

HOMELESS NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND MARKET ANALYSIS

Introduction

Homelessness has untold causes and each case requires unique solutions. However, as a way to prioritize programs and funding, homeless solutions are being created that focus on either 1st time homeless cases or the chronic homeless. Generally, the causes of homelessness include poverty, unemployment, low wages, a lack of affordable housing, alcoholism, drug abuse, mental illness, family disintegration, lack of education and training, migration and immigration without means of self-sufficiency and free will. The Great Recession has increased homelessness throughout the state of Florida as families who once had stable homes now have lost their homes through either foreclosure or unemployment.

According to HUD a person is homeless if the individual:

1. Lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and
2. Has a primary nighttime residence that is -
 - A. a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill);
 - B. an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or
 - C. a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

To be considered chronically homeless, persons must have been sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., living on the streets) and/or in an emergency shelter during that time. For the purposes of chronic homelessness, a disabling condition is a diagnosable substance use disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability, or chronic physical illness or disability, including the co-occurrence of two or more of these conditions. A disabling condition limits an individual's ability to work or perform one or more activities of daily living.

In 2010, the state of Florida released its Annual Report on Homeless Conditions. This report analyzed both the changes in the homeless population due to the current economic crisis. According to the report, in 2010 there were a total of 57,643 persons homeless on a daily basis. This number increased by 1% from 2009 due to:

- The downturn in the national economy;
- Florida's growing number of filings for foreclosure;
- Increasing numbers of applicants for cash assistance, food stamps, and other benefits;
- Rise in demand for local food and feeding programs; and
- Declining revenues for local and state government human services and housing programs.

It is important to note that the State of Florida's definition of homeless includes individuals and families sharing housing due to lack of employment or income.

The rate of first time homelessness remains high due to the difficult economic times. In 2010, over forty-three percent of the persons reported being homeless for the very first time. This is up from 37% in 2007, but down by 6.8% from 2009. Florida's high rate of foreclosure is in part responsible for the high rate of first time homelessness as individuals lose their homes or are forced to move from rental homes that have been foreclosed upon.

Local Homeless Data

The Suncoast Partnership to End Homeless (SPEH) which is both the Continuum of Care (CoC) and Homeless Coalition for Sarasota County estimated that there were 803 homeless in Sarasota County on any given day, according to its 2009 Homeless Census Results. This is substantially higher than 2008, in which the coalition estimated there were 655 homeless in Sarasota County. However, this is a very large decrease than the homeless population in 2004 when it was estimated that 1,294 homeless individuals in Sarasota County.

When homeless service providers were asked to expound upon the change in the homeless population they concluded that the deep recession that has existed in Florida since 2007 has radically changed the homeless population. Many homeless have migrated to areas where day labor jobs are easier to obtain. In addition, the Federal emphasis on ending chronic homeless during the last decade did meet with success with the chronic homeless subpopulation.

Service providers were quick to point out that due to the recession, the homeless population has dramatically transformed. It is estimated that up to 70% of homeless families and individuals who have lost their jobs are currently living with family members and are therefore not counted in their numbers. In addition, homeless families are worried that they may lose their children to the foster care system if it is known that they are unable to provide them with a stable home. While Sarasota County was awarded Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing funds that help to address the increase in homeless families, the need is greater than funding provided and will end by June of 2012.

Focus groups and public visioning sessions throughout Sarasota County pointed out the need for improved services for families, homeless facilities and feeding programs in South Sarasota County, and a one-stop community center to provide all homeless services in North Sarasota County. The City of North Port has been deeply impacted by the foreclosure crises and as a result, has a large population of homeless families and families living in foreclosed homes at risk of becoming homeless. Homeless camps have emerged throughout the county, especially in South County as individuals have overstayed their welcome at friends and families homes and have nowhere to go. Homeless service providers are particularly worried about South County since social services for the homeless exist primarily in the City of Sarasota.

The data provided below is from the HMIS system which is considered a superior data source by the local Coalition as compared to the Point in Time Study.

Sarasota County Homeless by Year	
2008	3295
2009	3900
2010	3773

2010 Homeless by Gender	
Male	1,1172
Female	2,652

2010 Homeless by Age	
Children under 18	252
Adults 18 to 59	3,291
Elderly 60 and up	228

2010 Homeless by Race	
White	2742
Black	723
Asian	23
American Indian/Alaskan Native	13
Other	247

2010 Homeless by Hispanic Ethnicity	
Yes	264
No	3426

2010 Disabling Condition	
Yes	1,158
No	2,447

2010 Homeless by Need or Disability *	
Addiction	39
Mental Illness	66
AIDS/HIV	4

The HMIS system experience a 14.5% increase in overall homelessness between 2008 and 2010 with the primary cause being the economic downturn and commensurate rise in unemployment, while the chronic homeless population remained relatively stable.

According to the SPEH there continues to be insufficient housing to meet the consistent needs of the chronically homeless population. In addition, due to the recession families with children continue to be one of the fastest growing homeless populations and both emergency and permanent housing remains inadequate to properly assist them.

In general, low- and very-low income families are at-risk of homelessness due to factors ranging from a lack of employable skills, employment opportunities and affordable housing options. Ongoing case management and supportive services are also required in order to stabilize families for the long-term. Homeless prevention has been a key focus of Sarasota County over the past five years and resources have been allocated to address the growing demand for emergency financial assistance, however staff and financial resources are currently insufficient to properly assist individuals and families at-risk of homelessness.

In 2010, the CoC listed the following issues as high priority:

1. Additional emergency shelters for families, woman with HIV/AIDS, youths aging out of foster care, and single men who are chronically homeless and where homelessness has been caused by unemployment;
2. Additional transitional shelters for families, woman with HIV/AIDS, youths aging out of foster care, and single men who are chronically homeless and where homelessness has been caused by unemployment;
3. Additional permanent housing for families, woman with HIV/AIDS, youths aging out of foster care, and single men who are chronically homeless and where homelessness has been caused by unemployment;

These priorities were chosen based upon several factors.

1. Monthly meetings with area homeless service providers;
2. The 2009 Homeless Census Results;
3. An annual meeting with homeless service providers to determine unmet needs and gaps in services;
4. Surveys submitted by service providers that detail services provided, populations and geographic areas served, and the unmet needs specific to area agencies;
5. The CoC also attends a caseworker roundtable that determines unmet needs; and
6. An analysis of the regional 2-1-1 phone calls for services and needs both met and unmet.

A focus group discussion with homeless service providers including the CoC in Sarasota County showed that a wide array of services for the homeless exist in Sarasota County. Their priority needs were:

1. Programs to assist the homeless;
2. Financial support of programs that feed the homeless;
3. Facilities and programs for the homeless in South Sarasota County; and
4. Transitional living facilities for homeless youths and youths aging out of foster care.

Continuum of Care and Homeless Coalition

The Suncoast Partnership to End Homelessness, Inc. (SPEH) was designed to be the provider of the Continuum of Care System for Sarasota and Manatee Counties. The Continuum of Care (COC) is a community plan to organize and deliver housing and services to meet the specific needs of people who are homeless as they move to stable housing and maximum self-sufficiency. The SPEH was created by community and governmental leaders to provide collaborative-based services to homeless people. The Sarasota-Manatee Continuum of Care program is a partnership of over 100 agencies, partners and individuals from throughout Manatee and Sarasota Counties with the widest possible representation from the business, criminal justice, government, homeless and social service communities. The SPEH assesses community homeless needs, identifies gaps in service, monitors agency programs and researches best practices to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of programs to prevent and end homelessness in the community.

The Suncoast Partnership writes federal and state grant applications on behalf of homeless service providers and was awarded over \$1.2 million in grants in FY2009 to build and operate housing for homeless individuals and families with special needs. The agency conducts the annual homeless census (mandated by HUD) and publishes the findings in an annual *Community Report on Homelessness*.

The Suncoast Partnership gathers, analyzes, and reports aggregate homeless client and service data using HMIS (Homeless Management Information System) and provides HMIS training, licensing and technical support at no cost to participating agencies. Through HMIS, the Suncoast Partnership captures an estimated 80% of all homeless services provided in Sarasota and Manatee counties.

The Suncoast Partnership will also continue to develop and manage special programs such as the Art & Homelessness program at Resurrection House and the “Tour de Ranch” at Lakewood Ranch which provides bicycle transportation to homeless people.

Plan to End Homelessness and Chronic Homelessness

Currently, the SPEH is participating in a countywide outreach effort to create a Ten Year Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in Sarasota County. The Consolidated Plan and Ten Year Plan are integrated and will work together over the next five years to accomplish homeless goals. The Consolidated Plan includes funding for homeless shelters in North and South County as well as funding to hire staff to help implement the Ten Year Plan.

While still under development, the plan has the following eight strategic goals:

- Increase access to appropriate homeless housing options, including emergency shelter, transitional, permanent and permanent supportive housing and accessible, affordable housing. Focus on long-term safe, stable housing.
- Improve outreach to people experiencing homelessness.
- Increase awareness of homelessness among all sectors of the community.
- Improve discharge planning from foster care, health, substance abuse and mental health and detention facilities.
- Increase access to supportive health and human services for people experiencing homelessness.
- Increase economic opportunity for homeless people and people at risk of becoming homeless. Focus on job readiness, job training, job placement and mentor support.

- Focus on preventing homelessness by providing early supportive services to keep people in safe, stable living environments.
- Create innovative community partnerships to prevent and end homelessness.

Plan to End Chronic Homelessness

While the Ten Year Plan is written, the CoC will still continue to seek funding for additional housing to reduce chronic homelessness. Additional housing was developed in 2009, the Housing First initiative has been presented and discussed locally and a Shelter+Care model has been implemented with 25 housing vouchers. Community education about homelessness is ongoing through a Speaker's Bureau in an effort to obtain wider community support for ending chronic homelessness, however, limited funding and other challenges, such as zoning prohibitions, and a lack of strong community understanding and support are impediments to creating additional housing and services for chronically homeless individuals.

The main strategy for ending chronic homelessness in Sarasota remains in attracting this population into the service delivery system. This involves two thrusts—service development and outreach.

The first is the area of service development. The community needs to increase the capacity of existing services available to the chronic homeless. Emergency shelters, provision of food and basic medical care are high priorities. Renaissance Manor and the Volunteers of America are both expanding the number of permanent supportive housing beds available.

In addition, the Office of Housing and Community Development plans to use HOME dollars to fund 10 housing vouchers to assist families graduating from transitional shelters find safe and affordable housing while they continue to build life skills. Due to the overwhelming need for transitional housing and the high priority ranking both special needs populations and rental subsidies were given by the Sarasota community, vouchers were seen as a reasonable tool to help end chronic homelessness.

A key element for the continued growth of services to fill identified gaps is the need for a stable, renewable funding source to support these new/expanded services on an ongoing basis. To relieve the financial burden of increased services, the community needs to explore the large resource of retired individuals in the area. A local provider of elderly services has done an excellent job of recruiting retired doctors, dentists and nurses for a very successful health clinic for the elderly. A similar approach needs to be explored to expand this concept to the homeless populations in general and the chronic homeless in particular. The provision of adequate facilities from which to more effectively deliver these services is also a need.

The second thrust is to expand active outreach to the chronic homeless populations. It is estimated that there are 360 chronic homeless individuals at any given point in time in Sarasota and Manatee Counties. Of this number 173 are sheltered and 187 unsheltered. The area is fortunate to have resources such as our two-day resource centers (Resurrection House in Sarasota and Open Door in Bradenton). Largely volunteer staffed, these centers are one of the primary points of contact with the chronic homeless. The dedication of their staff enables the building of relationships that can (over time) lead to personal decisions to seek help and change behaviors.

The need for a “safe haven” type of facility needs to be explored as another possibility. Also, there is a growing street ministry by the downtown churches and continued outreach into the homeless camps by the Salvation Army. All of these efforts need to be encouraged, supported, and expanded.

Efforts to develop a viable alternative to arrest and incarceration continue in the city of Sarasota and Sarasota County. This collaborative effort with city police and county law enforcement, mental health providers, emergency shelter providers and mental health court will provide a protocol for law enforcement to encourage chronic homeless to choose treatment over incarceration. The final step in this area will be to develop a coordinated plan for regular outreach to geographic areas not currently being covered by existing service provider efforts. Development of such a plan will follow the development of the intervention protocols for law enforcement and the identification of needed service expansions to handle increased referrals resulting from such outreach.

Discharge Planning Policy

After an extensive community analysis, the CoC has implemented the following discharge planning policies:

Foster Care:

SPEH has worked with Florida Coalition to develop formalized protocol for a foster care discharge planning and will continue to work towards collaborative partnerships, engagement of pertinent providers and best practices.

Currently, when a child ages out of foster care, he/she receives an Independent Living Services Transitional Services Plan which includes assistance and information on applying for life skills classes; transportation; school enrollment assistance; assistance with registering for employment at Workforce Development; identifying local employment opportunities; applying for job training and/or apprenticeship programs; continued care in the areas of physical health, mental health and education; obtaining safe and stable housing; identifying community activities; and maintaining an ongoing relationship with the local system of care.

SPEC has also researched and produced a foster care report and developed

partnerships with Children's Guardian Fund and Next Step programs. SPEH assists with grant writing to provide youth aging out of foster care with transition and educational expenses and support.

YMCA - Sarasota has a formal Transition Plan that includes four meetings during client's 17th year and employment, education, saving money, housing and supportive services. If client is still in high school, transition money is available to pay for an apartment or to stay with foster parents. The client works with a case manager and an independent living specialist.

Health Care:

Suncoast Partnership has worked with Florida Coalition for the Homeless to develop formalized protocol for health care discharge planning and will continue to work towards collaborative partnerships, engagement of pertinent providers and best practices.

Currently, patients may be discharged from the hospital or transferred to another level of care, treatment, and services, to different health professionals, or to settings for continued services. The hospital's processes are based on the patients assessed needs. The hospital assesses the patients needs, plans for discharge or transfer, facilitates the process, and helps to ensure that continuity of care, which may include mental health or substance abuse treatment, other treatment, and services. Planning consists of a clear understanding of how to access services in the future. Information related to the care, treatment, and services provided is exchanged with other service providers.

Outreach mobile healthcare to homeless persons is provided daily at agencies and sites though out Sarasota County. Sarasota Memorial Hospital will continue to contact the Salvation Army Sarasota and arrange for homeless patients to enter the Salvation Army program for temporary housing, drug abuse counseling, job placement and case management.

Mental Health:

Suncoast Partnership has worked with Florida Coalition for the Homeless to develop formalized protocol for mental health discharge planning and will continue to work towards collaborative partnerships, engagement of pertinent providers and best practices. Currently, discharge planning for all individuals receiving treatment includes transportation, access to stable living arrangements, assistance in obtaining aftercare follow up for medications and case management, assessment of medication availability, community program contact and referral information, referral to substance abuse treatment programs, and trauma or abuse recovery focused programs or other self-help groups.

First Step also has a discharge plan that involves housing, vocational assistance, supportive care and individualized support based upon individual client needs. Manatee

Glens provides ongoing supportive services to discharged clients including referral to housing agencies and the Salvation Army. They also provide rental assistance to qualified individuals.

Corrections:

The Manatee and Sarasota County Sheriff's Office are implementing discharge planning policies and procedures that include continued care and follow-up after release. The plan begins upon recognition of a serious physical or behavioral health issue. Planning includes linkages and discussion on importance of follow-up.

Sarasota County Jail's multi-step discharge plan provides a bi-lingual book of referrals; an interview with Suncoast Workforce Board, applications to housing, and linkage to Salvation Army for housing and substance abuse support services.

Manatee County Jail established a Discharge Planner position and the caseworker who filled this position has met with over 1,300 inmates and successfully placed 40% of them upon discharge in the Manatee and Sarasota community. Currently the caseworker is meeting with 60-100 inmates per month with the majority being veterans and/or those in need of mental health services. There is support for a similar position in the Sarasota County.

The Sarasota County Sheriff's Department has established jail pods for men and women who wish to recover from drug and alcohol addictions with the intention that this initiative will lead to long-term sobriety and a decrease in recidivism.

The CART Program is a collaboration among 6 agencies in Sarasota County which focuses on diverting homeless individuals from the criminal justice system through a secure receiving center. CART includes a 10-week residential services program, a 150 hours of substance abuse treatment, mental health services, vocational assistance, health care, and counseling.

Reception/Day Center

Access One – Provides assistance for the homeless who also suffer from mental illness.

All Faiths Food Bank – Feeds the hungry through a food pantry service for other agencies and individuals in need.

Bethesda House – Ministry providing supportive services to people with HIV/AIDS, their families, friends and caregivers. Provides food pantry, support groups, programs for women, laundry facilities, pastoral counseling, case management, information and referral, assistance with obtaining housing and public benefits, home and hospital visitation and transportation.

Caritas of St. Martha's – Provides emergency help, food, and utilities for the poor. It is a program run by the Church of the Redeemer, First Baptist Church, First Presbyterian Church USA, First United Methodist Church and St. Martha Catholic Church. These churches serve about 25-30 clients a day.

Catholic Charities – Assists with utilities, rent, and medical needs for the poor. About 242 homeless clients per year including 64 families, 149 children and 93 adults are assisted.

Central Church of Christ – Food pantry providing canned/package goods for temporary food assistance.

Child Development Center – Parenting education for homeless families.

Children First, Inc. – Early Head Start placement for children of homeless families.

Church of Palms - Food pantry providing canned/package goods for temporary food assistance. Referral required.

Community Care and Share – Venice-based assistance program with food, utilities, medical care and other services anticipated as funding becomes available.

Consumer Credit Counseling Services – Provides money management education for homeless families and individuals.

Englewood Bible Church – Assists about 40-80 families every week with food and other services in the Englewood Community.

Englewood Helping Hand – Englewood residents may receive immediate emergency help with food, rent, utility bills, referral services, clothing, prescription medicines, disabled children's medical equipment and job placement. Those with an emergency homeless situation may be placed for one night so other arrangements can be made.

Epiphany Cathedral – Venice-based emergency assistance for homeless individuals. Provides referrals for emergency shelter.

First Step of Sarasota, Inc. – Intake for alcohol/drug abuse, detoxification, drug treatment, pregnant substance abuse women's program and residential alcohol treatment. Serves homeless and non-homeless individuals.

Florida Department of Children and Family Services – Cash assistance for families with absent or disabled parents, food stamps, Medicaid and other services for needy children and adults.

Gifts from God Ministries – Provides free food pantry for the needy.

Good Samaritan Ministries – Provides free clothing and meals for the needy.

Goodwill Industries – Provides job training, employment and related services for the homeless with a focus on persons with disabilities. Assists approximately 135 homeless clients annually.

Gulfcoast Legal Services – Provides free legal assistance to low-income persons. In 2004, GLS handled over 300 cases involving housing and homeless issues, of which 25% were related to domestic violence.

Harvest Tabernacle – Provides a food pantry and other services.

Jim Russo Development Center – Program for ex-offenders coming directly from prison. Services include housing assistance, employment services, meals, and transportation. The program averages 60 clients per year from both Sarasota and Manatee counties. Currently they can house up to 20 clients at one time.

Mary House Ministries – Bradenton-based halfway house for substance abusers. Clients are typically homeless or in danger of homelessness. Serves more than 25 women and their children each year.

Mothers Helping Mothers – Provides necessities to families in need in Sarasota. Works with other agencies with battered women, substance abusers, Hispanic women and farm workers, the disabled, and women in homeless shelters.

North Port Social Services – Food, gas vouchers, and referral services for the poor. Served 5 homeless clients in 2004.

Resurrection House – Service provider for the homeless including medical assistance, counseling, restrooms, showers, laundry, food, clothing, telephone, bus tickets, job search, temporary housing for families, and referrals to other agencies. Assisted 3,428 clients in 2003 including 240 families with 486 dependent children.

Safe Place and Rape Crisis Center – Information and referrals for victims of domestic violence and abuse.

Saint Vincent De Paul – Provides assistance with housing, food, medical bills or transportation.

Salvation Army of Sarasota – Social Services Department provides assistance with rent, utilities, food boxes, clothing, auto fuel vouchers, and emergency prescriptions. Also has a feeding program that assists between 300-400 people daily. Serves breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Sarasota County Health and Human Services Business Center – Clinics at shelters, provides health care and referrals. Provides burial services, utility assistance, medical

assistance, medically indigent adult program, rent assistance, veterans assistance, and referrals.

Sarasota Veterans Center – (part of the Sarasota Health and Human Services Business Center) Provides counseling and referral services for homeless veterans.

Second Chance/Last Opportunity - Walk-in facility for the homeless, life management skills, clothing, washing facilities, food vouchers and baskets and referrals to services such as the Salvation Army and Resurrection House. Serves over a 1,000 a homeless per year.

SHARE – Food program with sites at Grace United Methodist Church in Venice, North Church United Methodist, Peace Lutheran, St. Andrew Church of Christ, Trinity United Methodist and Vamo United Methodist.

United Way 2-1-1 of Manasota Inc. – Telephone resource for anyone in Sarasota or Manatee County seeking any kind of social service program. This service refers the homeless, or those threatened with homelessness, to sources of financial assistance, food, shelter, and other assistance. The call center has been handling over 4,000 calls each month from residents of both Sarasota and Manatee County.

YMCA – The YMCA provides educational services for homeless youth. They impact approximately 1900 homeless children and their family members each year.

Emergency Shelter

Coastal Behavioral Healthcare – Health care facility providing services and housing to those affected by drug abuse, alcohol abuse, mental illness, and mental health problems. Provides services to over 650 homeless individuals annually. In 2004, donated over 12 million dollars in mental healthcare services to the indigent, many of whom are homeless.

First Step of Sarasota, Inc. – Provides services and shelter for adults with drug and alcohol problems, mental health problems, or both. Their Detoxification program has 15 beds, with eight available for homeless clients.

Good Samaritan Ministries – Six beds available for emergency housing.

Mercy House – Temporary shelter serving families and individuals of the Venice area. There are 10 beds available for homeless families.

Safe Place and Rape Crisis Center – 16 emergency shelter beds for domestic violence victims.

Salvation Army of Sarasota – provides 96 men and 16 females with emergency shelter. In addition, has an emergency family dorm that can serve up to 5 families.

YMCA – Provides a temporary runaway/homeless shelter for children ages 10-17. Houses 20 children at a time and 450-500 youth per year.

Transitional Housing

Harvest House – offers food, shelter, clothing, immediate full-time employment upon entry, job training, transportation, addictions counseling, financial management and a loving, nurturing environment. Serves up to 80 men.

Our Mother's House – Our Mother's House provides low-cost apartment living in a safe, nurturing, yet stimulating, community environment. Our Mother's House goal is to promote the healthy development of single homeless mothers and their at-risk children through support services that provide the opportunity to develop healthy parenting skills; and, gain economic self-sufficiency. Mothers are required to enroll in an educational or vocational program while their children have an educational experience in the day care provided on site. The house has 10 one-bedroom apartments where a mother and child can stay while the mother pursues an education, degree, and/or job training. Serves about 30 homeless clients a year.

Safe Place and Rape Crisis Center - 24 transitional housing beds available for domestic violence victims.

Salvation Army VIP Program- The Salvation Army offers their VIP Program, which is a 12-week drug and alcohol rehabilitation program for homeless individuals. It serves both men and women and follows an AA model.

Salvation Army F.A.I.TH Program- provides long-term living for 12 families. Families may stay for one year and must pay off their debt and save a minimum of \$3,000 before graduated from the program.

Salvation Army Transitional Living Center – clients can stay for up to 6 months in a safe, drug free environment for \$70 a week. Must be single and employed.

YMCA – Provides a transitional living program for homeless youth and homeless single mothers ages 16-21. Has shelter for up to 16 at a time.