

HHS COMMITTEE #1
December 1, 2011

MEMORANDUM

November 29, 2011

TO: Health and Human Services Committee

FROM: Linda McMillan, Senior Legislative Analyst 

SUBJECT: **Bethesda Cares Homeless Outreach Effort and Survey**

Susan Kirk and John Mendez from Bethesda Cares will provide the Committee with a presentation on their recent outreach and survey efforts conducted on November 7 to 9. Bethesda Cares hopes to use the information gathered through the survey to find ways to improve the ability to help homeless people with health, housing, and other needs. An article from the Gazette on this effort is attached at ©1.

As background for this discussion, the Department of Health and Human Services has provided a summary of homeless outreach resources (©2-4) that includes information on the contract with People Encouraging People which went into effect on July 1, 2011.

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Maryland Community News

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Bethesda homeless survey could be fuel for change in Montgomery County *by Alex Ruoff*
Staff Writer

Homeless advocates in Bethesda are hoping the results of a recently-conducted survey of people on the street can bring change to the way the county houses its neediest residents.

Coordinated by Bethesda Cares, a homeless outreach group based on Woodmont Avenue, the registry was taken from Nov. 7 to Nov. 9, and was designed to create a database of those living on the street. The survey includes details such as health issues they face, drug abuse concerns and military veteran status. Volunteers surveyed 40 homeless people over the three days for the database.

Bethesda Cares hopes to use this data to help get some of the area's most vulnerable — identified as those older than 60 or living with serious health issues such as cancer or diabetes — off the street faster.

"You have to know your market, who you're trying to help," said Susan Kirk, executive director of Bethesda Cares. "Now, we can do some different kind of thinking."

Those who operate housing programs in the county say there are more than just administrative barriers to getting people off the street.

The number of people living on the street in Montgomery County has increased, according to the annual Point in Time count, performed by nonprofits at the beginning of each year. This year, there were 226 people found living unsheltered on the street, up from 181 in 2010 and 127 in 2009.

Kirk said the data will help her group better connect homeless to the resources available to them, such as housing vouchers, medicare assistance or energy assistance. The database could supplement the current process for applying for housing assistance, which includes a 20-page intake form that can take up to two hours to complete.

County Councilman and Chair of the county's Health and Human Services Committee George L. Leventhal (D-At large) of Takoma Park praised the effort. He said the county's Department of Health and Human Services does little outreach to the county's homeless population, relying instead on those living on the street to come to them.

"For years it's been the case; we've been too busy with intake to do outreach," he said.

In recent years, Montgomery County has focused on providing homeless families with housing through its Housing Initiative Program, which currently houses about 65 families, said Nadim Khan, chief of the county's Special Needs Housing Program, part of the Department of Housing and Human Services. He said the largest resource for housing homeless in the county are the 5,946 housing vouchers, rent and mortgage assistance funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

These vouchers are administrated through the Housing Opportunities Commission and distributed via lottery to those on its waiting list, which is about 1,700 people long, said HOC spokesman Scott Ellinwood. There is a roughly 6 percent turnover rate for these vouchers.

Ellinwood said even with more data, his group cannot target specific people for housing assistance. He said federal law requires HUD funding to be distributed through lottery.

Leventhal said he hopes the survey can help curb the rise in unsheltered homeless in Montgomery County and plans to meet with HOC officials to determine if it can be used to target some of the most vulnerable.

"I think it could be useful, but what we can do with it is something I'm not sure of yet," he said.

aruoff@gazette.net

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Montgomery County Homeless Outreach Programs:

1. People Encouraging People – Homeless Outreach Program Summary

Contract was effective July 1, 2011 for \$362,400 and scope of services includes:

- A. Operating an outreach program for adults, eighteen years and older
- B. Hiring 3 full time case managers to outreach to a minimum of 150 clients (this will be revised to “outreach to a minimum of 200 clients”) during the contract year.
- C. Providing services at emergency shelters, day programs, soup kitchens, and responding to request by DHHS staff and constituents.

Performance Measures includes:

- A. The number and percentage of homeless clients who are actively participating in the program’s Transitional Psychiatric Services, and those linked with the Public Mental Health System, or other appropriate behavioral health services such as substance abuse or co-occurring mental health treatment.
- B. The number and percentage of homeless clients who complete applications for financial entitlements. It is expected that at least 70% of the homeless will complete applications for financial entitlements.
- C. The number and percentage of clients who have successfully moved from the street homelessness or emergency shelter to permanent housing, permanent supportive or transitional housing.

Current Status:

- A. The contractor has hired a program director and 1 full time case manager. A second case manager is scheduled to start November 28, 2011; and the contractor is actively recruiting the third case manager.
- B. Have outreached to 69 on the streets
 - a. 40 have moved to emergency or transitional shelter (58%)
 - b. 16 referred to mental health treatment ((23%)
 - c. 15 referred to substance abuse treatment (22%)
 - d. 8 have applied for food stamps (20%)
 - e. 7 have applied for Primary Adult Care (18%)
 - f. 3 have applied for Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP 3%)
 - g. 1 enrolled in transitional psychiatric services (1%)
- C. Homeless outreach schedule prior to opening winter overflow shelters (Aug. – October 31st)
 - a. Mondays- Silver Spring/Progress Place
 - b. Tuesdays- Homebuilders Cares Assessment Center (Men’s) and surrounding Rockville area
 - c. Wednesday- Gaithersburg/Germantown/Damascus/St Martin's Soup Kitchen
 - d. Thursday- Rockville
 - e. Friday- Crisis area- all over Mont County (following up on any calls from DHHS staff or constituents)

- f. Program director met with Bethesda Outreach worker to learn locations; however, Bethesda Cares outreach worker stated he would continue to cover the area.

D. Homeless outreach schedule since November 1st

- a. Mondays- Silver Spring/Progress Place
- b. Tuesdays- Homebuilders Cares Assessment Center (Men's) and surrounding Rockville area
- c. Wednesdays- Women's Center (if referrals)/Rockville and surrounding Rockville area
- d. Thursdays- Gaithersburg/Germantown/Damascus/St Martin's Soup Kitchen
- e. Fridays – General outreach and responding to constituents if unable to reach during the week.

2. Interfaith Works Community Vision at Progress Place

8210 Colonial Lane, Silver Spring 20910, 301-585-4471; Mary Muholland, Clinical Director
Hours 8:30 – 5pm

Community Visions serves homeless adults 18 years and older. Individuals receiving services can be street homeless, residing in an emergency or overflow shelter. They have one identified outreach staff worker that outreaches to areas around the Silver Spring business district which includes the metro and Westfield Mall area.

The general goal of outreach is to build relationships with the individuals and encourage them to participate in Community Vision's programs. They are connected to a case management who will refer to behavioral health treatment services, assist with applications for Food Stamps, Primary Adult Care, and Temporary Disability Assistance Program; in addition they can participate in any of their workshops which include vocational services. They will complete the Homeless Assessment Form and link to emergency, transitional, Safe Havens, or permanent supportive housing.

Breakfast and Lunch are also provided for clients involved in case management and for the street homeless they have access to laundry facilities.

3. City of Gaithersburg Homeless Outreach Program:

31 S. Summit Ave, Gaithersburg 20877, 301-258-6390, James Frazier-Bey, Program Director

The Wells Robertson House includes a street homeless outreach/advocate worker that provides services to the City of Gaithersburg, Germantown, and responds to police and constituent calls for all of the Upcountry area. The street outreach coordinates with the soup kitchens in the area and will outreach to encampments. Primarily the outreach worker has noted the homeless population tends to be substance dependent or having

co-occurring mental health disorders. He will refer to behavioral health treatment programs and emergency shelters. The Wells Robertson House provides transitional shelter for homeless men and women who have undergone alcohol/drug treatment or received other professional counseling and want to break the cycle of homelessness. The homeless advocate also coordinates with People Encouraging People to do on-going case management, transitional psychiatric, and entitlements if necessary.

4. Bethesda Cares Homeless Outreach Program:

7728 Woodmont Ave, Bethesda MD 20814, 301-907-9244

Sue Kirk, Executive Director

Hours: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday – Hours 9 a.m. – 12:30 and 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Tuesday and Thursday Hours 9 a.m. – 12:30 and 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

The Homeless Outreach engages clients on the streets, soup kitchens, and sometimes the clients come to our Drop-In Center. The Outreach worker fits the needs of the client to the services to form a strategy for each client to exit homelessness. Bethesda cares services include short term counseling, access to a psychiatrist to assist with assessment, referrals and linkages, to appropriate programs. In addition they can serve as a mailing address for homeless persons and can provide limited prescription assistance.