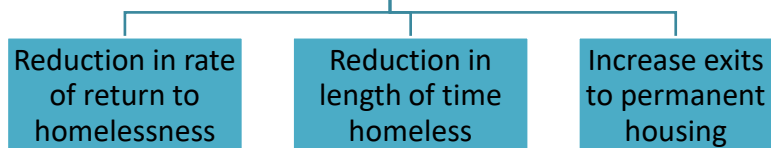


PA-603 COC – 2021- 2024 STRATEGIC PLANNING TOOL

The PA-603 Steering Committee is committed to the goal of ending homelessness in Beaver County by operating a system of partners that quickly identifies, engages, and rehuses households who face a housing crisis. The Steering Committee will use this tool in addition to the Consolidated Plan and Annual Action plans to guide their decision making over the course of the next 3 years (2021-2024). It will be updated periodically as determined necessary by data and outcomes.

METRICS OF SUCCESS



STRATEGIES

1. Monitor system and program outcome data regularly and develop strategies for improvement.
2. Ensure coordinated entry into the homeless system with an order of prioritization, efficiency, and equity
3. Engage more landlords in our efforts
4. Address disparities (racial, gender, abilities) in referrals and outcomes
5. Continue to build diverse partnerships in our work
6. Increase employment and income opportunities
7. Create an affordable housing collaboration
8. Develop strategies to address gaps in services including seeking new funding.

GAPS IN SERVICE

1. Lack of affordable housing options
2. Disparate outcomes
3. Wait times that lengthen time homeless
4. Lack of case management/supports both pre and post housing placement (peer, CM for non-disabled households, open table, FGDM type concepts etc)
5. Memorandums of Understanding with critical partners
6. Housing needs of teens and young adults
7. Housing needs of people exiting jail/prison
8. Housing needs of elderly homeless
9. Housing needs of people with complex MH



PA-603 Continuum of Care Strategic Plan to End Homelessness In Beaver County, PA

PURPOSE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING TOOL

The Strategic Planning Tool is meant to be used a reference to guide decision making and to help make funding decisions. It is used by the CoC Governing Board, the CoC Coordinator, and the Collaborative Applicant. Entities who apply for some homeless funds are asked to structure their proposals around the needs identified in this document. The Governing Board reviews the Strategic Planning Tool annually and formally updates it every 3 years. Input is gathered from CoC and ESG funded programs and from Housing & Homeless Coalition members. The CoC Coordinator also provides data to inform the process.

CONTEXT OF HOMELESSNESS IN BEAVER COUNTY

PA-603 CoC is made up of partners working in coordination with various housing programs to end homelessness in Beaver County. Ending homelessness means the experience of homelessness is a rare occurrence and when it does occur it is brief and non-recurring. The Housing & Homeless Coalition is comprised of 280 distinct service and resource partners and advocates. Of these partners approximately 50 regularly attend monthly partner meetings. 15 different programs provide housing to homeless people and include: 3 Permanent Supportive Housing programs, 2 Transitional Housing programs, 6 Rapid Rehousing programs, and 5 Emergency Shelters. These housing programs provide 365 beds for people who are homeless (2023 HIC). On the night of January 23, 2023, 94.5% of those beds were filled (345 people). This is the second year the number of people has decreased and is similar to pre-pandemic levels of 330 people reported on the 2020 HIC. Numbers peaked at 444 people during the height of the pandemic in 2021 as reported on that year's HIC. Length of time homeless has steadily decreased over the last two years which is slightly surprising given the extraordinarily tight affordable housing market (FY 2021 and 2022 System Performance Measures). In fact, in 2022 the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania estimated that Beaver County only has 57 affordable housing units for every 100 extremely low-income households.

METRICS OF SUCCESS

The PA-603 CoC has a wealth of data to determine progress toward the goal of ending homelessness in Beaver County. The Governing Board has adopted the three metrics indicated on the Tool to determine progress toward meeting that goal. These metrics further guide the Governing Board's planning efforts and their development of strategies to improve performance and overall progress toward the goal. The chart below demonstrates these outcomes over the last four years.

Metric of Success	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022
Avg length of time homeless for ES	76 days	77 days	60 days	66 days
Avg length of time homeless for ES and TH	99 days	125 days	74 days	70 days
Exits to PH from ES, TH, RRH	44% (339 people)	49% (347 people)	48% (380 people)	51% (395 people)
Exits to PH or maintenance of PH from PSH	96% (213 people)	95% (231 people)	98% (196 people)	91% (197 people)
Returns to Homelessness	15% (62 people)	16% (68 people)	16% (70 people)	15% (64 people)

ANALYSIS OF METRICS OF SUCCESS

Comparing FY 2022 to FY 2019, PA-603 CoC has decreased the average length of time homeless by 10 days for ES and by 29 days for ES & TH combined. Exits to PH from ES, TH, and RRH increased by 7% since 2019. Exits to PH (or maintenance of PH) from PSH decreased by 5% from 2019 to 2022 and needs further analysis to develop strategies to address this decline. Returns to homelessness have remained relatively stable.

STRATEGIES

The Strategies identified on the Strategic Planning Tool will advance the goal of ending homelessness as described below. The numbers correspond with the strategies numbered above.

1. Monitoring data enables the CoC to gauge its progress toward the goal of ending homelessness. The CoC needs to develop a formal process for this analysis and for developing strategies to enhance this progress. The Governing Board is currently taking this issue under consideration.
2. Fair and equitable access to CoC services will help ensure efficient and effective service delivery to all homeless households. Coordinated Entry (CE) has recently implemented the referral system through HMIS thereby expediting access to the housing programs. The CoC is also in the process of updating the CE tool to reflect changing needs and to be more inclusive and respectful. The Lived Homeless Experience committee is also providing insight into this effort.
3. Landlords are a critical partner in quickly housing homeless households and for providing PH options upon exit. Although our programs tend to have strong partnerships with many landlords, the CoC does not have a formal process to recognize those efforts. Further, there is very limited landlord representation on the Housing & Homeless Coalition. Currently one landlord regularly attends the monthly Coalition meeting and she is also an active member of ACRE (the local landlord association). Enhancing efforts to invite more landlords to the monthly meeting would be beneficial.

4. The CoC is aware of disparities in how different people enter the CoC and move through our CoC. While CoC partners are aware that many systemic factors have an impact on these disparities, they also want to determine which factors are within their control so they can address them. Currently a cohort of partners is attending a HUD Community Workshop series to review CoC data for disparities and to develop strategies to address them. This cohort intends to develop a local committee to continue this work.
5. The CoC recognizes that no two homeless situations are the same; therefore, households benefit from different combinations of supports and services to resolve their unique housing crises. To do this, we need broad partnerships of diverse services and resources, and across sectors. We currently have 280 entities represented in our Housing & Homeless Coalition with approximately 50-60 who regularly attend the monthly partner meeting. We are always inviting new partners into the work. And current partners are encouraged to invite new people as well. Since they are out navigating the resources, they often encounter new people who could play a stabilizing role in homeless situations. This enables the CoC to grow its membership every year and continue to offer the unique complement of services from which a household facing a housing crisis may benefit.
6. The CoC recognizes stable income as a significant factor in achieving long-term housing stability. CoC partners do coordinate with job training and education resources and the CoC Coordinator is in the process of growing these efforts. The housing programs also screen households for other sources of income for which they may be eligible, and they work to connect the households with these resources. Our CoC funded programs increased income by 5% for stayers in the last year (FY 2022 System Performance Measures). However, these same programs saw a 5% reduction in income for those households who left the program during the last year (FY 2022 System Performance Measures). It is worth noting that the FY 2022 numbers show significant progress compared to the previous year when there was an 11% decrease in income for stayers and a 7% decrease in income for leavers. This issue will continue to be addressed by the programs and the CoC will continue to pull in partners to assist.
7. As detailed above, Beaver County continues to face an affordable housing shortage. Partners have requested an affordable housing collaboration to help develop more affordable housing in the County. Also, the County received \$2 million to develop affordable housing for homeless people and is currently reviewing 3 proposals for implementation.
8. The CoC has identified several gaps in vital services and is committed to developing strategies and funding to address them. Requests for Proposals for homeless funds include the Strategic Plan and require that proposals address it. This ensures that new funding is being directed at the identified gaps. Further strategies include identifying relevant partners and experts to address the gaps, considering reallocation of funds as needs change, securing new funds, and learning best practices for addressing the gaps.

GAPS IN SERVICE

The CoC Coordinator, CoC partners, and the Governing Board identified these 9 gaps in services as having a negative impact on ending homelessness in Beaver County. Each is detailed below according to the number of the gap as listed above.

1. Beaver County only has 57 affordable housing units for every 100 extremely low-income households. This shortage impacts how long a homeless household remains homeless while looking for housing. It also lengthens the time in a program while a household looks for affordable housing when ready for exit. And finally, as a household may need to move or is evicted, the lack of affordable housing makes it more likely that the household will become homeless again.
2. The CoC is committed to embedding equity into our programs so that all homeless households have equal access to the appropriate level of housing supports and within reasonable timelines, and the opportunity to establish long term stable housing without returns to homelessness.
3. Many factors impact the length of time a household remains homeless - limited affordable housing options, insufficient case management support, delayed referrals, poor communication between partners etc. The CoC has implemented three new strategies to reduce the time homeless. First, the new Men's Emergency Shelter will streamline supports to men in the shelter thereby shortening the length of time that they need shelter. Second, Coordinated Entry is now referring homeless households directly to the programs with openings via HMIS. And finally, Coordinated Entry has recently streamlined the process to upload client information into a shared, secure depository for the accepting programs thereby expediting the housing programs ability to engage new households.
4. Partners have identified the need for more case management support after a homeless household is housed. The CoC recognizes that household challenges to housing do not disappear with housing alone. For long term housing stability ongoing case management support is needed – even if only as a safety net to prevent returns to homelessness. Partners have also highlighted the need for case management for people without behavioral health challenges as this population is often not eligible for traditional case management services.
5. PA-603 is a stand alone CoC within the geographical boundaries of Beaver County, PA. Beaver County is a small county where many partners have worked on the issue of homelessness for extended periods of time. This means that partnering is often seamless and non-contractual. However, CoC partners recognize the value in formalizing these partnerships so that consistent service is rendered. There is also value in being able to point to these formal partnerships when applying for funding and when demonstrating the cohesion within our CoC partnerships.
6. Children under 18 years of age do not have the option for emancipation in Beaver County. This means that unaccompanied children are still viewed as part of a family unit by our Child Welfare partner. Landlords are not likely to rent to persons under the age of 18. And those aged 18-21 often struggle with maintaining independent living initially. We work to address this with supportive services, but programs tailored to meet the needs of unaccompanied children and young adults are needed to better meet their unique needs. The CoC Coordinator is in conversation with our Child Welfare partner and other CoC partners to address this critical gap.
7. People leaving jail face many challenges to secure housing including a criminal history that often serves as a barrier to housing. We currently have an agency who connects with people in jail who are readying for release. This enables the incarcerated person to start working on housing

before they are out in the community with no money and limited supports. This population could benefit from expanding this program and/or other programs similar to it.

8. Elderly households face many challenges to secure housing including but not limited to low incomes and the need for in-home supports to live safely and healthfully. Partnering with our Office on Aging and other elderly focused service partners enables the CoC to bring specialized supports to these households but there continues to be a gap for those elderly adults with complex medical and behavioral health needs.

9. Our CoC continues to struggle with a small segment of the population who does not meet the criteria for institutional residential settings but who face many emotional and behavioral challenges to living safely, healthfully, and independently in the community. The CoC works very closely with Beaver County Behavioral Health and numerous other behavioral health treatment providers, but stably housing households with complex behavioral health needs remains a very real challenge in the CoC.

CONCLUSION

The Strategic Plan is meant to guide the CoC's efforts toward the goal of ending homelessness in Beaver County. It identifies the measures that are used to gauge progress toward that goal and provides data to demonstrate that progress. It highlights gaps in services that slow that progress, and it outlines strategies to fill those gaps. The Strategic Plan is formally updated every 3 years by the Governing Board and reviewed annually (by the Governing Board and the Housing & Homeless Coalition) and updated as needed. The CoC Coordinator amasses input from partners throughout the year and pulls data to further inform the process for updating the plan. As the Lived Homeless Experience committee continues to grow, they too will review the Strategic Plan and provide input. Anyone with input or questions on the Strategic Plan may reach out at any time to the CoC Coordinator, Dina Ciabattoni, at ciabattodina@gmail.com or 724.987.0714.