

FOOTHILLS HOUSING NETWORK
TEN-YEAR PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS

Over recent years, the federal and state approach to homeless services funding has undergone a paradigm shift – away from support for emergency shelters and transitional housing, and toward a model of housing first and rapid re-housing. As a result of this shift, between 2010 and 2012, the homeless shelters in the Rappahannock-Rapidan Region experienced a 90 percent decrease in state and federal funding. In order to adapt to federal and state changes and continue to address the needs of individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness, or in danger of homelessness, a regional Continuum of Care approach was required. The shelters and other homeless services stakeholders in the region formed a proactive partnership, named the Foothills Housing Network, to coordinate intake, assessment and services, and to develop a ten-year plan to end homelessness in the region. This plan includes assessment and planning for affordable housing needs, a vital component of the Continuum of Care.

FOOTHILLS HOUSING NETWORK PROFILE

- Partnership responsible for homeless continuum of care planning and implementation in Rappahannock-Rapidan Region
- A recognized Planning Group of the Virginia Balance of State Continuum of Care, which is the HUD-designated Continuum of Care (CoC) for parts of Virginia not covered by independent CoCs
- Organized under by-laws and memoranda of agreement among members
- Current members:
 - Aging Together
 - Community Touch, Inc.
 - Culpeper Community Development
 - Deane Outreach Ministries
 - Fauquier Family Shelter Services
 - Madison Emergency Services Association, Inc. (MESA)
 - Services to Abused Families (SAFE)
 - Culpeper Human Services
 - Fauquier County Department of Social Services
 - Madison County Department of Social Services
 - Orange County Department of Social Services
 - People, Inc.
 - Piedmont United Way
 - Rappahannock County Department of Social Services
 - Rappahannock Rapidan Community Services
 - Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission (Lead Agency)
 - Skyline CAP

- In existence under different names (Piedmont Housing Network, Rappahannock-Rapidan Housing Network) and lead agencies since 2004

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The Foothills Housing Network Plan to End Homelessness is guided by three overarching critical outcomes, which align with Federal and Virginia goals for ending homelessness:

- I. Reduce the number of individuals/households who become homeless
- II. Shorten the length of time an individual or household is homeless
- III. Reduce the number of individuals/households that return to homelessness

Each of the goals and strategies in this plan is intended to support one or more of these critical outcomes.

GOALS:

1. Create a sustainable organizational infrastructure that can plan, coordinate and facilitate FHN, homeless services and affordable housing in the Rappahannock-Rapidan Region.
2. Prevent situational homelessness by maintaining and strengthening preventive services.
3. Strengthen homeless service system capacity to facilitate movement of homeless to self-sufficiency and stable permanent housing in a timely manner.
4. Increase regional capacity to provide permanent and permanent supportive housing to target populations.
5. Establish data collection methods and evaluation criteria to document homelessness, evaluate FHN effectiveness, and identify economic and demographic trends that may affect homelessness.
6. Educate the public and local/regional decision makers about issues of homelessness.

STRATEGIES:

GOAL 1. Create a sustainable organizational infrastructure that can plan, coordinate and facilitate FHN, homeless services, and affordable housing in the Rappahannock-Rapidan Region.

Strategy A. Continue FHN operation as the Balance of State CoC Planning Group for the Rappahannock-Rapidan Region

Strategy B. Expand FHN participation to include a broader representation of service providers, property developers, landlords, and homeless or formerly homeless individuals

Strategy C. Develop long-term staff capacity to effectively support the required coordination of the continuum of care process

- 1) Secure consultant service to evaluate alternative organizational structures for the long-term sustainability of FHN, including funding potential. Implement plan by Dec. 31, 2015
- 2) Apply for grant funding to expand staffing for FHN to include housing locator, planning and evaluation

GOAL 2. Prevent situational homelessness by maintaining and strengthening preventive services

Strategy A. Make prevention and diversion the primary objectives of the FHN's Coordinated Assessment System.

Strategy B. Support and coordinate emergency assistance programs that help keep low-income individuals and families in their homes.

- 1) Coordinate region-wide homelessness prevention program with funding from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Homeless Prevention Program.
- 2) Identify other sources of emergency financial assistance, e.g., Departments of Social Services and faith-based organizations; coordinate with other organizations to avoid duplication and to maximize resources.

Strategy C. Develop housing counseling resources on regional or county level

- 1) Identify existing counseling services. Document services, eligibility, and contact information for each.
- 2) Encourage existing providers and find new providers to become HUD-approved.
- 3) Develop outreach plan to make service providers and consumers aware of the counseling services; develop referral protocols.

Strategy D. Document affordable housing needs in each county, including quantitative estimates and projections for various population subgroups.

GOAL 3. Strengthen service system capacity to facilitate movement of homeless to self-sufficiency and stable permanent housing in a timely manner.

Strategy A. Support local emergency shelters as the ultimate safety net for individuals and families in homelessness.

- 1) Implement the FHN Coordinated Intake and Assessment System within all emergency shelters and emergency housing programs; implement diversion strategies.
- 2) On the regional and county level, work with shelters to strategically plan for adequate beds to house homeless, regardless of gender, family make up or special needs, on a short-term basis, pending permanent housing placement.

- a. Expand number of emergency shelter beds for single men
- 3) Advocate for funding for emergency shelter programs, as a critical component of the FHN continuum of care.

Strategy B. Develop strategic partnerships with service providers to help improve outcomes for homeless

- 1) Job training and career counseling
- 2) Mental health and substance abuse counseling
- 3) Other housing providers and advocates

Strategy C. Design population-specific outreach and services for specified target groups, including veterans, teens aging out of foster care, justice system re-entrants, people with disabilities and chronically homeless.

- 1) Providing permanent supportive housing, in collaboration with community service providers, for chronically homeless and people with disabilities to accommodate financial, physical and behavioral needs of the individuals.

GOAL 4. Increase regional capacity to provide permanent and permanent supportive housing to target populations.

Strategy A. Work with VHDA to assess affordable housing needs and the need for specialized housing like PSH.

Strategy B. Work with VHDA to develop a regional affordable housing plan.

Strategy C. Engage a consultant to implement a regional affordable housing plan.

GOAL 5. Establish data collection methods and evaluation criteria to document homelessness, evaluate FHN effectiveness, and identify economic and demographic trends that may affect homelessness.

Strategy A. Enter required data in HMIS or in acceptable alternative data system.

Strategy B. Collect data required by HUD and DHCD federal and state outcome measures.

Strategy C. Establish FHN regional outcome measures and evaluation criteria. Put in place any additional necessary data collection.

Strategy D. Continue to facilitate and coordinate the annual point-in-time count.

GOAL 6. Educate the public, stakeholders, and local/regional decision makers about housing resources and issues of homelessness.

Strategy A. Establish Communications Committee to develop and implement Communications Plan.

Strategy B. Create FHN website to provide information on homelessness and homeless resources.