-four states already have created housing trusts to supplement current funding for affordable housing development and rental subsidy programs. These states fund their trusts through unclaimed property funds, general fund appropriations and other methods. Nationwide, state housing trust funds commit \$400 million annually to provide 50,000 units of affordable housing. On average,

each housing trust fund dollar leverages eight additional dollars of housing funding.

Many state housing trust funds target specific purposes. Three states have homeless trust funds specifically addressing the needs of the homeless. These include the Georgia Trust Fund for the Homeless, Nebraska Homeless Assistance Trust Fund and Wisconsin's Interest Bearing Trust Account.

One successful multi-faceted housing trust fund is the Burlington (Vermont) Housing Trust Fund. During its ten-year history, this fund has supported the construction or rehabilitation of 750 units of low-income housing; the continuous operation, building maintenance and improvement of Way Station, a 36-bed shelter for the homeless; and the operation of Project HOME – a program that links people who have extra living space with those who are seeking affordable housing.

One important component of the Burlington Housing Trust Fund activities has been its funding support of the Burlington Community Land Trust projects providing low-income housing alternatives. Between 1984 and 2002, the Burlington Community Land Trust developed 259 affordable single-family homes and condominiums. All of these homes were sold to first-time homebuyers subject to durable controls over their occupancy and resale. These controls are designed to maintain availability and affordability for low-income households far into the future.

Over the past five years, AHFC has funded affordable rental housing development totaling more than 950 units at a total development cost of \$170 million. During this same period, state funding of \$15 million has leveraged \$155 million in federal funds – a ten-fold leveraging. That leveraging came from low-income housing tax credits and mortgage financing and it made affordable housing projects feasible. Projects included 500 units set aside for households at or below 50 percent of median family income, with an additional 250 units set aside for households at or below 60 percent of median family income. The Council recognizes the importance of leveraging federal and other funds through commitment of state funds, and knows that such leveraging is critical to increasing affordable housing stock across the state.

AHFC has funded more than 950 units of affordable rental housing over the past five years.

AHFC has also proposed a federal legislative agenda involving modifications to the federal tax code that would increase funds for affordable housing. A number of housing authorities from other states support this initiative. The federal agenda can be accessed through the Reference Guide, which can be found at the end of the report.

**Council Recommendation:
Develop a State Affordable Housing Trust**

The Council recommends the Governor and Legislature establish an affordable housing trust. A steering committee should be formed, representing public and private interests, to research options and develop a housing trust framework to present for the Governor's approval, which will maintain the affordability of housing. The steering committee should examine the various resources – statewide and nationwide – currently available to develop and operate affordable rental housing and ownership programs; develop a mission statement and performance measures for the housing trust; establish policies and procedures; determine the financing mechanism of the trust; and develop enabling legislation to be considered during the next legislative session.

Institutional Services Discharge

A growing body of research is showing significant cost savings when public funds are invested in a well-coordinated transition from institutionalization to independent living. Those leaving a state hospital, a correctional facility or a foster care setting are likely to have little or no income and lack significant social skills to make a positive transition into society. Without support from family or friends, these individuals may be vulnerable to homelessness. Often this risk is increased by lack of adequate support, or expectations to secure



Elsie entered the Homeward Bound program after spending most of her adult life on the streets of Anchorage. She graduated from the program this year and now enjoys her own apartment. She was recently reunited with her brother Ben, a counselor from Sitka, for the first time in 30 years.

housing, employment, medical and mental health services and legal assistance. Some of these individuals require substantial and long-term support to achieve a successful and lasting transition. It is estimated that more than 4,700 Alaskans are released from institutional care into homelessness every year.

It is estimated that more than 4,700 Alaskans are released from institutional care into homelessness every year.

Council Recommendation: Institutional Services Discharge

The Council recommends the State of Alaska adopt policies to reduce the likelihood of homelessness upon discharge from institutions by creating a working group comprised of representatives from the departments of Health and Social Services, Public Safety and Corrections, the Alaska Mental Health Trust, and local community partners and stakeholders. This group would evaluate the barriers to effective discharge planning and make recommendations for modifications to policies that would reduce the risk of homelessness.

Homeless Prevention/ Housing Retention

Emergency shelters are expensive and problematic for local communities. The Council unanimously agreed that one of the best ways to reduce the need for shelters is to keep homelessness from happening. From the presentations and discussions on this topic, three major strategies emerged: education, early crisis intervention, housing preservation and increase of affordable housing stock. The Council also recognized the need for adequate supports in transportation, job opportunities and, in some cases, supportive services to assure housing stability.

Renter Education

According to testimony, young people first leaving home and rural residents relocating to urban centers often have a difficult time retaining housing. They are not fully prepared for, nor do they understand the consequences of not paying rent on time or neglecting the maintenance needs of their units. To mitigate this problem, several providers around the state, such as Catholic Social Services in Anchorage and St. Vincent de Paul in Juneau, have developed successful renter education programs that cover such topics as budgeting, housing search techniques, understanding and negotiating a lease, maintenance dos-and-don'ts and skills



Homeward Bound has served 212 program participants since April 1997. Participants have repaid \$330,670 in debt previously considered unrecoverable.

for dealing with guests and roommates. AHFC currently provides free day-long seminars throughout the state to educate prospective home buyers about various aspects of buying and caring for a new home. This program could be modified easily to provide information pertinent to renters. Several other states such as Minnesota, Wisconsin, Virginia and Michigan provide renter education courses through their Cooperative Extension Service.

Council Recommendation: Expand Renter Education

The Council recommends the expansion of renter education opportunities in Alaska through existing delivery systems and educational programs, such as the Department of Education and Early Development, the University of Alaska Cooperative Extension Service, AHFC and community and faith-based groups.

Housing Preservation and Increasing Inventory of Affordable Housing

Other critical elements of homeless prevention are the preservation of existing housing stock and increasing the inventory of affordable housing. Programs that assist low-income homeowners make needed repairs or modifications, improve energy efficiency, or create additional affordable housing can ease the burden on community-funded shelter services by reducing homelessness. Additionally, support for maintenance and weatherization programs aids in reducing the rising costs of utilities and extend the life of existing homes.

Council Recommendation Long-Term: Appoint a Working Group to Continue the Discussion on Homelessness and its Solutions

The Council recommends the Governor bring together policy makers, partners from within our communities, and other stakeholders as a working group to address ongoing housing issues mentioned in this report, including the goal of expanding the affordable housing inventory and preserving existing housing stock. This working group should include housing builders, housing financiers, current housing providers, land use planners, Alaska Native corporations, and faith-based and community organizations.

The working group's primary charge should be to address community and statewide barriers and solutions to ending homelessness. It should work closely with the housing trust to encourage investments in affordable housing in areas most in need. Documents created from state and local planning efforts to address homelessness, community "best practices" and resources can be shared and used to craft an ongoing action plan that produces measurable results, and achieves the goal of ending homelessness in Alaska.

Alaska Council on the Homeless

Members

DAN FAUSKE, CEO/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CHAIR
Alaska Housing Finance Corporation

LT. GOVERNOR LOREN LEMAN

MARK ANTRIM, COMMISSIONER
Department of Corrections

MIKE BARTON, COMMISSIONER
ERIC TAYLOR, MANAGER OF STATEWIDE PLAN & TRANSIT
Department of Transportation & Public Facilities

COLLEEN BICKFORD, ANCHORAGE FIELD OFFICE DIRECTOR
U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development

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Alaska Council on the Homeless

(l to r) Eric Taylor, Mark Antrim, William Tandeske, Jeff Jesse, Karleen Jackson, Colleen Bickford, Dennis DeWitt, Loren Lemman, Dan Fauske, Roger Sampson and Jerry Beale.

Reference Guide

Links to the following information can be found at www.ahfc.us/homeless/homeless.cfm#reference.

- A. 2004 Gaps Analysis for the Continuum of Care, Balance of State
- B. 2005 Policy Academy for Improving Access to Mainstream Services for Families with Children Experiencing Homelessness Action Plan
- C. Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Strategic Plan on Housing
- D. Alaska Wage/Rent Disparity Chart
- E. Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan for the State of Alaska, 2005 - 2010
- F. "Costs of Serving Homeless Individuals in Nine Cities," Corporation for Supportive Housing, November 2004.
- G. Continuum of Care Housing Activity Charts
- H. Continuum of Care Service Activity Chart
- I. Fair Market Rent Chart
- J. Faith-Based & Community Initiatives Task Force
- K. Governor's Administrative Order No. 214 forming the Alaska Council on Homeless
- L. Homeless Funding Matrix
- M. AHFC Homeless Surveys
- N. Alaska Council on the Homeless minutes and public hearing proceedings
- O. Municipality of Anchorage Ten Year Plan on Homelessness
- P. "Innovative Services for Alaska's Homeless Persons with Mental Illness," Bernard Segal, PH.D., Center for Alcohol and Addiction Studies, University of Alaska, 2003.
- Q. AHFC federal legislative agenda for affordable housing
- R. "Keeping Alaskans Out of the Cold," State of Alaska, Report to Governor Frank Murkowski, Recommended Strategies to Address Homelessness, October 2005.

