

## Alaska's Plan to End Long Term Homelessness 2016 Progress Report

The Alaska Council on the Homeless adopted *Alaska's Plan to End Long Term Homelessness* (Plan) in October 2015. The Plan is designed as a framework for communities to utilize in their local planning efforts around issues of homelessness. It is organized around five priorities; housing development, supportive services, education, engagement and policy, and data. Within each priority are recommended strategies for communities and state agencies to guide progress in addressing a specific priority.

This progress report covers the first year of the Plan from July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016 with accomplishments reported by communities and state agencies, including the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), Department of Corrections (DOC), Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC), and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA).

**Priority 1: Housing Development** *Every Alaskan should have access to an affordable, accommodating, and safe place to call home.*

### **Strategy: Expand Housing Options (Construction/Rehab/Rental Assistance)**

- AHFC's Greater Opportunities for Affordable Living (GOAL) program provided funding to construct 141 new units of housing for low-income Alaskans in the communities of Anchorage, Juneau, Wasilla, Seward, Ketchikan, and Ninilchik. Funding was also provided to rehabilitate 46 units through the GOAL program.
- A redesign of the Anchorage Continuum of Care Sponsor Based Rental Assistance Program added over 20 vouchers for persons experiencing chronic homelessness.
- AHFC in partnership with the DOC provided Tenant Based Rental Assistance to 115 persons re-entering the community in locations outside of Anchorage.
- AHFC received 24 new vouchers through the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program for a total of 271 vouchers to assist Alaska's homeless veterans.
- Providence Health and Services has partnered with the Municipality of Anchorage, United Way, and the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness to provide financial support for rapid re-housing activities and a landlord risk pool.

### **Strategy: Increase Pool of Operating Support to Preserve Existing Housing Stock**

- AMHTA and AHFC supported permanent housing for 277 households across the state through the Special Needs Housing Grant Program.
- The DHSS and the AMHTA partnered with the Technical Assistance Collaborative to develop the Alaska Supportive Housing Plan which identifies need and proposes a variety of integrated housing priorities.

### **Strategy: Increase Number of Units Available to Priority Populations**

- Collaborations in Anchorage will result in 20 new units of housing for specialty populations through the John Thomas Building Project.
- The United Way of Anchorage in partnership with the Municipality of Anchorage received a technical assistance and capacity development grant to conduct a feasibility analysis and develop the capacity to implement a *Pay for Success* social investment bond program focused on chronic homelessness.

### **Additional Accomplishments**

- The DHSS and Municipality of Anchorage provided support to retain Sitka Place, a 16 unit Housing First Program for chronically homeless individuals.
- The Municipality of Anchorage developed a Tenant Based Rental Assistance program for homeless persons which is expected to support 10-12 households.
- AHFC in partnership with the DHSS Office of Children's Services provided rental assistance to 20 youth transitioning out of foster care.
- The AMHTA provided grant funding to the Nome Emergency Shelter Team to provide supported housing for individuals participating in outpatient rehabilitation services in partnership with Norton Sound Health Corporation.
- The AMHTA provided funding to support the Juneau Housing First Project.
- The AMHTA and the DHSS have partnered to provide targeted technical assistance to supportive housing providers to address challenges in operating supportive housing programs.
- Through the Section 811 Project Based Rental Assistance Program, the DHSS and AHFC have partnered to develop a rental assistance and supportive services program for 200 extremely low income persons with disabilities.
- The DHSS and AHFC partnered to provide rental assistance to 150 of Alaska's most vulnerable, homeless individuals in multiple communities throughout the state through the Moving Home Program.

***Priority 2: Supportive Services Individuals and families experiencing or at-risk of homelessness should have access to all eligible services and supports.***

### **Strategy: Increase Funding and Sources of Supportive Services in Underserved Areas**

- The AMHTA provided the state's share of expanding Medicaid which provided individuals who previously did not qualify for Medicaid (adult childless males) with access to health care services through Medicaid.
- The DHSS supported the CHOICES Assertive Community Action (ACT) team in Anchorage to provide multi-disciplinary support for 44 homeless adults with serious mental illness and/or co-occurring serious mental illness and substance use disorders.

### **Strategy: Increase Income and Employment Opportunities for Persons in Transition**

- The AMHTA in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Services assisted 5 Supported Employment Programs around the state.
- The Mat-Su Job Center has dedicated a position to specifically work with re-entry clients through a partnership with the Mat-Su Coalition on Housing and Homelessness.
- The AMHTA and the Block Foundation partnered to provide start-up funding for Brother Francis Shelter in Anchorage to provide Individual Placement and Support Services which is an evidence based best practice for supported employment for individuals with severe mental illness.
- The AMHTA, Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and DOC partnered to create a liaison position between the Department of Workforce Development and Department of Corrections to work on eliminating employment barriers for individuals returning to the community.

### **Strategy: Increase Outreach Services**

- The DHSS, in partnership with the AMHTA supported RurAL CAP's Intensive Case Management Program which provides outreach, case management, and other supports for homeless individuals experiencing serious substance disorders. Twenty-one individuals have formally been enrolled in services and an additional 29 individuals have received outreach services through this program.

### **Strategy: Maintain and/or Expand Emergency Lodging Options as Needed**

- AHFC and the AMHTA supported 17 emergency shelters statewide through the Basic Homeless Assistance Program.
- The Municipality of Anchorage approved the Downtown Soup Kitchen as an extension of the Brother Francis Shelter to provide the first women-only space for single adults.

### **Additional Accomplishments**

- The AMHTA and DHSS, in partnership with key stakeholders, have developed a strategic plan to address the development of employment opportunities for all persons through a contractual agreement with the Institute for Community Inclusion.
- The Municipality of Anchorage, in partnership with Alaska WorkSource, implemented a Work Van Program for persons experiencing homelessness.
- The AMHTA provided funding for a culinary training program in Fairbanks and Anchorage modeled after the Catalyst Kitchen which is a social enterprise model working to provide training and employment opportunities for chronically homeless individuals.

- The AMHTA provided funding to the YWCA to develop and provide an ongoing economic literacy program to educate individuals on budgeting and support them to better understand their personal financial circumstances.
- The AMHTA provided funding to Anchorage Community Mental Health Services to develop and implement their supported employment vocational program for transitional aged youth and adults.
- The AMHTA and the Division of Vocational Rehab have partnered to provide startup funds to more than 10 agencies across the state to provide pre-employment services to ensure individuals have the skills and resources needed to seek and become employed.
- Anchorage partners and service providers are meeting weekly to coordinate outreach services to persons experiencing homelessness.
- New partnerships were created in Anchorage to provide emergency shelter beds for youth and single adults during the winter months when existing shelters were at capacity.
- MY House, Knik House, and Pacific Northwest Adult and Teen Challenge have added emergency housing beds to their programs in the Mat-Su Valley.
- The AMHTA and DOC continue to partner on the Discharge Incentive Grant Program that provides housing placement and services support to individuals re-entering the community.
- The AMHTA supported efforts to increase the number of certified benefits counselors throughout the state and developed an interactive website, DB101, so individuals can generate a customized benefits analysis.

***Priority 3: Education, Engagement, and Policy Community and statewide education, engagement, and policy efforts among stakeholders and interested parties is central to addressing issues of homelessness.***

#### **Strategy: Landlord Engagement, Education, and Support**

- The Municipality of Anchorage, Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness, and the United Way of Anchorage, launched Anchorage's first landlord liaison program designed to engage and educate landlords to increase the available pool of rental units for all agencies in Anchorage.
- The AMHTA provided financial support for Alaska Legal Services to deliver Fair Housing Advocacy and Education throughout Alaska.
- The Mat-Su Coalition on Housing and Homelessness hosted two Landlord Appreciation Luncheons to thank landlords and property managers who partner with the coalition to support homeless and special needs populations.

### **Strategy: Encourage Housing Policy at the Local Level**

- The AMHTA partnered with the Municipality of Anchorage to create a Housing and Homeless Coordinator Position within the Mayor’s office to lead the municipality’s efforts to reduce homelessness.
- The Mat-Su Coalition on Housing and Homelessness in collaboration with the Mat-Su Borough Planning Department supported Resolution 2016-025 which is “A Resolution Supporting a Coordinated Public/Private Partnership on Housing and Housing Affordability in The Matanuska-Susitna Borough.”

### **Strategy: Support Local Housing Organizations to Coordinate Planning Services and Reporting**

- The AMHTA and AHFC support the Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness Executive Director Position to provide statewide education, engagement, and policy efforts on issues of housing and homelessness.
- The DHSS and the AMHTA support the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness Director Position to further community efforts to address issues of homelessness.

**Priority 4: Prevention** *Prevention support is essential to mitigating episodes of homelessness.*

### **Strategy: Eliminate Discharge to Homeless Shelters and the Streets from State Institutions**

- Partnerships with the DOC has increased opportunities for service providers to share their programs and reentry services with clients prior to releasing to the community.
- Catholic Social Services and Providence Health and Services designed a medical respite pilot program to be implemented at the Brother Francis Shelter in Anchorage.

### **Strategy: Improve Outreach and Linkages to Housing Resources and Services**

- The AMHTA in partnership with the DOC provided support for Re-Entry Coalitions in Fairbanks, Mat-Su, Anchorage, and Juneau to develop and implement a gap analysis and needs assessment to create a comprehensive plan for reducing recidivism and ensuring service supports are available.
- The Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness in partnership with stakeholders and service providers designed and launched the Anchorage Coordinated Entry System.

### **Strategy: Maintain Centralized Pool of Prevention Resources**

- Over 1,300 households were provided prevention assistance by 24 organizations statewide through AHFC’s Basic Homeless Assistance Program in partnership with the AMHTA.

## **Additional Accomplishments**

- Annually, communities throughout the state conduct a Project Homeless Connect event which connects persons experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness with service providers.
- The DHSS supported the CHOICES Assertive Community Action (ACT) team in Anchorage to provide multi-disciplinary support for 44 homeless adults with serious mental illness and/or co-occurring serious mental illness and substance use disorders.
- The DHSS supported RurAL CAP's Intensive Case Management Program which provides outreach, case management, and other supports for homeless individuals experiencing serious substance disorders. Twenty-one individuals have formally been enrolled in services and an additional 29 individuals have received outreach services through this program.
- Providence Health and Services has partnered with the Municipality of Anchorage, United Way, and the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness to provide support for coordinated entry transition coordinators, a case manager, and outreach support.

***Priority 5: Data*** *Timely and accurate data is essential to making housing and homeless policy decisions.*

### **Strategy: Expand Homeless Service Provider HMIS Coverage**

- The Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness, Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness, and AHFC have partnered with the Institute for Community Alliances, HMIS System Administrator, to increase HMIS utilization. The implementation of coordinated entry, data sharing, and increased outreach efforts resulted in 23 new organizations and 73 new programs reporting data in HMIS in SFY 2016.

### **Strategy: Develop Strategies for Gathering Homeless Data from Organizations Not Connected to HMIS**

- The DEED gathers information from school districts throughout the state to generate a yearly report on homeless children and youth.
- The Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness, Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness, and AHFC continue to gather homeless data from organizations not connected to the system through the annual Point-in-Time Count and Housing Inventory Chart.

### **Strategy: Coordinate Community Prevention Services**

- Community prevention services are coordinated in some communities through AHFC's Basic Homeless Assistance Program.