



Conference Agenda

Who do we think we are to be able to end homelessness? How do we expect to accomplish this goal with budgets being cut left and right? Where does all this change in the homeless system leave the homeless individuals and families? This conference will focus on answering some of these key questions as communities struggle to meet the need, change gears to strengthen the system and adhere to funding requirements all at the same time. We will discuss useful strategies and provide an opportunity to learn from your peers across the state as CoCs in New Jersey work to keep up with the changing system.

Opening Plenary Panel – Superstorm Sandy Recovery: Resources to Strengthen Your System

With resources shrinking, how can we tap into other resources to strengthen the homeless services system? Superstorm Sandy devastated many areas in New Jersey, destroying housing stock, straining an already tenuous local economy and pushing more people into homelessness. Recovery funds provided in response to Sandy are one of the few areas where we have an influx of resources in an otherwise tight funding environment. While many federal recovery dollars are reserved for the hardest hit counties, there are opportunities for all New Jersey communities to tap into those resources to find creative ways to strengthen their system. Speakers will share information about recovery funding available through the state of New Jersey. The session will provide creative strategies to tap into recovery funding and use resources to support the homeless service system.

Session 1

Governance

What is the value of managing your homeless services from a system perspective versus a programmatic perspective? How do we move towards a system view as opposed to a programmatic view of the homeless system? Thinking through the decision making process for your homeless service system and planning activities is key in moving forward with a coordinated approach to ending homelessness. Communities across the state have begun to work through these critical issues and some have made great strides in establishing an effective decision-making process and governance structure for their system. In this session, presenters will share their successes in redefining operating procedures and structure. The session will include discussion of various governance strategies and action plans being developed in New Jersey.

Resource Realignment

How do we end homelessness with no new money coming into the system? In a tight budget environment with federal and state government cuts and more stringent HUD requirements, CoCs are being forced to reexamine how they continue to fund their homeless service system. Identifying new funding sources and restructuring the existing models may be necessary to ensure sustainability for the future. Presenters will highlight opportunities to include funders in the CoC planning process and discuss innovative ways to realign and leverage local funding to attract new sources and improve the impact of your local system.

Coordinated Assessment

If we are truly functioning as a coordinated system, how do we streamline the system intake/entry process? Communities across the country have developed creative ways to structure system access and have seen impressive outcomes as new intake and assessment processes are put into place. What are the benefits of a coordinated or centralized intake/assessment process? How do communities develop these systems? National experts will discuss local strategies that communities can use to develop their own successful coordinated intake and walk through next steps in the process.

Afternoon Plenary - Open Discussion

Can We End Homelessness

Across the nation communities are developing and implementing strategic plans to prevent and end homelessness. At the federal level resources are being focused to help accomplish the goals outlined in the Opening Doors: the Federal Strategic Plan to prevent and end homelessness. As communities work towards implementing changes to their homeless service system we must continually ask Can we End homelessness. How do we accomplish this task in a time of dwindling resources? How can the required HEARTH changes help communities accomplish the goal of ending homelessness? This session will be an open conversation about what it really takes to end homelessness in New Jersey communities.

Session 2

Mergers

What is the point of merging with another CoC? If CoCs merge, what does that mean for the service area of their programs? What critical questions should you consider? Many communities are considering the merger question now, but what are the practical steps to enacting a merger? How does merging impact planning and service provision? This workshop will share lessons learned from communities that have completed the merger process. Presenters will offer guidance on the benefits and challenges along with the processes used to explore, develop and finalize mergers.

Strategic Planning

Who should be engaged in the homeless planning process? How do we attract new partners in the planning process? In this time of limited resources, community-wide and cross-government strategic planning is a pivotal step in ending homelessness and can result in demonstrable decreases in homelessness and cost savings when the plans are well-crafted and successfully implemented. Only through collaboration at all levels, can communities realistically expect to end homelessness. Targeted planning activities should help communities set ambitious goals, identify needs and gaps, develop strategies to meet these needs and gaps, create public-private investment in the strategies, monitor progress, and adjusted the course when needed. Presenters will discuss models for how communities can organize themselves to create comprehensive solutions that prevent and end homelessness.

Evaluating Your System/Determining Need

“Data equals dollars”! “Data saves lives”! How do we move towards data driven planning? How do we develop an inclusive and comprehensive system evaluation process? In order for CoCs to allocate resources and make decisions that effectively address the needs of the homeless in their communities, they must be able to accurately discern what areas, populations, and programs should be prioritized. They must also find ways to monitor the effectiveness of programs operating in their system. With cuts in funding at various levels, it is even more imperative that communities harness the power of their data: HMIS, Housing Inventory Counts, Point-In-Time Counts, and community-wide input to shape a system that not only targets the areas of greatest need but also assesses and corrects areas of poor performance. Presenters will discuss how data can be utilized for strategic planning purposes beyond reporting.