HHS COMMITTEE ITEM #2
September 26, 2016

MEMORANDUM

September 22, 2016

TO: Health and Human Services Committee

FROM: Linda McMillan, Senior Legislative Analyst

SUBJECT: **Update: Zero 2016 Initiative for Ending Veteran and Chronic Homelessness**

Expected for this session:
Uma Ahluwalia, Director, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
Amanda Harris, Chief, DHHS Special Needs Housing

At this session, the Committee will receive an update on the continued work to maintain "functional zero" for Veterans Homelessness and to end chronic homelessness by December 31, 2017. An update report is attached at ©1-14. The following are highlights from the two reports.

Veterans Homelessness (©3-7)

- Montgomery County achieved "functional zero" for Veterans at the end of 2015. Functional zero is defined as *"At any point in time, the number of Veterans experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness will be no greater than the current monthly housing placement rate for Veterans experiencing homelessness." (Community Solutions).* The County has estimated that functional zero would be no more than six (6) Veterans awaiting housing placement. As of September, the County was slightly above this at seven (7) identified Veterans.

- The County is continuing to use the "By-Name-List" that compiles information on all homeless persons that have been identified as Veterans.

- As of September 2016, 20 formerly homeless persons have been housed during the current year. Ten (10) have been placed in permanent supportive housing, six (6) have been served through rapid rehousing, and four (4) are considered "self-resolving" in that they do not have the need for ongoing housing support. As of September 1, there were

five individual Veterans and two Veteran families that were on the By-Name-List that were not yet housed.

- The table on ©5 shows the decrease in the average number of days in homelessness since the effort began. The median time in homelessness in 2016 has been 66 days.

- The report notes that in 2016 expanding resources will include 12 additional VASH vouchers and an expansion of permanent supportive housing through Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless' Operation Homecoming program.

- Challenges include (1) a small number of clients who have consistently rejected housing offers even with persistent outreach efforts, (2) the limited availability of affordable housing for people in the rapid rehousing program, and (3) Veterans who have service needs that exceed those currently available in permanent supportive housing.

Chronic Homelessness (©8-14)

- Per the directive from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), for Montgomery County to end chronic homelessness there should be no more than 3 unhoused chronically homeless individual or families at any time.

- There is a new Federal definition for chronically homelessness individuals. A family meets the criteria if the head of household meets the definition. (This is a very specific definition and there will be many in the homeless system that do not meet the definition of chronically homeless.)

  1. Have a disability, and
  2. Live in a place not meant for human habitation, or safe haven, or an emergency shelter, or
  3. Live in an institutional care facility if the individual has been living in the facility for fewer than 90 days and had been living in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter immediately before entering the institutional care facility, and
  4. Have been homeless continuously for at least 12 months or at least four separate occasions in the last three years where the combined occasions must total at least 12 months.

- The Zero 2016 Initiative for chronically homeless also uses a By-Name-List. The partners have also created a policy on "un-named clients" for identified homeless people who are anonymous so they may be entered in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

- As of September 2016, the By-Name-List included 209 individuals and no families that were either verified as chronically homeless or staff believes they are likely to meet the

definition, so this is a "high-end" list. An "Outreach Blitz" to identify people is planned for October 19-21.

- Information on ©12 describes three new contract positions, an HMIS Support Specialist, an Outreach Coordinator, and a Housing Coordinator for the Zero 2016 Initiative.

- The team will be working with data to try to better predict appropriate service and housing needs for households (individuals and families). Some strategies that will be employed to address expected barriers include, landlord engagement, development of additional permanent supportive housing, and reviewing the structure of the rapid rehousing program. The team is also looking at new approaches to help clients who are ready to transition out of a high level of services and to reduce the time between housing placement and move-in.

- The effort will also look at ways to prevent households from ever becoming chronically homeless by finding methods to identify those most at risk of chronic homelessness.

Background – Point in Time Report

- As background, attached at ©15-19 is the Montgomery County portion of the report on the 2016 Point-in Time Survey. Circle 17 shows the counts and changes from 2015 to 2016. Circle 16 shows the number of year-round and winter overflow shelter beds.

- In terms of considering this report as it relates to the Zero 2016 Initiative, it is important to note that the Point-in-Time is self-reported information. For example, during the survey, 17 individuals identified themselves as Veterans (©19) but the status could only be verified for six (6) of those people.

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OFFICES OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

Timothy L. Firestine
Chief Administrative Officer

MEMORANDUM

September 21, 2016

TO: Nancy Floreen, Council President

FROM: Bonnie A. Kirkland, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer

SUBJECT: Zero: 2016 Ending Veteran and Chronic Homelessness Update

The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), in partnership with the Interagency Commission on Homelessness and the Homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) continues to implement the Zero: 2016 campaign. Zero: 2016 campaign is a national effort of 71 communities across the Country who have committed to ending Veterans homelessness by December 2015, and chronic homelessness by December 2017. Led by Community Solutions, Zero: 2016 supports participating communities in optimizing local resources, tracking progress against monthly housing goals, and accelerating the spread of proven strategies.

In December 2015, Montgomery County was successful in achieving a "functional zero" for Veterans Homelessness. This was achieved by identifying specific targets for both the number of placements needed as well as types of housing required, development of a comprehensive By-Name-List of all Veterans experiencing homelessness, and prioritization of veterans for available housing. For more detailed information on the Zero: 2016 Ending Veteran Homelessness, please see the attached report.

The second phase of the Zero: 2016 campaign is the initiative to end chronic homelessness by December 31, 2017. Montgomery County is committed to providing permanent housing to all County residents experiencing chronic homelessness by December 31, 2017. In order to meet this goal, we need to identify new resources for housing subsidies and service dollars as well as more effectively use existing local, state, and federal resources. This will entail changing eligibility requirements that prevent individuals with complex needs from accessing housing and prioritizing vacancies in permanent supportive housing for these individuals. Strategies to overcome the barriers to ending chronic homelessness have been identified in the attached Zero: 2016 Ending Chronic Homelessness report.

Over the last several months, the Homeless Continuum of Care has been working to determine the actual number of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. The high end estimate is 209 chronically homeless individuals. This number includes 59 Outreach clients who disability and length of homelessness have not been verified. In October, the County will be conducting an "Outreach Blitz" to assess these Outreach clients to verify their chronic homelessness status. When factoring in new projects and turnover in existing Permanent Supportive Housing units, there remains a gap of 88 units.

One of the new projects coming online is Progress Place. Progress Place includes 21 new units of permanent supportive housing. Construction is on schedule to be completed by December 2016. DHHS' Contract Management Team confirmed that the Private Living Quarters request for proposal Posting is now closed and they received proposals. Award of contract is expected December 1, 2016. This gives the vendor one month to staff and set up operations to move clients in by January 2017.

Attached please find the Zero: 2016 Ending Veterans Homelessness report and the Zero: 2016 Ending Chronic Homelessness report which outlines our progress to date.

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Attachments

Montgomery County

Zero: 2016

Update on Veterans Homelessness

Presented by

Montgomery County Continuum of Care

September 2016

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Montgomery County Zero: 2016 – Update on Veterans Homelessness

Fiscal Year 2017 Plan - September 2016

I. Background

Montgomery County achieved functional zero for Veterans experiencing homelessness as of the end of December 2015. The County's effort has been recognized by both the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) and the Zero: 2016 campaign. Zero: 2016 is a national effort of 71 communities across the Country who have committed to ending Veterans homelessness by December 2015 and chronic homelessness by December 2017. Led by Community Solutions, Zero: 2016 supports participating communities in optimizing local resources, tracking progress against monthly housing goals, and accelerating the spread of proven strategies.

Montgomery County's Zero: 2016 Initiative builds upon the successful 100,000 Homes Campaign. Montgomery County's Zero: 2016 Plan for Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 was developed with a primary focus on the rapid exit of Veterans from homelessness to permanent, sustainable housing. The following plan was the result of collaborative discussions between Department Health and Human Services (DHHS) and key stakeholders including family and single adult shelter providers, Veterans groups, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) providers and others. This group reviewed the current homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) to determine what resources – federal, state and local – and strategies were needed to address Veterans homelessness. These strategies required the redeployment of existing resources and the addition of new resources to reduce the length of stay in homelessness for Veterans. The focus on ending Veteran homelessness in 2015 was an extension of a system-wide embrace of the Housing First Model and on-going prioritization of Veterans for housing.

II. Status on Goals

The work on Veterans homelessness in the County in 2016 continues to be based on the use of the "By-Name-List" which compiles information on all persons experiencing homelessness and have been identified as Veterans in the County. The Veterans List is updated multiple times each week to record new persons who have been identified, any change in status for persons already on the list, and all planned or achieved housing placements.

As of September 1, 2016, 20 formerly homeless Veterans have been housed from the List during the course of the current year as shown on the chart below:

Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)			**Rapid Re-housing**		**Self-Resolving**	**2016 TOTAL TO DATE**
Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH)	Mont County Coalition for the Homeless (Operation Homecoming)	Other PSH	SSVF	Bethesda Cares Veteran Rapid Rehousing Prog. (VRRP)	Self-Resolving	
2	7	1	1	5	4	**20**

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Average Time for Placement

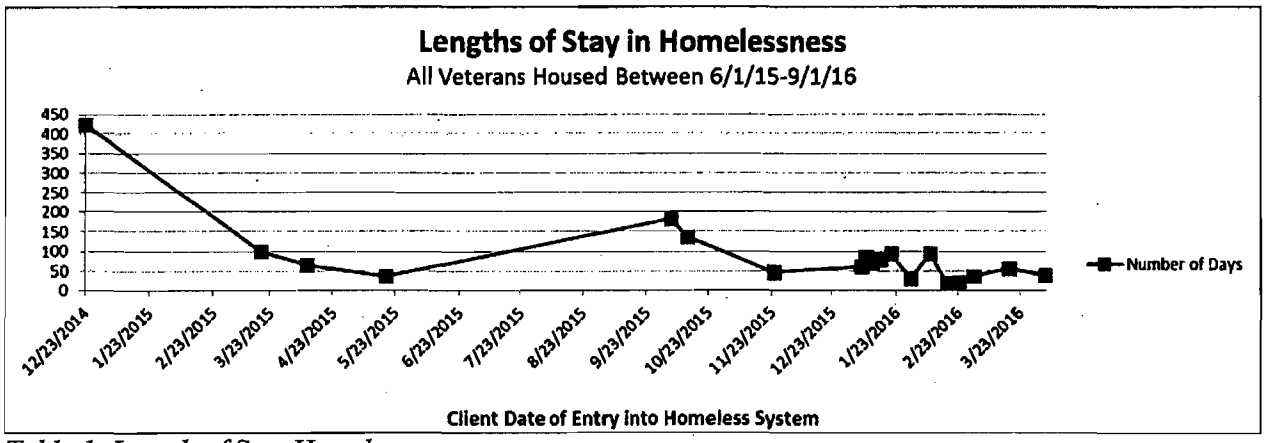

Table 1. Length of Stay Homelessness

As shown in Table 1, the average length from date of identification to date of housing for the Veterans housed so far in 2016 has been 86 days and the median is 66 days. Additionally, 17 of the 20 have been housed in 100 days or less. Since the Zero: 2016 effort began last year, the average length of stay has consistently decreased as the individuals who had been homeless for years are housed.

Tracking New Veterans, Placement Rate and Number Currently on the By-Name-List

There are currently seven Veterans (five individuals and two families) remaining on the By-Name List who have not yet been housed as of September 1.

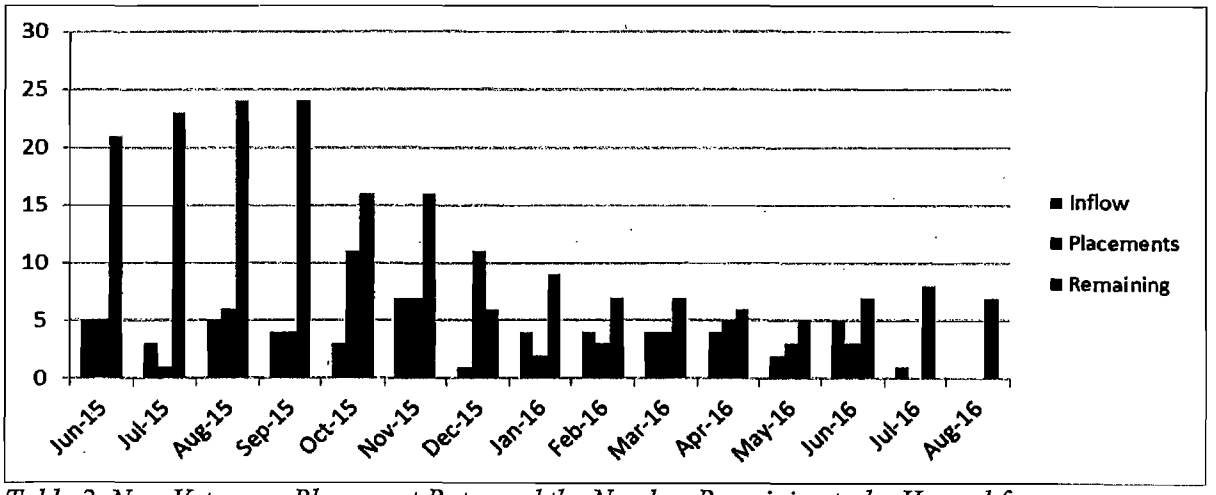

Table 2. New Veterans, Placement Rate, and the Number Remaining to be Housed from June 2015 through August 2016

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Table 2 shows that as of September 1, a total of 24 Veterans have been added to the By-Name List during 2016. Based on the trend of recent years, the number of Veterans becoming newly homeless in Montgomery County during 2016 was estimated to be 40-45, so the current inflow number is on target for this point in the year.

Montgomery County is currently operating slightly over the 'functional zero" level target of no more than six Veterans awaiting housing placement, with seven Veterans currently on the By-Name-List. The number of monthly housing placements fell over the summer months as some key resources were slow in coming on line. This has since been resolved and the number of Veterans remaining on the By-Name-List should drop back to 6 or below in September and October.

III. New Housing Resources

As part of Montgomery County's FY17 Budget, an appropriation in the amount of $150,000 was approved to provide permanent supportive housing to homeless Veterans in the County. The County's FY17 Budget has funded the expansion of the Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless (MCCH) Operation Homecoming program providing housing and supportive services for a minimum of four Veterans. This expansion is in the final stages of the contracting process, and the housing placements are expected to be available before the end of September.

This expansion of the existing Veterans program is intended to supplement existing Federal resources that already been committed to Veterans homelessness in the County. Existing resources include the Federal Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program (VASH) vouchers. An expansion of this program will include 12 additional VASH vouchers for use in the County. There was a delay in getting these vouchers connected with the Veterans identified for VASH placements, but this has been resolved. Currently, there are seven veterans on the on the By-Name-List awaiting a housing placement of which four are being processed for VASH.

IV. Challenges to Sustaining Functional Zero

The Zero:2016 team continues to manage the By-Name-List on a daily basis and meets bi-weekly with all providers to review all open cases, make housing referrals, and discuss any program issues. In order to maintain the functional zero level, average number of permanent housing units needs to meet or exceed the number of Veterans becoming newly homelessness on a monthly basis. There are several on-going challenges that will impact sustainability.

1. There are a small number of clients who have consistently rejected offers of housing, despite intensive outreach efforts. The experience of the past 18 months of the Zero:2016 campaign has shown that on-going and persistent engagement can result in an eventual permanent housing placement, although this can take years. The emphasis will need to remain on having VA, County staff, and providers all working collaboratively to create trusting relationships with the hardest-to-engage Veteran clients. When a previously disengaged Veteran expresses an interest in housing, the County will make every effort to house this individual as quickly as possible.

2. The limited availability of affordable housing in the County for persons on a fixed income will continue to impact Veterans who are in the time-limited rapid-rehousing programs. For those formerly homeless Veterans who do not need long-term supportive services but cannot transition to paying market rents at the end of the rental subsidy, there is a gap in available housing options. The rapid-rehousing providers (Bethesda Cares for the County-funded program, and the SSVF providers for the VA-funded program) are working on a case-by-case basis to identify alternative housing options, but this will remain a challenge in the current environment.

3. The staff working on the permanent supportive housing programs (MCCH for the County-funded program, and the VA for the VASH tenants) have identified Veterans whose service needs exceed what is possible in the current program configurations. These situations have created issues with the stability of the client's housing. Program staff are exploring how to increase the intensity of service by offering expanded services in-house or brokering services with other providers. This remains a struggles as resources are limited.

V. Conclusion

Montgomery County's successful strategies to achieve functional zero for Veterans experiencing homelessness included identifying specific targets for both the number of placements needed as well as types of housing required, development of a comprehensive By-Name-List of all Veterans experiencing homelessness, and prioritization of veterans for available housing. Close collaboration with the Veterans Administration helped shorten the length of time for eligibility determination. Additionally, local commitment of funding to create additional housing options was critical to our success. The CoC thrives to achieve the vision of making homelessness a rare, brief, and non-recurring event for Veterans in Montgomery County.

Last Update: 9/15/2016

Montgomery County

Zero: 2016

UPDATE ON CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Presented by

Montgomery County Continuum of Care

September 2016

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Montgomery County Zero: 2016 – Update on Chronic Homelessness

Fiscal Year 2017 Plan - September 2016

I. Background

Montgomery County is committed to providing permanent housing to all County residents experiencing chronic homelessness by December 31, 2017. This initiative focusing on chronic homelessness will be the second phase of the Zero: 2016 campaign and builds upon the successful implementation of the effort to effectively end homelessness for Veterans in Montgomery County.

Montgomery County achieved functional zero for Veterans experiencing homelessness as of the end of December 2015. The County's effort has been recognized by both the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) and the Zero: 2016 campaign. Zero: 2016 is a national effort of 71 communities across the Country who have committed to ending Veteran homelessness by December 2015 and chronic homelessness by December 2017. Led by Community Solutions, Zero: 2016 supports participating communities in optimizing local resources, tracking progress against monthly housing goals, and accelerating the spread of proven strategies.

II. Goal

Beyond successfully serving Veterans experiencing homelessness, Montgomery County is also committed to ending chronic homelessness. The target for the Zero: 2016 work in the County has been to create a homeless services system which provides permanent housing for individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness by December 31, 2017. Per directive from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), for Montgomery County to effectively end chronic homelessness, there should be ***no more than 3 unhoused*** chronically homeless individuals or families in the County at any time.

In order to meet this goal, we need to identify new resources for housing subsidies and service dollars as well as more effectively use existing local, state, and federal resources. This will entail changing eligibility requirements that prevent individuals with complex needs from accessing housing and prioritizing vacancies in permanent supportive housing for these individuals. Additionally, we will need to invest in creating low-barrier permanent supportive housing that includes both single-site and scattered-site for our most vulnerable. This goal has included a commitment to the "Housing First" Model, whereas every individual and/or family is offered permanent housing of their choosing and intensive, wraparound supports without pre-conditions. In an effective Housing First system, housing is not contingent on compliance with services, treatment or sobriety, but instead, participants must comply with a standard lease agreement.

III. Definition of Chronic Homelessness

As approved by the Montgomery County Continuum of Care, chronic homelessness will be determined in Montgomery County by following the Federal definition, which was revised at the end of 2015. Under the new definition, for an individual to be chronically homeless, they must:

1. Have a disability, and
2. Live in a place not meant for human habitation, or a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter; or
3. Live in an institutional care facility if the individual has been living in the facility for fewer than 90 days and had been living in a place not meant for human habitation, a safe haven, or in an emergency shelter immediately before entering the institutional care facility, and
4. Have been homeless continuously for at least 12 months or on at least four separate occasions in the last three years where the combined occasions must total at least 12 months. [Each period separating the occasions must include at least seven nights of living in a situation other than a place not meant for human habitation, in an emergency shelter, or in a safe haven.]

Chronically homeless families are those in which the head of household meets the above definition.

IV. Methodology

The work on ending chronic homelessness in the County will be based on the use of a "By-Name-List," similar in format to what has been used on the Veterans effort. The By-Name-List for chronically homeless persons has recently been created based on the County's current Housing Prioritization Committee (HPC) list and the new consolidated list of clients seen by outreach providers.

Over the past three months, the Zero: 2016 team has gone through the hundreds of names on the HPC and Outreach Lists to identify clients who meet the Federal definition for chronic homelessness. This has been a time-consuming process which involved staff at multiple County and service provider agencies adding a large number of new outreach clients into the County's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), obtaining and uploading disability determination certifications, confirming clients' length of time and periods of homelessness, and updating vulnerability assessments. Homeless outreach providers including People Encouraging People (PEP), Interfaith Works, City of Gaithersburg and Bethesda Cares—participated in a workgroup to develop a strategy for collecting information about anonymous homeless persons to enable data entry into HMIS and inclusion on the By-Name-List. This effort led to the creation of written policy on "un-named clients." All this newly collected information has been added into the HMIS database. While the Chronic Homeless By-Name-List is currently a separate document, the intent moving forward is to consolidate all information on client's chronic homelessness status within HMIS so that in the future the chronic By-Name-List can be pulled directly out of HMIS.

The immediate goal of creating the By-Name-List has been to get a better understanding of the scale of chronic homelessness in Montgomery County, with the longer term goal of getting an exact number of persons living in the County who meet the Federal definition. Because an individual's circumstances can change, whether through diagnosis, living situation, change in residency, etc., a component of the By-Name-List has been to include a separate section with the names of those who, based on provider records, are at-risk of meeting the Federal definition in the future. By being identified as "at-risk" early, this group can then be immediately referred for less intensive service interventions which ideally can prevent them from ever becoming chronically homeless.

The development of the County's By-Name-List will continue to evolve based on experience and input from the providers on the ground locally as well as shared expertise gleaned from peers doing this work around the nation. The Montgomery County Zero: 2016 team regularly meets with groups from other jurisdictions to share ideas and refine systems. The Montgomery County By-Name-List process has been reviewed by the national Zero: 2016 staff and currently has a close to 100% score, which should be reached before the end of the year after some continued integration with HMIS.

V. Current Number

As of September 1, 2016, the By-Name-List includes 209 individuals and 0 families who are either verified as chronically homeless or who have been deemed by provider staff as likely to meet the Federal definition; 131of this total is from the HPC List, and 78 are from the Outreach List. This estimate is a high end number, as it includes 59 individuals from the Outreach List whose chronic status and Montgomery County residency has not yet been verified. Some of these 59 people are not well known to the staff of the provider organizations, and while the engagements indicate the potential of both a diagnosable disability and long periods of homelessness, this will not likely be the case for everyone that is currently being included in the count.

An "Outreach Blitz" count is planned for October 19-21 with a primary goal of collecting additional information on all individuals currently on the Outreach List, with a particular emphasis on documenting chronic status for those who meet the Federal definition. During the "Outreach Blitz" volunteers and outreach providers will canvas approximately 260 county-wide "hotspots" where individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness are known to frequent. These individuals are not currently engaged with social services or system providers thus most relevant information about disability and chronicity is missing.

VI. New Resources

As part of Montgomery County's Fiscal Year 2017 Budget, an appropriation in the amount of $250,000 was approved for the Chronic Homeless Initiative. The objective of this additional funding is to provide a range of services from record keeping, housing location and other needs for chronic homeless population.

As the County is increasing focus on getting all chronically homeless individuals and families into permanent housing placements, the Department of Housing and Community Affairs funding was approved for three contract positions that will be key to effort to end chronic homelessness. These three positions are:

1. HMIS Support Specialist to enable the use of the HMIS data to determine the most efficient use of resources for chronically homeless individuals and families, as well as those at risk of becoming chronically homeless.

2. Outreach Coordinator to be responsible for street outreach efforts county-wide including the development and facilitation of outreach strategies that reach out to individuals, build trusting relationships and work collaboratively with organizational and community partners. This new position is intended to help establish system-wide protocols for identifying and engaging homeless individuals and families who are either minimally connected or not currently participating in any social services programming.

3. Housing Coordinator to help strengthen relationships with landlords and housing developers to create more and better opportunities for affordable and sustainable housing placements for persons exiting chronic homelessness. There are currently a number of staff persons at County agencies and provider organizations whose responsibilities include building relationships with landlords and property managers. This new position is intended to centralize and coordinate the existing efforts of staff persons, and create some new relationships at a system-wide level to increase the opportunities for permanent housing placements in existing buildings and new developments.

VII. Barriers to Meeting the Goal

In order to effectively end chronic homelessness in Montgomery County, we must use data to inform how we allocate both new and existing resources. By collecting relevant demographic data on all individuals and families experiencing homelessness or at risk, we can more accurately predict future needs. Over the next few months, our goal is to further develop a quality By-Name-List in which every household experiencing homelessness in the County is known and has been assessed for his/her housing needs. Not all chronically homeless individuals and/or families require the long-term housing support and a permanent subsidy. Some households may need intensive short-term case management while others may need a long-term housing subsidy but no to minimal services. We will be using HUD funding to complete a full assessment both the County's current needs, existing resources, and gaps in the system.

Prior to the completion of an in-depth analysis of our housing system, we must continue to work to identify barriers to meeting our goal. To this end more than thirty people in Montgomery County leadership participated in an Action Camp in late July to discuss and identify the necessary next steps to ending chronic homelessness. Out of the Action Camp, a number of possible barriers and potential solutions were raised. Listed below are the three main areas of focus.

1. New subsidized housing units,
2. Maximizing and targeting existing resources, and
3. Prevention programs to reduce the number of people who become chronically homeless

The major issues raised in these three areas and some specific strategies to address are as follows:

1. Additional Subsidized Housing Units Needed – there is an existing supply of permanent supportive housing units for chronically homeless persons that are available through regular turn-over, as well as some new targeted programs coming on line, such as Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless Keys First Program that will serve 28 households and Progress Place that will serve 21 households. The number of units specifically designated as permanent supportive housing for the chronically homeless population does not, by itself, meet the current and anticipated future need.

   More exact numbers on the gap between existing permanent supportive housing units and the number necessary to meet the goal will be available based on the results of the Outreach Blitz count in October 2016. In the meantime, three subgroups are working on strategies to make more housing options available for chronically homeless persons:

   - Landlord Engagement: The subgroup will work to pursue strategies to encourage more landlords and property owners to rent to persons existing homelessness. These strategies may include the establishment of a landlord contingency fund, development of consistent messaging on the importance of permanent supportive housing in the community, better outreach efforts to existing and new landlords, community education efforts (i.e., housing fairs), and the creation of a centralized source of social services contact information for landlords and property managers.

   - New Permanent Supportive Housing Units: This subgroup will explore ways to create incentives for the development of new permanent supportive housing units, particularly through the use of creative financing mechanisms and the identification of potential sites. The intent is to increase the stock of units that are dedicated for use as permanent supportive housing, especially for the hardest-to-serve clients.

   - Rapid-Rehousing Models: The final subgroup will explore how time-limited rental assistance and intensive case management models might be better utilized to provide housing for some of the chronic homeless population. This has not previously been a significant component of Montgomery County's approach to ending chronic homelessness, but the experience of some other jurisdictions has indicated that rapid-

rehousing could be an appropriate housing intervention for those people with a small number of acute issues that seriously impact his or her housing stability, rather than a larger number of complex, co-occurring issues.

2. New Approaches to Using Existing Resources – there are opportunities to create some efficiencies within the existing system. Out of the Action Camp, there were workgroups established to develop strategies around the following two ideas:

   - Transitioning Out or "Moving Up": An occasional challenge with permanent supportive housing programs is that some clients may reach the point where they no longer need a high level of services attached to their placement but still require a housing subsidy. Currently there is no process of identifying who is ready to transition or alternative program that would enable them to maintain their permanent housing in a less intensive service setting.

   - Reducing the Time Between Housing Placement and Move-in: To focus on ways to improve the existing housing placement process with a particular focus on streamlining and reducing redundancy.

3. Prevention/Diversion – the goal is to create a system that ensures that no individual or family is ever chronically homeless, so it is essential to emphasis prevention and diversion programs that will keep people from ever reaching a point where they will meet the chronic homeless definition. The most direct way to prevent people from becoming chronic homelessness is to limit the length of time that they are not living in permanent housing. One immediate strategy that can be implemented is to emphasize data collection and reporting within HMIS for those individuals and families identified as "at risk" of chronic homelessness, and prioritize housing placements – particularly rapid-rehousing - for those clients. Additionally, we must continue our commitment to those individuals placed in permanent supportive housing through the County's housing continuum if and when they are not successful in housing. We will work to find provide additional supportive services and/or a better program match so this individual does not return to homelessness.

VIII. Conclusion

According to the USICH, ending homelessness is achieved when individuals who fall into homelessness, experience it as a brief crisis and quickly move forward on a path to housing. By converting existing resources, targeting new investments, and enhancing collaboration, Montgomery County will transition from simply managing the problem to actually solving it. Reaching this goal will be challenging, but by working together, Montgomery County can end chronic homelessness.

Last Update: 9/15/2016

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD

Description of Homeless Services

The Montgomery County Homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) is a public-private partnership that includes state and local government agencies, non-profit service providers, landlords, and other stakeholders who have a role in preventing and ending homelessness. The Interagency Commission on Homelessness serves as the CoC's governing board and oversees the community's strategic plan that focuses on four overarching goals:

- Prevent and end homelessness among Veterans by the end of 2015.
- Finish the job of ending chronic homelessness by the end of 2017.
- Prevent and end homelessness for families, youth, and children by 2020.
- Set a path to ending all types of homelessness.

The CoC continues to provide a full continuum of outreach and engagement, emergency and transitional shelter, safe havens, rapid re-housing, permanent supportive housing and permanent housing with supports to reduce the length of time persons are homeless. The CoC also utilizes a range of strategies including emergency financial assistance, shallow rent subsidies, and energy assistance to stabilize at-risk households to prevent the loss of permanent housing.

The CoC has enhanced its coordinated entry system to include uniform community-wide standards that prioritize persons for housing using a common screening and assessment process. This ensures that households are "matched" with the appropriate housing option and are screened for diversion services that can resolve the housing crisis, reducing the length of time homeless.

Montgomery County CoC achieved the goal of ending Veteran Homelessness by December 2015 according to benchmarks established by two national efforts – the U.S. Mayors Challenge to End Homelessness and the Zero:2016 Campaign. Montgomery County was one of only four jurisdictions nationally to meet both of these benchmarks. Key strategies to reach this goal included collaboration with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to identify veterans; prioritization of veterans for homeless housing opportunities; and an increase in the supply of housing options for homeless veterans through collaboration with Montgomery County, the Housing Opportunities Commission and the Veterans Administration. Montgomery County provided funding to create a permanent supportive housing program for 20 veteran households and a rapid rehousing program for 15 veteran households to support this effort.

Other important initiatives this year included:

- The CoC held its fifth, annual "Homeless Resource Day" as part of outreach efforts to connect residents experiencing homelessness with needed community resources and supports. Approximately 450 residents attended this highly successful event and were able to receive health screenings, flu shots, registration for mainstream benefits, personal care services (massages/haircuts) and much more. The event was supported by 270 volunteers from the community and 76 service providers or vendors.
- Young-Adult Rapid Re-Housing Program designed to meet the unique needs of young-adult headed families began operation with the capacity to serve 20 households. This program

2016 Point in Time Survey
Council of Governments

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pairs a rental subsidy with case management, independent living skills coaching, vocational and educational supports.

- Relocation of the Interfaith Works Community Visions Program and Shepherds Table to a new location is underway. Groundbreaking occurred in October 2015 and construction is projected to be complete by December 2016. This new facility will include 21 single room occupancy units for formerly homeless adults.
- Planning continues around relocation of the Wilkens Avenue Women Shelter to a new site. Cornerstone Montgomery in collaboration with Montgomery County is purchasing a new site which will enable the shelter to co-locate its program with behavioral health, medical and other vocational services.
- Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services renovated three homeless located in downtown Rockville that will provide transitional housing for large families that have legally immigrated to the United States and have limited English proficiency, employment skills, or involved in domestic violence.

The CoC continues to provide emergency shelter to households with children through three family shelters with the capacity to serve 27 families. An additional 14 families can be served through the County's domestic violence shelter. During this year's enumeration, a total of 34 families were in residing overflow shelter – 30 in motels, which serve as overflow when shelters are at capacity, and 4 families at Winter Haven, a hypothermia shelter serving women and families, a reduction over the previous year.
Emergency shelter capacity for adults without children includes 135 year round beds including 5 designated for victims of domestic violence, 3 designated for Healthcare for the Homeless, and 2 designated for Aging and Disability. During hypothermia season from November 1 to March 31st, capacity expands to 384 beds. On the day of the 2016 enumeration, there were 375 emergency shelter beds occupied, 239 of which were designated as seasonal or hypothermia overflow beds.

Transitional shelter and Safe Havens programs provide 178 beds for households without children. The number of transitional beds increased when one program was re-classified from permanent housing with supports to a three year time-limited transitional housing program. On the day of the enumeration, there were 152 beds occupied, a decrease over the 2015 enumeration. Evaluation of transitional housing programs to improve utilization will be occurring.

For households with children, The National Center for Children and Families (NCCF) added two homes to serve undocumented families fleeing domestic violence who need additional time and supports to obtain permanent status or work permits for self-sufficiency. In addition, the House of Divine Guidance opened the Lighthouse program in Jan. 2016 to serve three young-adult headed families. The Dwelling Place Re-Entry transitional housing closed which reduced the number of transitional units.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY'S YEAR-ROUND AND WINTER INVENTORY OF BEDS				
	Beds for Households w/o Children	Beds\Units for Households w/children	Total Year-Round Beds	Total Winter Beds
Hypothermia/Overflow/Other (Additional winter Capacity	243	111/34	0	354
Emergency Shelter Beds	135	135/41	270	0
Transitional / Safe Haven Beds	178	171/50	349	0
TOTALS	556	417/125	619	354

HOMELESS POINT-IN-TIME RESULTS

Montgomery County's homeless point in time survey was conducted on January 28, 2016, one day later than initially planned as a result of the January blizzard. A total of 981 homeless persons were counted that day, a decline of 11% over the 2015 count.

This overall decrease in homelessness can be attributed to a 31% reduction in the number of homeless households with children, which fell from 159 in 2015 to 109 in 2016. This reduction can be attributed to a focus on diversion efforts to prevent entry to homelessness, use of an intensive teaming model for households in motel more than 30 days, an increase in increase in rapid re-housing units, and the opening of the public housing authority waiting list, which enabled households that had stabilized in permanent supportive housing to move to mainstream housing.

Households without children experienced a 4% increase in 2016 from 598 in 2015 to 623 in 2016. The January blizzard likely contributed to this increase as the severe weather encourage people to come into shelter. The number of persons in emergency shelter was 11% higher than during the 2015 enumeration. Of the 375 homeless households without children surveyed 291 indicated they had lost housing in Montgomery County, while 19% indicated loss of housing from other jurisdictions.

The number of households with children headed by transition age youth (18-24 years old) decreased 42% from 31 in 2015 to 18 during the 2016 enumeration. The number of unaccompanied transition age youth also decreased in 2016 from 27 persons in 2015 to 24 in 2015, an 11% decline.

Montgomery County continues to experience high housing costs which make it difficult for households to obtain and maintain permanent housing. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, a family living in Montgomery County would need to earn a housing wage of $28.04 per hour or $58,344 annually to afford the fair market rent on a two-bedroom apartment of $1,458 per month.

The table below provides a comparison of the past 3 years.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY'S HOMELESS COUNT BY CATEGORY					
Category	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**Percent Change 2014 to 2016**	**Percent Change 2015 to 2016**
Total Number Counted	891	1100	981	10%	-11%
Total Individuals	603	598	623	3%	4%
Total Number of Families	91	159	109	20%	-31%
Total Persons in Families	288	502	358	24%	-29%
Total Adults in Families	101	184	128	27%	-30%
Total Children in Families	187	318	230	23%	-28%

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MONTHLY INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT

Among all households without children including those who are unsheltered, veterans, and transition age youth, 336 reported some type monthly income, a total of 54% percent which is a slight decline from the 2015 enumeration when 55% reported income. Of those reporting monthly income, 34% percent reported employment as the primary source of income while 57% percent reported that Social Security Retirement, Social Security Disability, and/or Veteran Disability income was the primary source of income. The CoC has made a concerted effort to connect homeless persons with vocational and employment supportive services, but this remains a challenge.

Among households with children including veterans and transition age youth, the number of adults reporting monthly income was 106 (83%). However 63 (59%) reported income from employment, which is an increase over the 2015 enumeration when 48% percent reported employment income. This is a reflection of the prioritization of work force development in new housing programs, community outreach and education. Montgomery County recognizes the need to increase income given the high cost of living. Providers are partnering with employment specialist and job coaches to assist in obtaining and maintaining employment.

SUBPOPULATIONS

Montgomery County saw a decrease in adults reporting serious mental illness from 204 in 2015 to 183 in 2016, a 10% decrease, but a 10% increase from 2014. There was a 21% in adults reporting co-occurring disorders but only a 3% decrease in chronic substance abuse only.

Over the past four years, the number of persons fleeing domestic violence has fluctuated, increasing in some years and decreasing in others. There was a 56% decrease during the 2016 enumeration from 291 in 2015 to 127 this year. In discussion with the CoC's domestic violence partners, there was no major explanation for this change; however, this enumeration did occur during the blizzard, and it may have been challenging to flee. Due to the additional needs of households reporting domestic violence including limited work experiences, poor to no social supports and limited resources, the CoC has created scattered site transitional housing that provides housing, case management for up to 12 months so that households have time stabilize, and obtain and/or improve income via employment and entitlements.

The number of persons experiencing chronic homelessness decreased 8% from 162 in 2015 to 151 in 2016, a continuation of a three year trend during which chronic homelessness has declined 36% since 2013. In addition, there was a 10% decrease in the number of unsheltered persons experiencing chronic homelessness from 49 in 2015 to 44 in 2016. This decrease can be directly attributed to the CoC's collaboration to prioritize vacancies in permanent supportive housing for those experiencing chronic homelessness. Despite these efforts, however, 15% of the County's total homeless population counted during the enumeration still met the criteria for chronic homelessness including 2 households with children (6 persons), 101 sheltered adults without children and 44 unsheltered adults without children.

While Montgomery County achieved "Functional Zero" for homeless Veterans in December, 2015 as a part of its commitment to the Zero: 2016 Initiative, it was expected that additional veterans would become newly homeless over time. During the 2016 enumeration, 17 persons self-identified as Veterans, a 29% decrease over the 2015 count and a 51% decrease over the 2014 enumeration. However, after further evaluation, veteran status could only be verified for 6 of those who self-identified while the status of the other 11 could not be verified for the following reasons: limited information, not registered with the US Dept. of Veteran Affairs, and/or did not meet the Montgomery

County CoC definition. The CoC's defines a veteran as any individual experiencing homelessness who has served on active duty in the United States Military, regardless of discharge status who lost housing in Montgomery County. The active duty requirement is not time restricted, which means that it applies to any length of service beyond training/boot camp.

	Adults Only in all Households FY15	Adults Only in all Households FY16	Percent Change 2015 – 2016
Chronic Substance Abuse (CSA)	76	74	-3%
Severe Mental Illness (SMI)	204	183	-10%
Dual Diagnosis (CSA&SMI)	144	114	-21%
Chronic Health Problem	194	198	2%
Living with HIV/AIDS	15	7	-53%
Physical Disability	80	91	14%
Domestic Violence Victim History	291	127	-56%
Limited English	73	85	16%
U.S. Veterans	24	17	-29%
Chronically Homeless	164	151	-8%

Based on this year's data and the continued lack of affordable, low income housing, the County is attempting to address this growth by increasing a variety housing options.

RAPID RE-HOUSING AND PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING PLACEMENTS

Montgomery County Continuum of Care is committed to providing a variety of housing options to address the needs of households experiencing homelessness. As previously mentioned a new rapid rehousing program began operation this year to serve 20 young adults households with children. In addition, Montgomery County's rapid rehousing program provides a time-limited, shallow rental subsidy ($400 per month for singles, $600 per month for families) and case management services for up to twelve months for an additional 35 families and 12 adults without children with the support of both County Federal Emergency Solutions Grant funding.

Permanent Housing

In Montgomery County there has been little change in the availability of affordable housing for persons with low to extremely-low incomes. The CoC has been able to increase permanent supportive housing via both County and HUD funding. The number of persons residing in permanent housing including RRH increased to 2,071 in 2016 from 1,960 in 2015, representing a 6% increase over 2015 and a 12% increase over 2014. This increase reflects the continued commitment of Montgomery County to increasing the supply of permanent housing.

The Montgomery County CoC strategic plan to end homelessness continues to emphasize a variety of objectives including increase access to housing options; improve access to education and training and increase employment and community education and strengthen the capacity of organizations by increasing knowledge about collaboration and homelessness.