

Plan on Homelessness

Executive Summary

In January 2004, Mayor Mark Begich appointed 24 Anchorage residents representing diverse community sectors to form the Mayor's Task Force on Homelessness. Their task was to study homelessness in Anchorage and develop a ten-year plan to address it, and to complete the process by the end of 2004. The Task Force's final report presents a "housing first" plan to reduce homelessness. This assumes that assistance for any other aspect of an individuals' life will be less successful if he or she is without safe and affordable housing, so housing must come first. The plan also seeks to reduce the real and perceived negative impacts of people's lack of housing on our community's economy, quality of life and safety. The following summarizes the Task Force's work, including a vision, goals and ten-year action steps.

Vision

In 10 years, the homeless of Anchorage will be connected with a way to secure safe and affordable housing within three months of first contact with any homeless services provider.

Goals

- **Housing:** Develop 500 new housing units affordable to households at or below 50 percent of the median income.
- **Targeted Case Intervention:** Provide adequate support services for individuals and families to survive and succeed on their own or in the least restrictive environment of their choice.
- **Public Policy:** Identify and eliminate statutory, regulatory, policy and other barriers and, educate the public about homelessness.
- **Information Management:** Develop and implement a coordinated and comprehensive intake, eligibility, discharge, and housing barriers assessment system.

Action Steps

Action steps and performance measures in the plan are written for one- three- five- and ten-year time frames to achieve the vision and goals. Implementation of these action steps will require two fundamental changes in the way the Anchorage community approaches homelessness:

- Service providers must change the way they do business to emphasize "housing first"

This will involve developing the information technology and the willingness on the part of service providers to cooperate with one another to efficiently and effectively address individuals' and families' housing barriers. Specifically, this means keeping referral information up to date, learning the details about other

programs' requirements and resources, making and accepting appropriate referrals, changing individual programs to meet changing community needs, and participating in active outreach outside of their traditional place of service (going out to homeless camps, finding cars where families live, visiting other agency's gathering places).

- Planners, funders and policy makers must change their processes and rules to provide information, funding, and requirements that result in "housing first"

Planners will need to provide real-time feedback to service providers on their performance on an on-going basis. Training on how to participate in the homelessness service provider network will need to be on-going, and a centralized place for maintaining web-based referral and information systems will need to be identified and funded. Funders and policy makers will need to be responsive to the effectiveness of programs and organizations in their contribution "housing first". Policy makers will need to identify and implement methods to increase affordable housing units, both through traditional subsidized developments, and through other incentives and requirements affecting private development.

Finalization

The draft Plan was made available to the public on October 8, 2004. A public hearing will be held on October 26, 2004 in the Mayor's conference room beginning at 4:00pm. The Task Force will then present the final report to the Assembly and the Mayor during a December work session.