

OVERVIEW OF SONOMA COUNTY'S CONTINUUM OF CARE PLANNING PROCESS APRIL 2008

The Continuum of Care

Homelessness impacts every community in Sonoma County. It requires a countywide, shared responsibility to develop solutions. The complex problems that have resulted in homelessness require specialized programs and services for each of many homeless subpopulations. The "Continuum of Care" (CofC) brings together a broad spectrum of participants to address all aspects of homelessness, the needs of all of the homeless subpopulations, and works collaboratively to set and achieve goals that are shared by a broad range of participants in the community.

A fully developed homeless services system includes five fundamental components: homeless prevention; outreach, assessment, and other supportive services; emergency shelter; transitional housing; and permanent housing. An effective CofC plan includes strategies to address the needs of all homeless subpopulations in the community. It ensures that financial and other resources are coordinated to provide the necessary breadth of housing and service options, so that homeless persons may transition from the streets to stable work and living environments, and may become more self-sufficient. In many communities, CofC's have developed ten-year plans to end chronic or other homelessness.

Lead Agency: Coordination with Local Policies and Consolidated Plans

The Sonoma County Community Development Commission (CDC) and the cities of Petaluma and Santa Rosa jointly comprise the Lead Agency for the Sonoma County CofC planning process. This group is comprised of the three HUD entitlement jurisdictions in the County directly funded by HUD; their partnership ensures that CofC plans are compatible with their Consolidated Plans, local Housing Elements and related policies.

Steering Committee: Facilitation of Process and Planning Meetings

The Steering Committee is the primary decision-making and policy body for the Continuum and guides the efforts and actions of the Continuum of Care Planning Group (CCPG), the Continuum of Care Coordinator and CofC's working committees. The 10-member CofC Steering Committee is comprised of both appointed and elected representatives. The CDC, the cities of Petaluma and Santa Rosa, the Sonoma County Task Force on the Homeless, the United Way of Mendocino-Lake-Sonoma and the Community Foundation Sonoma County each have appointed representatives. The two largest Sonoma County homeless service provider non-profit agencies appoint one member each, currently Catholic Charities and the Committee on the Shelterless (COTS). Lastly, two private sector representatives are elected at-large from the CCPG;

described below. The Steering Committee plans the CCPG meetings, reviews committee reports and actions, formulates policy and takes any other actions necessary to accomplish the goals and action steps included in approved plans or per HUD directives.

Consistent with HUD preferences, the Steering Committee is comprised of fewer than 35% of the voting members from governmental agencies. In order to meet this objective, the Steering Committee has non-voting *ex officio* members— typically senior management staff in local government with an interest in coordination of homeless services.

Continuum of Care Planning Group (CCPG): Collaborative Planning

The CCPG is comprised of the widest possible representation from the nonprofit, governmental, service provider, housing development, law enforcement, faith-based, business, homeless and general communities. The CCPG meets at least quarterly to share information, discuss emerging issues, plan solutions, prioritize community needs, and prepare the annual CofC funding submission. The CCPG developed Sonoma County's 10-Year Homeless Action Plan, which was adopted by the CCPG in January 2007 and endorsed by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors the following month. The CCPG works primarily by consensus to address a wide range of issues; the Steering Committee is the final arbiter of CCPG decisions.

Working Groups: Implementing 10-Year Plan Goals and Action Steps

The CCPG has established working groups to implement the goals and action steps included in the approved 10-Year Homeless Action Plan and annual CofC plans. Each committee has a chair that plans and schedules meetings, disseminates meeting notes to the members of the CCPG via an Internet-connected email group, and prepares reports to the Steering Committee and CCPG. All committees must be approved by the Steering Committee. Committees can be either standing or *ad hoc*. Standing committees must include at least one member of the Steering Committee to act as liaison. Steering Committee liaisons are encouraged for *ad hoc* committees, but not required. *Ad hoc* committees work on projects of six months duration or less.

Broad Planning Parameters

To ensure the effective development of the County's homeless services system, the CCPG has agreed on a goal of a full range of housing and services to address the various homeless subpopulations and geographic areas of Sonoma County. The 10-Year Homeless Action Plan set goals in three major strategic areas in addition to current efforts: prevention of new homelessness, developing effective resources for the chronically homeless, and building out the homeless housing system in the particularly challenging Sonoma County economic milieu.