

BRIDGING THE GAPS

*CONTINUUM OF CARE
PLAN*



2008/2009

INTRODUCTION

The United States leads the world in the number of citizens who are billionaires, yet the problem of homelessness exists across the country. Our nation is also known for the innovative and tenacious spirit of its people. The Fairfield County Housing Coalition believes that homelessness is a problem with a solution. Working together we can overcome great obstacles and in that spirit, the Coalition presents this Continuum of Care Plan that offers hope in its approach toward ending homelessness and a commitment to take meaningful actions that can make a difference.

Fairfield County's plan coordinates a comprehensive set of services and housing choices designed to move individuals and families out of homelessness. It also informs various groups throughout the community of the challenges we face in ending homelessness and the possible solutions.

COALITION STRUCTURE AND PLANNING PROCESSES

As the lead entity for the CoC planning process, the Fairfield County Housing Coalition provides a unified approach toward improving and sustaining local housing services – a *no-wrong-door* approach. The Coalition is comprised of approximately 42 members that represent housing programs throughout the community. They are dedicated to addressing the needs of the homeless. Members collaborate in the CoC planning process to ensure, to the extent possible, that every local agency providing services to the homeless has the opportunity to provide input and perspective. If an additional group, agency or individual comes forward as a stakeholder, they are invited to participate.

The Coalition prepared the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Fairfield County during 2006 to outline strategies and implementation goals that provide solutions to homelessness within the community. The plan envisions a service system that makes prevention and permanent housing priorities.

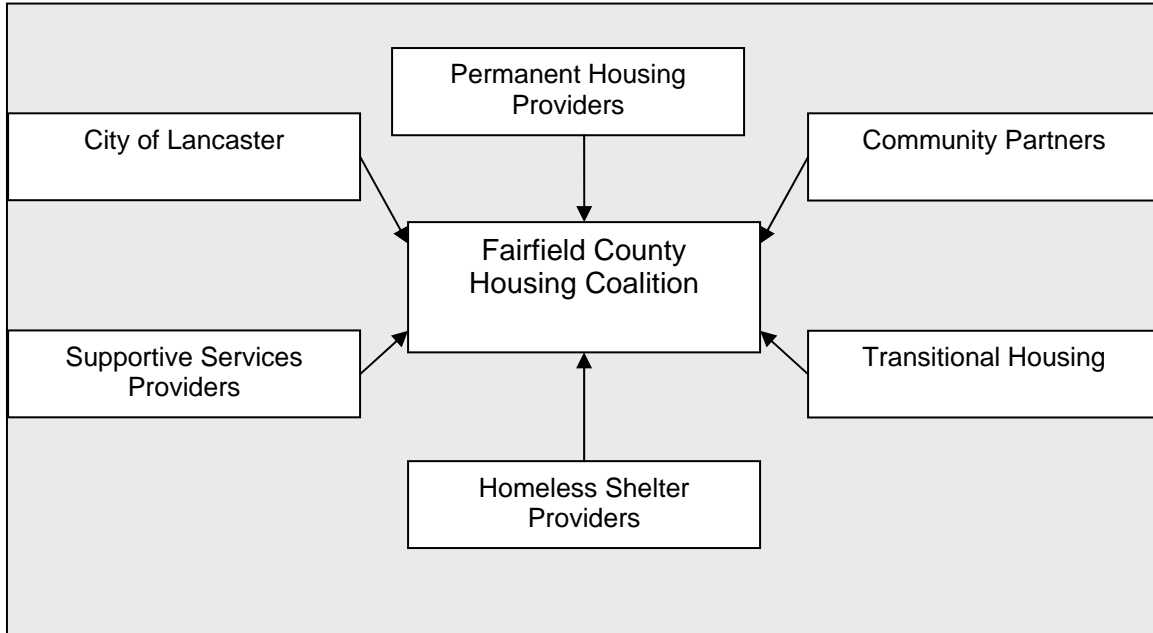
In 2008, the Coalition received a funding award in the amount of \$68,750 from the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation and Fannie Mae as part of the Rural Housing Initiative of Southeastern and Central Ohio (RHISCO). These dollars enhance the Coalition's mission in helping to address the priorities of Fairfield County's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness. The grant award is already making a difference in our community. The Coalition has created two part-time positions, a housing coordinator and a housing specialist. The housing coordinator is a member of the Lancaster-Fairfield Community Action staff and the housing specialist is a member of the Fairfield County Information and Referral staff.

Updating the Continuum of Care Plan is a collaborative process undertaken by the Housing Coalition as illustrated in the following diagram:

PRINCIPLES AND GOALS OF THE COALITION

- Reduce and eliminate homelessness
- Collaborate in providing housing and services
- Increase availability of affordable housing and services
- Share County resources
- Explore, develop and obtain funding in an ever increasing, complex and competitive market
- Educate consumers about self-sufficiency
- Identify emerging needs and develop responses

CONTINUUM OF CARE PLANNING PROCESS



FAIRFIELD COUNTY’S CONTINUUM OF CARE HISTORY

The Fairfield County Board of Commissioners established a Continuum of Care Committee in 1987. After instrumental involvement in community housing planning, the Committee formally identified itself as the Fairfield County Housing Coalition in 1997. Shortly thereafter, the group conducted its first point-in-time count and agreed on a set of priorities. In 2002, the Metropolitan Housing Authority and Lutheran Social Services partnered to create a more coordinated system of services and the Coalition was restructured. Today, the Coalition is a collaborative organization whose members represent to the extent possible, each local agency providing services to persons who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The Coalition has had healthy attendance and interest from key stakeholders.

The Housing Coalition meets every month and upholds its mission: *to assist individuals and families who become homeless or who are at risk of becoming homeless to regain housing stability and quality of life. Toward this end, the Coalition implements and expands a comprehensive Continuum of Care Plan to prevent and end the devastation of homelessness among individuals and families.*

REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

Fairfield County serves as a bridge between the Columbus Metropolitan area and Appalachian Ohio. It encompasses some of the strengths and challenges of both areas. The county and its seat, Lancaster, are caring communities that step forward to serve people in need, including churches, volunteer groups, foundations, generous individuals and corporate donors.

It is among the top-five fastest growing counties in the state. As the overall population grows, so does the number of people we need to serve. We strive to address these needs strategically and prudently.

Federal spending per capita remains the lowest of all contiguous counties. Sales tax rates in Ohio span from 6.25 percent up to 7 percent with Fairfield County being at the lowest end of the scale.

FEDERAL SPENDING

PER CAPITA IN THE REGION (SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, 2000)

<i>COUNTY</i>	<i>FEDERAL PER CAPITA SPENDING*</i>
Fairfield	\$3,475
Pickaway	\$3,996
Licking	\$4,800
Perry	\$4,968
Franklin	\$7,901

***Note:** Federal spending includes federal expenditures or obligations for grants, salaries and wages, procurement contracts, direct payments for individuals, and other direct payments, plus coverage/ commitments in the form of direct loans, guaranteed or insured loans and insurance.

The unemployment rate is 4.8 percent, slightly lower than the national average. Within Fairfield County, wages are the 68th lowest of all 88 counties in the state, according to information provided by the Fairfield County Department of Economic Development. While employment opportunities are not in abundance locally, the county's proximity to the Columbus metropolitan area gives workers convenient access to jobs there. U.S. census data indicates that 55.8 percent of our workers travel outside of the county to work. The average commute time is 27.7 minutes – higher than the state average of 22.9 minutes. Dramatic increases in fuel costs that far outpace wage increases are cause for concern to Fairfield County's commuting workforce.

Housing costs are tied to the market of the Columbus Metropolitan area (Franklin County) where per capita income is significantly higher than Fairfield County's. The average per capita personal income in Franklin County in 2005 was \$36,547 in comparison to \$30,371 in Fairfield County according to the U.S. Census Bureau data. Within the City of Lancaster, the average 2000 per capital income was \$17,614. Trends reported by Claritas project Lancaster's per capital income at \$20,563 for 2008.

DEFINING HOMELESSNESS

Coalition partners define homeless as:

An individual who lacks fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and

An individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is –

- *A supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations;*
- *An institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or*
- *A public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.*

The Coalition defines “at risk” homelessness as:

- *Persons who are near homelessness, such as those who are living doubled up with relatives or friends, or*
- *Those who are living in sub-standard housing conditions brought on by overcrowding or unsafe and unsanitary conditions.*

The above definitions mirror those supported by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). However, given that Fairfield County is largely rural and the definitions are more reflective of an urban setting, we must take into consideration the unique characteristics of our geographic area when examining the needs of the homeless and how to prevent homelessness.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RURAL HOMELESS

- Less educated but more likely to be employed, although in temporary jobs
- Less likely to receive government assistance, but more likely to have higher average monthly incomes and more likely to receive cash assistance from friends
- Shorter episodes of homelessness
- Two to four times more likely to live with friends or family
- As likely as other homeless persons to report having a mental health, alcohol, or drug problem during the past month, but six times more likely than their urban counterparts to report an alcohol-only problem during the last year
- Less likely to have health insurance or access to medical care.

THE RURAL PERSPECTIVE

Actual homelessness in which people live on the street or in a shelter is often less common in rural areas due to family networks and fewer resources. Homeless people in rural areas typically experience precarious housing conditions more frequently than actual homelessness. Rural homeless people housed in these types of situations, such as temporary accommodations with friends and relatives, do not meet the definition of literal homelessness used to determine eligibility for government programs.¹ According to Post (2002, pgs.1-2) rural homelessness differs in important ways from urban homelessness.

Developing a comprehensive response to homelessness in rural areas presents unique challenges. Many communities lack a system to meet emergency housing needs and they face several barriers that limit the development of these resources, such as:

¹ Housing Assistance Council fact sheet, “Rural Homelessness,” August 2006. www.ruralhome.org.

- **Access to Services**—Rural areas have fewer service providers and people may have to travel longer distances for services. The providers that exist in rural communities differ from their urban counterparts – they tend to provide less shelter and housing than outreach, food and financial assistance (Burt et al, 1999).
- **Assessing Need**—No national survey quantifies the number of rural homeless persons in the United States. Most of the homeless literature bases assessments on metro and non-metro service providers to document homeless characteristics.
- **Community Awareness and Support**—Rural homeless people do not usually sleep outside, in emergency shelters or in visible spaces, so there may be a misperception that the problem does not exist (Burt et al, 1999).
- **Defining Homelessness**—The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) uses a limited definition of homelessness in determining allocation of resources. Rural residents who have no homes and are living in highly unstable situations are not counted for programs such as the Continuum of Care. Therefore, many rural communities cannot access funding streams that address the needs of their population.

The obstacles require innovative rural delivery systems. Because the number of homeless people in a given community is often small and congregate shelter may be viewed as inappropriate, providers in rural areas have a strong incentive to focus on prevention and permanent re-housing. Limited capacity has encouraged networking among providers, which lessens the obstacles posed by diseconomies of scale, diversity of assistance needs and limited program resources (Stover 1999).

IDENTIFYING FAIRFIELD COUNTY’S HOMELESS

Identifying various homeless populations according to key characteristics is an important step in the planning process – a step that enables the development of the most effective solutions. The homeless populations of Fairfield County have been categorized as follows:

Populations

- Individuals
- Families
- Youth

Sub-Populations

- People with drug or alcohol addictions
- People with mental illness
- People with dual or multiple diagnoses
- People who are physically disabled
- Veterans
- Victims of domestic violence
- People living with HIV/AIDS

POINT-IN-TIME COUNT

January 31, 2008, the Fairfield County point-in-time count was conducted using agency surveys and field outreach. It identified 386 homeless individuals according to the HUD definition, representing a 38-percent increase in comparison to 2007. Twenty-eight individuals were found to be at-risk of becoming homeless.

Of the 386 individuals meeting the HUD definition, 343 were sheltered in community homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters or transitional housing facilities for the homeless. The remaining 43 individuals were unsheltered and on waiting lists for shelter and were members of families. This data confirms previous gaps analyses conducted by the Housing Coalition that revealed a significant need for increased family shelter capacity.

Sheltered individuals were assessed to identify the primary issue/special need that led to their homelessness:

**SPECIAL NEEDS OF HOMELESS PERSONS IN FAIRFIELD COUNTY
2008 POINT-IN-TIME COUNT**

<i>Issue/Special Need</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Mental Health	69	18%
Drug/Alcohol Abuse	58	15%
Dual Diagnosis	38	11%
Domestic Violence Victim	35	9%
Low Income	164	42%
Chronically Homeless	22	5%
TOTAL HOMELESS	386	100%

Shelter Plus Care participants are moved directly into permanent housing and are provided individualized, home-based supportive services to help them transition to stability and independence. The high incidence of individuals that are homeless due to mental health or substance abuse issues or with dual diagnosis – 44 percent collectively – indicates that a Shelter Plus Care model of permanent housing could have a significant impact on reducing homelessness in Fairfield County.

Homelessness due to low income represents a large segment of the population – 42 percent – as reflected in the County’s 2008 point-in-time count. This indicates the need for strengthening effective supportive services designed to build greater self sufficiency for individuals and families, such as Shelter Plus Care focused on housing counseling, job- and life-skill development as well as financial literacy.

Twenty-two individuals in Fairfield County were identified as chronically homeless – five percent of the homeless population. These individuals tend to have multiple obstacles toward obtaining and maintaining permanent housing, require intensive service coordination and utilize a high percentage of community resources for homeless services. These individuals could benefit from a Shelter Plus Care model.

HOMELESS POPULATION PROFILE

Obtaining a truly accurate count of homeless persons is a difficult task – not all persons who are homeless access the shelter system. Some individuals are temporarily housed in mental health and substance-abuse facilities and jails. Some are living on the streets or in cars. Others are illegally squatting in abandoned public and private housing or precariously doubled up with relatives or friends.

Given that a point-in-time count – particularly one conducted in a rural area – does not account for the entire homeless population, statistical data provided by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the U.S. Health and Human Services Department and from the National Alliance to Prevent Homelessness have been applied to the Fairfield County population. With the county population at approximately 140,000, one percent incidence of homelessness would be 1,400 people. The figures in the chart below approximate a countywide profile that can offer a perspective that encompasses the uncounted. These numbers are based upon national averages.

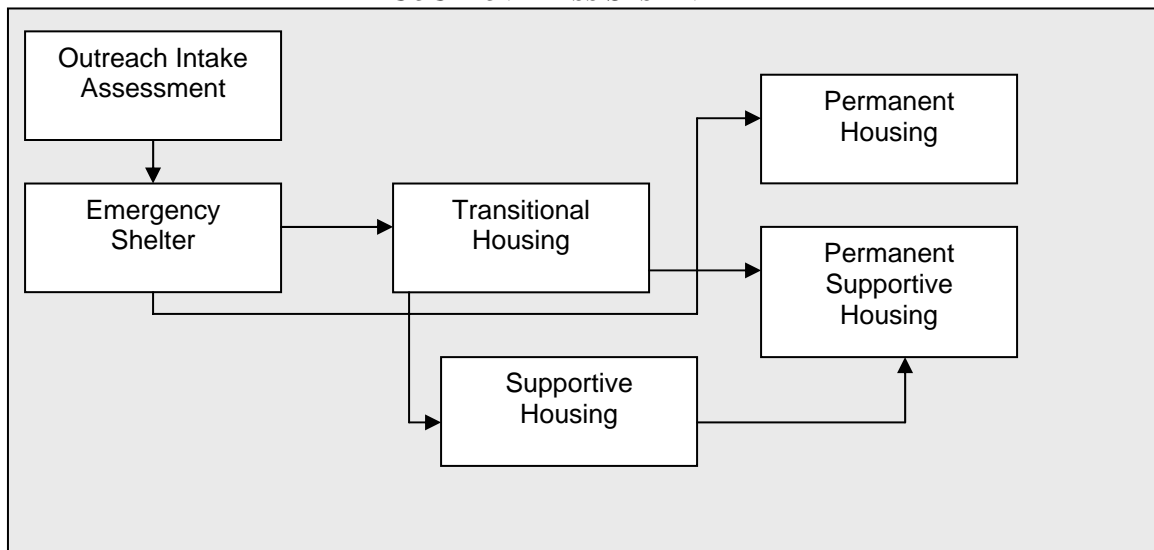
HOMELESS POPULATION PROFILE BASED ON NATIONAL AVERAGES

<i>CATEGORY</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
Mental Health	308	22%
Drug/Alcohol Abuse	420	30%
Dual Diagnosis	224	16%
Domestic Violence Victim	182	13%
HIV / AIDS	42	3%
Chronically Homeless	70	5%
Veterans	322	23%
Families With Children (> age 18)	560	40%
Children Unaccompanied by Adults	70	5%
Total Homeless	1,400	1% of entire population

ANALYZING THE GAPS

The ultimate goal of the community’s plan is to have sufficient resources in the outreach, prevention, transitional, supportive and permanent housing and in supportive services that minimize an emergency shelter stay for an individual or family. During the 2008 update of the Continuum of Care Plan, Housing Coalition members identified gaps in each of these areas using point-in-time count data, documented community needs as well as local, state and national statistical data.

CoC HOMELESS SYSTEM



OUTREACH

Outreach services provide information and services to individuals and families who are currently homeless. Fairfield County offers outreach by providing information and referral to the homeless population. A point-in-time count is conducted annually on January 31. In 2008, the count identified 386 homeless people. Statistics compiled by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration indicate that, on average, the homeless represent one percent of the overall population. In Fairfield County that number would be approximately 1,400 individuals. We need to increase outreach to the remainder of the homeless. In reaching them, we have the opportunity to address the situational changes needed to build a foundation for their housing stability.

Gaps & Needs Identified: locating homeless persons who are not accessing shelters; assessing specific needs; providing transportation to shelters; increased awareness of housing and support resources within the community and particularly in the homeless population; increased efforts toward data collection and analysis to support program and resource planning.

PREVENTION

Prevention is the most cost-effective method of providing service. It is also less disruptive to a family's life to maintain existing housing whenever this can be achieved. Homeless prevention activities target both homeless and at-risk households.

The point-in-time survey revealed that low income is the single greatest contributing factor to homelessness. Therefore, support that meets both short-term and long-term economic needs is a priority toward eliminating homelessness. While the ultimate goal is to help this population achieve financial self-sufficiency, having access to adequate emergency housing funds for rent, mortgage payments, deposits and utilities is crucial. Eviction prevention, landlord-tenant mediation, hard-skill and soft-skill training and financial literacy education are valuable services to help the low-income population acquire the means to avoid homelessness.

In 2007, available housing emergency funds at Community Action provided prevention assistance to 545 of the 641 households in need, leaving a gap in service to 96 households. Ten of those households had already slipped into homelessness at the time of application for funds.

In addressing the needs of low-income individuals with mental health challenges, New Horizons has emergency housing funds for 35 households; however, the estimated need annually is 70, leaving a gap of 35.

According to the SAMHSA, substance-abuse problems frequently lead to loss of housing. The Recovery Center for substance-abuse treatment typically has a six- to eight-week waiting list for services in Fairfield County. Low-income single adults who are ineligible for Medicaid face a significant treatment barrier. In addition to not qualifying for Medicaid, they typically do not have health care coverage. Therefore, the ability to pay for treatment is far beyond their financial means, so they are placed at a high risk of experiencing a perpetual cycle of homelessness.

Another factor contributing to homelessness is the length of time it takes to process applications for SSDI and SSI. It is often necessary to resubmit an application multiple times. In the interim, these individuals have no means of income and they are placed at a very high risk of homelessness.

The Fairfield County Job and Family Services Department (JFS) has a monthly intake of approximately 200 low-income households in need of services and support. The Food Stamp program provides assistance to nearly 3,000 households per month. These figures encompass the low-income population that could potentially encounter housing instability.

Gaps & Needs Identified: Adequate resources for emergency rent and utility assistance; eviction mediation services; car repair services to support sustained employment for very low-income households; adequate budgeting, financial, housing and bankruptcy counseling; foreclosure counseling and intervention; more flexibility in working with customers to address case-specific circumstances; increased capacity to work with low-income families in early childhood development and family management skills; increased capacity to provide training; increased treatment capacity for the mentally ill and drug/alcohol dependent population.

EMERGENCY SHELTERS

Emergency shelters in Fairfield County serve single adults, families and victims of domestic violence. Families represent the fastest growing segment of the homeless population. National statistics indicate an incidence of 40 percent for families in the overall homeless population. Point-in-time survey data points to a shortage of space in the family shelter and families are usually placed on a waiting list for shelter. There is also a shortage of support services, particularly in the faith-based Foundations Shelter.

Fairfield County JFS provides emergency housing assistance to homeless families through its Prevention, Retention and Contingency (PRC) program. These resources have decreased in recent years, while the need has increased. In 2008, funds were available to provide daily assistance to six families; however, there is a need to serve 15, leaving a gap in service for nine families.

Gaps & Needs Identified: Increased units of family shelter; day programming for the homeless; additional case management; increased coordination in the system of care; increased funding for emergency housing assistance; adequate food; adequate medical resources.

EMERGENCY SHELTER UNITS

Shelter Name	Type	Capacity	Estimated Unmet Need
Lancaster-Fairfield County Community Action Emergency Homeless Shelter	Families in crisis	12	31
Lighthouse	Victims of domestic violence	18	5
Foundation Shelter	Adults and Families in crisis	20	Not Available
Lutheran Social Services Shelter	Individuals in crisis	24	0
TOTALS		74	36

TRANSITIONAL & PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Transitional housing provides individuals and families with the needed services to move from homelessness to self-sufficiency, such as life-skills training, community information and referral, assistance with housing and transportation, housekeeping supplies and clothing, job-skill building, mental health treatment and substance-abuse recovery.

Fairfield County’s 2008 Point-In-Time data indicated that the top causes of homelessness were issues related to income, mental health and substance abuse.

Fairfield County does not have an inpatient treatment facility for substance abuse. When placed outside of the county for treatment, clients are removed from their continuum of care, which bears an adverse impact on recovery success. People with substance use disorders that are homeless face competition for limited treatment slots.

We are unable to meet the need for Housing Assistance Program (HAP) vouchers issued through the Ohio Department of MR/DD. New Horizons typically has a list of 100 or more mental health clients waiting for permanent supportive housing. In the interim, they face unstable housing situations.

Two transitional housing facilities were recently opened – one for youth aging out of foster care and a faith-based home for women ex-offenders. A number of life circumstances make transitional housing the best solution – situations where individuals or families are moving from a sheltered environment, but they are not equipped for success in permanent housing.

The increasing number of homeless families is an indicator of the need for permanent supportive housing for families.

Gaps & Needs Identified: Additional transitional and supportive placements for individuals and families moving out of emergency shelters; placements for youth aging out of foster care; additional and ongoing case management; accessible, temporary housing for physically disabled; additional facilities with case management; additional housing for individuals and families who are recovering from substance abuse.

FAIRFIELD COUNTY TRANSITIONAL / PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING UNITS & NEEDS

Facility Name	Type	Capacity	Est. Unmet Need
Fairhaven Place (Lutheran Social Services)	Single adults	17	7
Our Place (Fairfield Mental Health Consumer Group)	Single adults with mental health needs	7	7
New Horizons	Individuals and families with mental health needs	35	37
Grace Haven Place	Transitioning women ex-offenders	4	
Reality House	Youth aging out of foster care	5	5
Family Supportive Housing (LSS)	Very-low income families	250	30
Lancaster-Fairfield Community Action (facility in concept planning)	Families (estimated need based on three persons per family)	0	33
LFCAA	HOPWA	8	0
Need Assessed by Job & Family Services	Family Transitional Housing	0	50
TOTALS		326	169

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Supportive services help formerly homeless persons or the person at risk of homelessness identify and modify behaviors and change circumstances that can jeopardize their housing stability. Once families and individuals are able to access housing, the key is to break the cycle of homelessness and to maintain a safe, decent and affordable home through adequate and appropriate supportive services.

Providing the low-income sector with supports toward acquiring the financial resources they need for housing is a priority, whether through skill building for local jobs that pay a living wage or by ensuring that those who are unable to work are connected to the appropriate benefits.

According to national statistics from The Urban Institute, 38 percent of the homeless population has less than a high school diploma – an often required credential for employment. We can help more of the homeless population and those at risk by ensuring we have adequate General Education Development (GED) preparation and testing services. An increased focus on certified career training would provide the opportunity for the homeless and those at risk to build even greater earning capacity.

Workforce Investment Act (WIA) training programs have layers of enrollment requirements that exclude many people in the very low-income population. We lack programming and funds for the type of short-term training that will enable this population to secure adequate employment quickly.

Further, ensuring that people have the knowledge of how to manage their material resources can contribute to housing stability, whether through housing counseling, financial literacy training or life-skill building.

The county does not have a transportation system that adequately addresses the needs of the low-income population, which imposes barriers to seeking employment, locating housing and/or receiving necessary medical and health care services. Skyrocketing fuel costs are rapidly making vehicle operation expenses out of reach of this segment of the population. JFS has limited resources to provide transportation services, but those resources cover only half of the estimated need.

Gaps & Needs Identified: Affordable public transportation to medical services and places of employment; more Social Security payees for the disabled; financial assistance for security deposits and first month's rent; continued case management to provide education and encouragement toward responsible life choices; financial literacy education; housing counseling services; more opportunities to provide life-skills training and job training for the jobs available in the local market; increased participation in the Benefit Bank; additional support to customers in locating affordable housing.

PERMANENT HOUSING

Permanent housing resources include: private rentals with affordable rents for the low-income sector; units with below-market rents contractually committed (i.e., tax credit projects) to keep rents affordable for the low- to moderate-income (LMI) population; and government-assisted, project-based units where the subsidy is attached to the unit or tenant based that moves with the household. The project-based subsidized units and below-market rentals are owned by a number of for-profit and nonprofit developers in the community. The tenant-based assistance programs are operated by Fairfield Metropolitan Housing Authority.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness indicates that funding for public housing and Section 8 vouchers declined by 25 percent nationally from 1999 to 2006. Going into 2008, Fairfield Metropolitan Housing Authority's waiting list for Section 8 vouchers had 958 families. Due to the wide gap between availability and need, FMHA closed its waiting list. The public housing waiting list was also lengthy with 765 households.

Fairfield County has a significant percentage of dwellings constructed prior to 1979 – 54.7 percent. Homes constructed prior to 1979 have a higher risk of lead-based paint health hazards as well as a higher need for maintenance and repairs to ensure the health and safety of occupants. Though the 2000 Census data does not directly reveal needs with regard to physical or financial conditions, the age of the housing stock indicates that more than 4,000 LMI housing units may be in need of lead-based paint mitigation or other emergency repairs.

Low-income people with physical disabilities face a lack of affordable and accessible housing. Some are detained in nursing homes due to the unavailability of appropriate housing. Statistical data has not been compiled on a local basis to illustrate the extent of the need; however, a snapshot in time shows the Southeastern Ohio Council for Independent Living working with five physically disabled individuals who are unable to transition to permanent housing for this reason. With Ohio participating in the Money Follows the Person (MFP) Rebalancing Demonstration grant, it is estimated that over 2,000 people statewide will be relocated from nursing homes over the next five years. Should this occur the caseload will increase.

Gaps & Needs Identified: Additional Housing Choice Vouchers; more units of safe, affordable and accessible rental properties; intervention for at-risk individuals and families; safety net of emergency funds; homeownership assistance for low- to moderate-income households; additional housing for the physically disabled as well as other special populations; housing counseling; home buyer education; funding for lead-based paint abatement, private-owner rehabilitation, rental rehabilitation and other repairs to bring older units up to a safe condition in a manner that keeps the units affordable.

SOLUTIONS – THE TEN-YEAR PLAN

The Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Fairfield County outlines strategic actions to address identified local issues that contribute to the conditions and risks of homelessness. The Coalition received a grant from the Osteopathic Heritage Foundations to develop the plan. The grant was part of a larger effort by 17 counties in southeast and central Ohio known as the Rural Homeless Initiative of Southeast and Central Ohio (RHISCO). Technical assistance for the plan was provided by the National Alliance to End Homelessness.

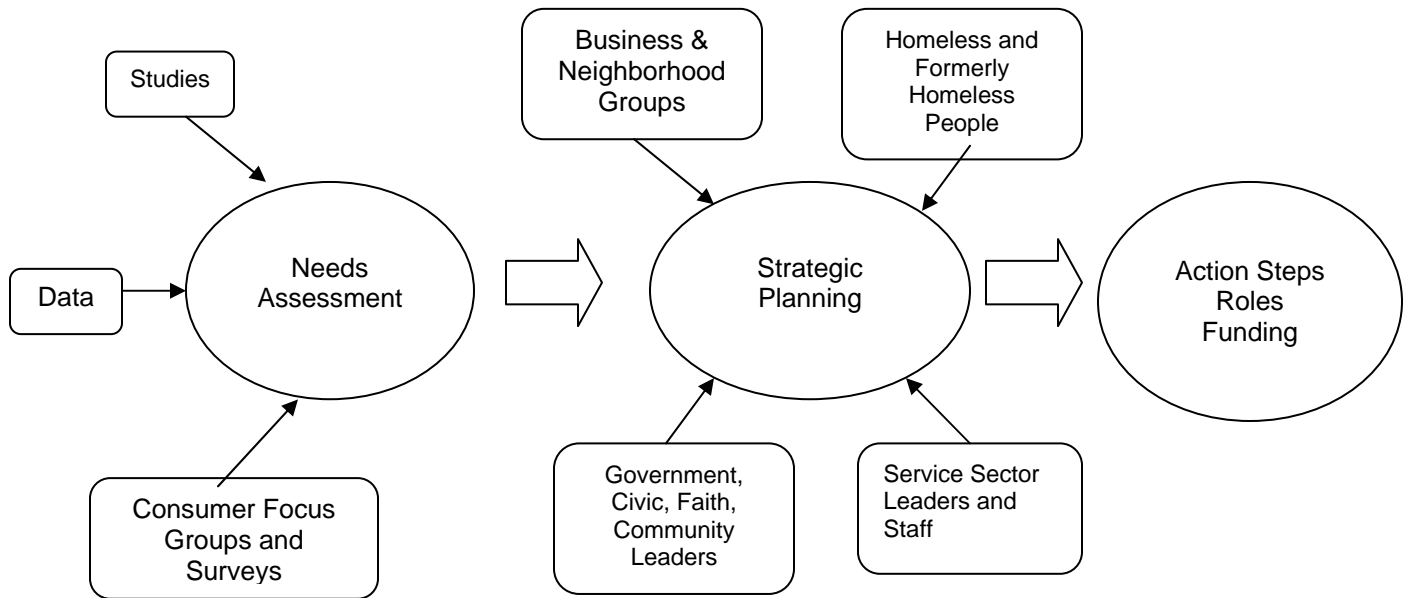
A workgroup of the Coalition met from August through December 2006 and reviewed existing needs assessments and studies, data from multiple systems of care, and input from homeless and low-income residents. The workgroup then developed achievable strategies to build upon strengths of the current system and created new programs and services to meet the needs of homeless persons.

The Fairfield County Housing Coalition is working together to accomplish strategies within the Ten-Year Plan, assigning sub-committees for projects as needed. Some of the strategies will require teamwork and collaboration from major systems of care in Fairfield County, including

professional and natural support systems. Other strategies are simpler, and may be accomplished by a single agency or program.

Throughout implementation, the Coalition continues to work together with community partners to identify action steps, roles and responsibilities, and funding sources to help make the strategies a reality to end homelessness in Fairfield County.

PLANNING PROCESS



Current assessment by providers of housing and services for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness as well as members of the community indicate the following areas of priority needs:

- 1) Preservation of emergency shelter care
- 2) Expansion of family shelter services
- 3) Increased capacity for transitional and permanent supportive housing
- 4) Preservation and expansion of permanent affordable housing
- 5) Adequate, affordable housing for elderly, mentally disabled, physically disabled and special populations
- 6) Counseling, educational and supportive services to meet diverse needs of the low-income population as well as people with special needs

GOALS / ACTION PLANS

The goals and action plans of the Housing Coalition address the needs of varying populations and consider the development of self sufficiency skills at all stages of life. Far more than a “bricks and mortar” approach to ending homelessness, these goals and action plans are designed to strengthen a community infrastructure that seeks to provide the most critical and effective educational and material supports.

Education and Public Information:

- Continue to train individuals and the community on programs such as the Family Self-Sufficiency, WorkForce Development and Break-Out.
- Educate the public about housing resources and services using local media channels.
- Educate landlords on the high cost of eviction and low-income tenants on the benefits of staying in one place.
- Educate people at all stages of life about effective management of family and personal finances.
- Educate those at risk of homelessness about how to avoid losing their current housing.
- Encourage landlords to use the state online Housing Locator to post available housing units.
- Examine educational resources for the low-income sector that provide adequate training at all stages of life to increase self-sufficiency skills, beginning in early childhood, throughout school years and continuing into adulthood. Find ways to convey the link between education and self-sufficiency to all audiences.

System Coordination

- Expand opportunities for collaboration: conduct a housing summit that includes direct perspectives of the homeless and the faith-based community.
- Develop a dialogue with neighboring counties engaged in the Rural Housing Initiative of Southeastern and Central Ohio.
- Develop a system throughout the network of Fairfield County shelters to share information about the homeless population.
- Compare Fairfield County's housing assistance funding with five similar counties to determine if there are additional opportunities to bring more funding into the county for housing assistance.
- Continue to build partnerships between mental health, elderly and special populations and with nonprofits involved in affordable housing projects to increase inventory of affordable housing – ensure consideration is given to accessibility for people of all ages.
- Encourage dialog, education and coordination of care with institutions that discharge people to any type of housing in Fairfield County (Veterans Administration, Chillicothe Correctional Institute, jails, etc.).

Advocacy

- Work with local elected officials to develop greater awareness of unmet needs and of existing resources that serve the homeless and low-income sector; provide key leaders with tours of homeless shelters and outreach locations; invite local elected officials to participate in the annual housing summit.
- Raise awareness of utility costs (gas, electric, water) and advocate for forgivable accounts for consumers in a state of hardship.

Programs and Services

- Expand access to available resources by increasing the number of Social Security payees and promoting the Benefit Bank.
- Develop a pocket-sized directory listing resources for the homeless.
- For the homeless and those at risk of homelessness, develop a daytime resource center.
- In collaboration with the Lancaster Public Transit System and other regional resources, foster the development of a transportation pool that serves low-income workers during all work shifts. The low income population of Fairfield County would benefit from greater access to low-cost transportation resources for purposes of attaining employment and remaining employed.
- Target elderly and disabled residents in their exploration of additional rental assistance resources.
- Provide more assistance to people before they are in crisis.
- Assess home-repair services and resources to prevent low-income residents from becoming homeless due to residential health and safety hazards.
- Increase the number of accessible affordable housing units to prevent people with disabilities from becoming homeless.
- Develop additional housing and support programs for youth aging out of foster care.
- Promote faster access to employment for persons who are out of work:
- Advocate the development of secure, local jobs that provide a living wage.
- Encourage the development of job-skill training to meet the potential needs of the local businesses and industries.
- Encourage the development of meaningful work incentive programs, part-time positions and supportive employment opportunities.

Procurement of Resources

- Seek new funding sources to address gaps in need for emergency shelter, transitional housing and permanent supportive housing (e.g., Shelter Plus Care).
- Preserve adult beds and expand capacity of family shelter.
- Seek additional funding for services and programs that build greater self sufficiency for the low-income sector through housing and employment stability. Examples include the Family Self Sufficiency Program and Individual Development Accounts at Fairfield Metropolitan Housing Authority as well as financial literacy education programs.
- Encourage providers and other agencies to consider exploring funding resources, such as the HUD SuperNOFA to provide additional homeless outreach to Fairfield County.

Fairfield County's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness will be flexible as needs and priorities change. New funding opportunities, economic changes and population shifts will undoubtedly affect how the plan is implemented.

The Housing Coalition will assess progress on the plan's implementation on an annual basis. Progress toward specific strategies and objectives will also be assessed at monthly meetings. The annual review will include analysis of outcomes, timelines, roles and responsibilities and reporting to community.

POINTS OF PROGRESS

- The Recovery Center initiated outreach and treatment for homeless persons in conjunction with other agencies to provide intensive outpatient services and *wrap-around* services.
- FCJFS received grants for the Family Stability Unit Project for the child welfare program (Children Services), funded at \$698,629 for the development of a team of child welfare professionals assigned to provide short-term intensive intervention to families experiencing domestic violence or economic instability.
- The Pay Forward Project received \$307,121 for a self-sufficiency program offering asset accumulation opportunities for successful Ohio Works First (OWF) families achieving continuous employment.
- The Breaking Out Project received \$86,641 to serve the re-entry needs of released felons.
- FCJFS identified a case worker to help appropriate families apply for SSI benefits. If successful, this initiative will enable families to become self-sufficient and reduce our caseload size for OWF.
- The Lutheran Social Services adult shelter was relocated to a new facility that increased its capacity.
- Lutheran Social Services applied for 15 units of Shelter Plus Care housing through HUD in April of 2006 to create 15 additional housing vouchers for homeless persons.
- The Lancaster-Fairfield Community Action Agency (LFCAA) is in the concept stage of planning for the development of a new 11-unit permanent-housing project to serve low-income families. The project may include homeless families who would qualify for permanent supportive housing and access either federal Supportive Housing Program or Shelter Plus Care funds.
- LFCAA is in the planning stages of expanding the emergency family shelter.
- In the wake of the national foreclosure crisis, Coalition members identified the need to develop a HUD housing counseling resource in Fairfield County. LFCAA is in the process of learning the requirements and developing the resources to become a HUD-approved housing counseling agent.
- The Fairfield ADAMH Board has a project for respite beds and for a group home. The Board lacked funding to match funds received by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill's Mental Health Housing Leadership Institute. Levy funding enabled progress on these projects.
- Workforce Investment Act training was provided to representatives from 15 community agencies on rapid response for individuals displaced from employment as a result of corporate restructuring.

- Representatives from several agencies have been trained on the Benefit Bank, a web-based, counselor-assisted resource that simplifies and centralizes the process of applying for many state and federal benefits for low and moderate income individuals and families. The program includes free tax filing. At Lancaster-Fairfield Community Action Agency during the first quarter of 2008, 30 customers were able to claim a total \$46,000 in tax credits, not including funds claimed through the 2008 federal economic stimulus package.
- The Social Security Office conducted training on the online application process to several agencies and plans to provide this training to all social service providers.
- The Housing Coalition published the Guide to Affordable Housing in 2007 as an educational and informative resource to foster greater awareness of ways to achieve and maintain housing stability.
- A Housing Summit was conducted in 2007 at which 150 service providers received training and information on housing services and resources available to the very low, low and moderate income individuals and families.
- Tip sheets are being developed to help educate people at risk of homelessness on ways to avoid losing their current housing.
- Fairfield County Information and Referral Services initiated 24-hour access during 2007. This expanded service makes available emergency information for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness.
- A mail and message service is being developed at Fairhaven Place for persons who are homeless or in short-term shelter. Efforts will be made to improve this service by further coordination with the United States Postal Service and among Coalition service providers.
- The point-in-time count was conducted on January 31, 2008. While volunteer resources have increased in recent years, more volunteer assistance is still needed. Lutheran Social Services will be implementing an outreach for volunteers for the 2009 count through local public information channels.
- An up-to-date list of available, affordable rental housing in Fairfield County is being distributed on a regular basis to Coalition members and to other organizations in need of this information to facilitate rapid re-housing. *Project House Call* is a database that includes monthly rental rates, contact information and other pertinent points of reference.
- The Fairfield Metropolitan Housing Authority's Family Self-Sufficiency Program expanded to 24 participants in 2008.

POTENTIAL RESOURCES

Federal Funding Options

HUD Continuum of Care (Supportive Housing Program, Shelter Plus Care Program)
HUD Low Income Tax Credit Funding (permanent housing for low income individuals and families)
HUD 202 Housing Project Funding (permanent housing for elderly and disabled)
Demonstration projects / special grant opportunities (HHS, DOJ, SAMHSA, etc.)

State Funding Options

Ohio Department of Development (Ohio Housing Trust Fund, Office of Housing and Community Partnerships, etc.)
Ohio Department of Job and Family Services – TANF and other funding
Ohio Housing Finance Agency

Local / Other Funding Options

City, County CDBG funding and other resources
Fairfield County Job and Family Services – TANF and other funding
Fairfield Foundation
Other local, regional, and national foundations
United Way
Community Fundraising

Technical Support

COHHIO
Corporation for Supportive Housing
Ohio Association of Nonprofit Organizations
Ohio Capital Corporation for Housing
Ohio Housing Finance Agency
Private Consulting Firms

2008/2009 Fairfield County Housing Coalition Partners

Name	Organization
Becky Edwards	Fairfield County Family, Adult and Children First Council
Bob Sulick	Habitat for Humanity of Fairfield County
Brenda Shamblin	Lancaster-Fairfield Community Action Agency
Brooks Davis	Fairfield County Regional Planning Commission
Carol Wagner	Lancaster-Fairfield Community Action Agency
Cora French-Robinson	OSU Cooperative Extension of Fairfield County
Donna Fox-Moore	Lancaster-Fairfield Community Action Agency
Ed Clum	Foundation Shelter
Eddie Rapp	Lutheran Social Services
Edwin Payne	New Horizons
Jackie Keller	Fairfield Metropolitan Housing Authority
James Kennelly	Veterans Administration Medical Center
Janice Novotni	Fairfield Affordable Housing
Jill Spearman	The Woodlands
Jodi Clutter	The Recovery Center
Jolyn Pugh	Fairfield Metropolitan Housing Authority
Jonda Clemings	Coalition for Housing and Homelessness in Ohio
Kellie Ailes	Lancaster-Fairfield Community Action Agency
Kristin Ankrom	Fairfield County Job and Family Services
Laura Holton	Fairfield County Job and Family Services
Leslie Poole	Lutheran Social Services
Lisa Pickrell	Lutheran Social Services
Lyle Hamilton	Fairfield County Job and Family Services
Lisa Poole	Lutheran Social Services
Marcy Fields	New Horizons Youth and Family Center
Mary Jo Smith	Lancaster CDBG Program
Melissa Gantner	Meals on Wheels
Missy Fields	Fairfield County Job and Family Services
Molly Swisher	Information and Referral
Orman Hall	Fairfield County ADAMH Board
Pam Patula	Southeastern Ohio Center for Independent Living
Patti Morrow	Information and Referral
Patricia Waits	Fairfield Mental Health Consumer Group
Peter Gerds	Social Security Administration
Sharon Riecky	Fairfield Center for Disabilities & Cerebral Palsy
Sherry Orlando	United Way of Fairfield County
Susan Secoy	Fairfield Metropolitan Housing Authority
Suzanne Pelletier-Walker	The Lighthouse
Tami Karr	Fairfield Metropolitan Housing Authority
Tony Matta	New Horizons Youth and Family Center
Trisha Saunders	The Recovery Center
Victor Ward	Lutheran Social Services – Faith Mission

References and Resources

Burt, et al, 1999. *Homelessness: Programs and the People They Serve*, Washington, D.C., The Urban Institute. <http://books.google.com/>

Post, Patricia. 2002. *Hard to Reach: Rural Homelessness & Health Care*. Nashville, Tenn.: National Health Care for the Homeless Council. Available at: <http://www.nhchc.org>

Stover, Mary. 1999. *The Hidden Homeless In Housing in Rural America*, ed. Joseph N. Belden and Robert J. Weiner, 91-95. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

United States Department of Housing and Urban Development:
www.hud.gov/homeless/index.cfm

National Alliance to End Homelessness, <http://www.endhomelessness.org/>

Fairfield County Department of Economic Development, <http://www.co.fairfield.oh.us/dev/>

Urban Institute, <http://www.urban.org/>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the U.S. Health and Human Services Department, <http://www.samhsa.gov/>

University of Detroit Mercy study of at-risk homelessness,
<http://www.udmercy.edu/ibsc/research/homeless-count/>.