Monarch Housing Associates NJCounts 2018
Best Practices for Ending Homelessness

Across New Jersey, government and the homeless services system are implementing the best practices to end homelessness. The State of New Jersey needs increased federal funding to ensure that New Jersey continues to make progress in ending homelessness.

Housing First

Housing First is an evidence based best practice designed to end homelessness and support recovery by housing individuals as quickly as possible and then wrapping services around them as needed. This housing model proves effective in housing a wide variety of homeless population subsets including chronically homeless households and families and the general homeless population. Within this model, housing is not contingent upon participation in services and services provided are designed to promote housing stability. The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) invests significantly in Housing First as a solution to chronic homelessness in New Jersey.

Bergen County has been the first county in New Jersey to end Veteran Homelessness and the first county in the United States to end chronic homelessness. This has been achieved through using the Housing First Model throughout the Continuum of Care (CoC) along with other bet practices in ending homelessness.

In Middlesex County, Coming Home of Middlesex County, a non-profit organization, was awarded 45 State Rental Assistance Program (SRAP) vouchers for the chronically homeless by the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. Thirty-four of these vouchers have been leased up. The remaining eleven vouchers have been issued and clients receiving the vouchers are in the housing search process.

Rapid Re-Housing

The Rapid Re-Housing strategy proves successful in helping communities cost effectively reduce homelessness. Homeless households entering the emergency shelter and transitional housing system immediately receive services to connect them with permanent housing. Once they locate housing, households receive temporary rental assistance and short term, intensive case management to help them stabilize and maintain their housing.

New Jersey uniquely uses Emergency Assistance (EA) funds to provide intensive case management to households placed in permanent housing through Temporary Rental Assistance (TRA) and created a statewide opportunity to implement rapid re-housing.

In Mercer County, the Mercer County Board of Social Services utilizes a single point of entry model to assess and prioritize rapid rehousing resources for families. The Board of Social Services commits to intensive case management, wraparound services, and linkage to other community supports to ensure success. Community leaders embrace the rapid rehousing model and dedicate resources for housing assistance and client centered inter-agency collaboration.

For more information contact:

Richard Brown, Monarch Housing	908-272-5363 ext. 225	rbrown@monarchhousing.org
Kate Kelly, Monarch Housing	908-272-5363 ext. 226	kkelly@monarchhousing.org

Centralized and/or Coordinated Assessment Systems

Centralized/Coordinated Assessment/Entry/Intake paves the way for more efficient homeless assistance systems by:

- Helping people move through the system faster (by reducing the amount of time people spend moving from program to program before finding the right match);
- Reducing new entries into homelessness (by consistently offering prevention and diversion resources upfront, reducing the number of people entering the system unnecessarily); and
- Improving data collection and quality and providing accurate information on what kind of assistance consumers need.

Coordinated assessment offers a system-wide process and serves any and all populations. Systems may accomplish coordinated assessment using a centralized phone hotline (e.g. a 2-1-1), a single physical point of assessment (through an emergency shelter or a dedicated assessment center, for example) or a decentralized coordinated system (with multiple assessment points all employing the same assessment and referral process).

Bergen County operates a One Stop Facility including shelter, nutrition program, on-site services and 24 hour availability through a government-nonprofit and faith based collaboration.

In Middlesex County, the Coordinated Assessment System has helped Coming Home of Middlesex County and its partners uniformly assess the homeless, create a by-name list of the chronically homeless, homeless veterans, and all other individuals experiencing homelessness, and prioritize homeless individuals for the most appropriate resources without "overserving" them. Since inception in at the end of 2015, Middlesex County has achieved "Functional Zero" for veterans homelessness and permanently housed over 100 homeless households, of which approximately 75% were chronically homeless.

Prioritizing Homelessness by Public Housing Authorities

Setting public housing authority (PHA) priorities for homelessness directs rental assistance vouchers to households with the greatest housing need and saves money by keeping households out of the shelter system.

In a priority system, referrals for homeless households come from pre-approved organizations. The referring organization verifies homeless eligibility and keeps current referral information. The referring organization can be required to follow up with and provide services to the household for one year. To be fair to those already on a waiting list, a cap of 20% for homeless households can be set.

The Housing Authority of Bergen County gives tge Bergen County Health, Housing and Human Services Center 20% of its vouchers to assist homeless individuals.   Bergen County uses a by name list to triage individuals and families in need of housing based on vulnerability and a low to no barrier shelter that is housing focused.