



INTERAGENCY COMMISSION ON HOMELESSNESS

Housing for all = A Stronger Montgomery

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/homelessness | HousingForAll@montgomerycountymd.gov

Hybrid Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, November 2, 2022, | 3-5p

Present or represented

Bohorquez, Margarita (representing:
 Ruschelle Reuben)
 Chesney, Amanda
 Crowel, Raymond
 Dickersin-Prokopp, Christopher
Goldman, Jeff
Grey, Ebony

Habte, Asmara
 Hall, Courtney
 Harris, Amanda
 Hegel, Connor
 Hidalgo, Manny
 Hill, Terence
 Kelly, Kathryn

Lewis, Robin
 London, Sharan
 Nigam, Aseem
 Sinclair-Smith, Susie
 Seidel, Stan

Absent

Glass, Evan
 Sheth, Karishma
 Talley, Angela

Welcome | Introductions | Remarks – Jeff Goldman, Chair

Approval of the September 14, 2022, Meeting Notes (VOTE) – Ebony Grey, Co-Chair

The meeting notes were approved as written.

Built for Zero: Zero for all Populations – Chela Schuster

Community Solutions has been working with Montgomery County since 2011 to end homelessness starting with the first initiative the 100,000 Homes Campaign. Community Solutions envisions a more equitable society where homelessness is never inevitable, inescapable, or a way of life. There are 105 communities participating in Built for Zero (BfZ) and these communities have housed 147,000+ individuals. Fourteen communities, including Montgomery County, have functionally ended homelessness for a population. All the data and effort of these communities proves that homelessness is solvable.

Montgomery County is a National Leader because the County has:

- Ended veterans’ homelessness in 2015
- Committed to address racial inequalities in homelessness response system
- Continues to increase housing placements and decrease inflow
- Nimble and able to pilot and scale things quickly
- Committed to continuous improvement of system
- Strong capacity for data-driven decision making
- Strong partnerships and collaboration across systems

The Path to Zero – Next steps

- **End all homelessness by 2026:** BfZ will partner with critical stakeholders in Montgomery County to launch a planning process to determine a shared strategy and path to accomplish this goal
- Montgomery County Maryland is **one of 4 communities in the Country** currently invited to engage in this work. The four other communities are Abilene Texas, Rockford Illinois, and Arlington Virginia.

The Path to Zero – The Process

- **Collaborate** by bringing together different stakeholders (providers, staff, people with lived experience, adjacent systems, advocates, elected officials and other key community members).
- **Educate** by convening stakeholders to learn about and commit to shared definition of ending youth, family, single adults, and all homelessness
- **Examine the real-time data** and systemwide data to support goal setting and improvements while working with this broader stakeholder group
- **Set a goal** to end homelessness in next 4 years and **create a plan** to get there

Tools and Support provided by BfZ to help communities reach the Path for Zero is the all population by-name list scorecards to ensure accurate data; support and facilitation around definitions, data and goal setting, data coaching and technology assistance, as well as cohort peer learning facilitation to work through the process.

Definitions are developed from three criteria, 1) Quality Data; 2) Outcome Data and 3) Racial Equity Indicators.

- **Functional Zero:** The actual homeless number is less than the 6-month positive exits average in your community for singles, youth, adults, families, and veterans.
- **Single Adult:** Unaccompanied individuals 18 years old or older
- **Youth:** Unaccompanied individuals under 25 years old (includes pregnant and parenting youth)
- **Families:** Families with minor children
- **Ending Homelessness** by ensuring that homelessness is:
 - Rare: The community has met and sustained the functional Zero definitions for youth, families, single adults, veterans, and chronically homeless individuals
 - Brief: 45 days or less on average length of time from identification to move-in
 - Non-recurring: Of all the exits to permanent housing, no more than 5% of positive exits results in a return to the homelessness system within 2 years of exit from the homeless system (e.g., subsidy or services)
- **Racial Equity Indicators:**
 - System Decision Making Power makes sure that BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) at all levels of the homeless response system have decision-making power to influence the design of the system.
 - Lived Experience ensures that BIPOC receive services from the homeless response system have experiences that preserve their dignity, needs in a timely manner
 - Quality Data confirms that people experiencing homeless have access to the system and are known by name in the real-time.
 - System Outcomes indicates that communities close all racial/ethnic disproportionality in housing placements, returns to homelessness, and the average length of time from identification to housing by improving outcomes for BIPOC who experience homelessness.

Amanda commented that Montgomery County has a way to go to end homelessness. Ending homelessness is more than reaching functional zero but involves ensuring that our system is efficient and equitable. People will still become homeless, but our goal is to move them along quickly (**within 45 days from identification to move-in**). **Montgomery County's goal is to end homelessness by the end of 2025** (a year ahead of the BfZ 2026 goal).

Courtney Hall asked for some background as to why 2025 instead of 2026. *Amanda* responded that Montgomery County had originally set the goal in the Strategic Plan to end homelessness for all populations by the end 2023 but adjusted the goal because of the pandemic. In addition, the County would like to end homelessness ahead of the other communities.

Courtney also asked what lessons were learned from ending veteran homelessness. *Amanda* shared that each of the initiatives provided lessons learned, for example:

- Ending Veterans' homelessness taught us that it is possible to end homelessness.
- The Inside Not Outside initiative to end chronic homelessness helped us fine tune the housing prioritization process and our coordinated entry system.
- At Home Together or the effort to end family homelessness taught us that diversion really works.

Susan Sinclair commented the ending Veterans homelessness initiative involved having a dedicated campaign manager who reached out to the communities to identify Veterans in need. We right sized the housing placement by identifying which Veteran was eligible for VA housing benefits. We worked with HOC to make sure Veterans eligible for VASH vouchers were housed quickly. We advocated with the County Council to get resources for Operation Home Coming (a permanent supporting housing program) for Veterans not eligible for

VA benefits. Functional zero for Veterans in Montgomery County is having no more than 6 Veterans in our homeless system and that they are housed within 30 days.

Review of Progress on Population Goals

Today (November 2), Montgomery County population status is:

9	Veterans 3 of the 9 do not have current housing placements
72	Households with minor children The number has jumped dramatically. Housing families experiencing homelessness is a focus.
24	Chronic The number has gone down because there is supportive housing available. Those experiencing chronic homelessness are being included in the permanent supportive housing (PSH) prioritization.
26	Youth Tracking youth experiencing homelessness is difficult because youths are not in the usual places. We hope in a year or so to establish a Youth Coordinated Entry System, get the Youth drop-in center up and running and strengthen partnership and our data sharing with Montgomery County Public Schools.
16	Seniors 62+ Recently started tracking seniors as a sub population.
450	Adult only households experiencing homelessness which includes veterans, chronic, youth and seniors.

Amanda shared charts showing the inflow and outflow for adult, families with children (see [Presentation](#)). The charts showed that there is a need to figure out a way to prevent people from entering our system and once they do we want to house them quickly (i.e., turn off the faucet and open the drain). More families are entering our system with the bigger issue is that they are not being housed quickly. This is because there is not enough available units and landlords are getting creative on how they discriminate.

System Performance:

Rare	The number of people entering homelessness for the first time has decreased (5-year trend has decreased 17%)
Brief	Exiting people to permanent housing is going up (5-year trend has increased by 25%). The length of time homeless needs to be reduced (currently LOS 108 days)
One-time Only	Percentage of people returning is increasing (18% returns to homelessness after 24 months)

Terrence Hill shared from his experience people need support and wrap around services. For example, people have difficulty planning a budget. What would help is having peer support groups, care coordination and case management to help people learn the skills to stay housed.

Highlights of the [Tableau Dashboards Data Pull](#):

Ashley Richards share charts created through newly obtained Tableau. The timeframe for the data pool of clients who entered the system between January 2020 and October 31, 2022.

- Length of time to housing: Assigned to house (entered the system) less than 30 days; Accepted to housing (exited to permanent housing) over 100 days
- Youth: The 18-24 group are not being assessed and trends as mostly Black and people of color
- Seniors: The 62-74 age group have assessment completed because they stay in the system longer and trend to be mostly white
- Gender and sexual orientation are available in HMIS. We will be adding a question as to whether a person is among LGBTQ+ community.

Strategy and Planning Committee (SPC) Updates

- Current Strategic Plan to End Homelessness expires in December 2023
- SPC is embarking on an environmental scan as the pandemic has significantly altered our reality
- Current Strategies outlined in the plan will remain, but the action plans will be updated

Strategies, Goals, and the Progress we have made:

1. **Reduce Racial Disparities Across the System** | We have made some progress, thanks to Councilmember Glass and the County Council, who enacted the Housing Justice Act which prevents landlords from denying people based on criminal record which impacts Black and Brown people.

 2. **Build and Support Strong and Adaptable Programs** | Progress has been made in creating the Youth Drop-in Center, adding housing programs, and addressing unsheltered homelessness

 3. **Build and Support Affordable Housing Solutions** | Expanded rapid rehousing by 250 units (goal to expand by 350) and we have accomplished our goal to expand Permanent Supportive Housing by 100 units. Next steps getting dedicated units in any new or new preserved affordable housing.

 4. **Coordinate Effectively Across Other Systems of Care** | Partnered with Behavioral Health and other DHHS service areas throughout the pandemic.

 5. **Increase and Diversify Funding** | We have increased our funding.

 6. **Educate and Advocate for Change** | This is a strategy that we will focus on during the next year getting the community involved in the effort to prevent and end homelessness.
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Sharon London reported that the SPC will be reviewing and refreshing the Strategic Plan by doing an environmental scan. The current plan was adopted in 2019. We need to examine what has changed among the PESTEL = Political, Economic, Social Technological, Environmental and Legal factors that needs to be incorporated in a revised plan. Once the scan is done and the data is gathered and analyzed, the SPC will come back to the full ICH with a refreshed plan that meets the current needs.

HUD Continuum of Care and Unsheltered NOFO Update

1. Annual Continuum of Care Competition
 - All renewal projects were prioritized for funding in Tier 1
 - Submitted **two new bonus projects** on time
 - Pathways to Housing DC: Scattered Site- Permanent Supportive Housing Program for individuals enrolled in Assertive Community Treatment services
 - National Center for Children and Families: Youth Transitional Housing – Rapid Rehousing Program
2. Unsheltered Supplemental NOFO
 - Collaboration of multiple partners (Bethesda’s Cares Coordinating Center and Mary’s Center)
 - Expansion of Corporate Lease Permanent Supportive Housing
 - Critical Time Intervention Specialists
 - Mary’s Center will add Enhanced Access to Behavioral and Somatic Health Care
 - The Allocation Committee recommended creating better system coordination with Park Police, MCPD and Urban District, Libraries, Regional Service Directors, etc. by hiring a permanent Outreach Systems Coordinator
 - Utilizing the Planning Grant to evaluate current outreach strategy, conduct environmental scan and recommend improvements

Public Comments

Last week, *Stan Seidel* participated in a Blitz Count sponsored by EveryMind. *Stan* met *LaWanda B.* who experienced homelessness for over 6 months and lived in her car for almost 4 months. *LaWanda* shared her experience:

LaWanda Brown, a single mother of two sons and a HOC voucher holder, was given 30 days by her landlord to vacate the apartment because of failure to pay rent. *LaWanda* left the unit and experienced homelessness for the first time because of a rent increase. Her eldest son is in college and her 16-year-old son was sent to live with a family friend. *LaWanda* expressed that HOC did not assist her and when she went to Social Services at 1301 Piccard Drive, they said they were unable to help and sent her back to HOC. HOC instructed her to find a place on her own and provided her a list of rental properties to contact. She applied at over 30 locations and spent a lot of money for application fees only to be denied repeatedly.

LaWanda's frustration is that there was no help, referral to services and no guidance from HOC. Social Services was sympathetic, but no one helped her. She lost her HOC voucher and had to fight to get it back. *LaWanda* has the voucher again and was told that she had to find an apartment on her own within 3 months or she would lose the new voucher.

Stan expressed that *LaWanda's* situation is not an isolated incident. There needs to be better communication of where people experiencing homelessness can go for assistance. Perhaps, a media blitz to get the word out or having information posted at libraries where people experiencing homelessness frequent.

Kim Ball expressed that having a HOC voucher is wonderful because there are 16,000 people on the waitlist for vouchers. Kim shared that diversion grants are provided and may have been helpful. When a person receives an eviction notice, there are services that DHHS can provide. Unfortunately, there is a middle ground between people in need and people who are literally homeless. We focus on people who are literally homeless. This gap needs to be closed so that people in the middle, who may have a roof over their heads, but are in need receive assistance.

Courtney Hall asked *LaWanda* with her experience where she would recommend information be posted that would be seen by people in need. *LaWanda* answered that she and others spent a great deal of time at Starbucks and the Libraries. Perhaps, information at those locations would be helpful.

Connor Hegel expressed that it would be helpful if everyone were provided with contact information for caseworkers and managers so they can escalate their need. Many workers are working from home, have left, or changed jobs and it may be difficult for a consumer to get in touch with their caseworker. This type of transparency would empower the consumer and hold staff accountable.

Announcements

Amanda Harris announced the in-person December 14 Communitywide meeting at Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Rockville.

Next meeting: Wednesday, January 18, 2023, Hybrid meeting, Rockville Memorial Library, Rockville.

Meeting adjourned.