Rhode Island Consolidated Plan, 2010-2015
Public Focus Group #3: Homelessness
Casey Family Services, 1268 Eddy St., Providence
June 25, 2009, 9-11am

On June 25, Rhode Island Housing convened the third of seven focus groups to collect public feedback and ideas regarding the 2010-2015 Consolidated Plan, a strategic plan that serves as a funding application to the Department of Housing and Urban Development to support numerous housing programs across the state.

This document includes:
- a summary of the Homelessness discussion
- a list of acronyms and terms commonly used regarding Homelessness
- a list of the participants

The presentation, the 2005-2010 Consolidated Plan, and a list of commonly used terms and acronyms can be found at www.rhodeislandhousing.org.

1. **What trends are emerging and what is important to take into account?**
   - New veterans are returning from Iraq/Afghanistan with PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), brain, physical injuries
   - Adolescents and others with special needs are not being captured in data reports
     - Sex workers
       - Criminalization can make it difficult for them to seek help
     - Human trafficking
     - Illegal immigration
   - Elderly citizens are running out of money and can not afford assisted living, but can not live on their own
   - Individuals 50+ lose are losing their jobs and having difficulty securing new employment
   - Structurally unemployed individuals (never employed): widows, new high school or college graduates
   - Individuals are being timed out of benefits
   - The economy is collapsing unevenly across the state
     - Communities with more foreclosures are having more trouble
   - There are many types of families coming to shelters: male-headed, two-parent
     - Many families have never accessed shelters or supportive services previously
• Increase in the appearance of individuals with previously secure housing, no history of drug abuse, no criminal records
• The economy is driving some people towards substance abuse, mental health problems
• Many agencies have old computers which are in need of upgrading
  o Makes data entry and electronic record-keeping difficult

2. Which additional data sources or publications can provide information on homelessness?
   - HMIS
     o How can it be made more user-friendly, easy to use, efficient, simple, quick?
     o Will an increased HUD reliance on HMIS mean that agencies are forced to serve numbers instead of people?
     o Work with agencies to make sure they are using HMIS regularly
     o Make sure that HMIS reports and inputs are compatible with programs
       ▪ Are agencies not using HMIS because it either does not cover their needs or accommodate the data they do collect?
       ▪ Develop survey for agencies to evaluate HMIS
         o How can it be changed to better suit their needs?
     o Educate service providers about advanced technology tools to improve their tracking and secure real-time information
     o Continuum of Care application evaluates the realization of HMIS
       ▪ More agencies using the system means more points
• Complete the Point In Time count more efficiently and more than once a year
• Use neighborhood centers to identify people in need and homeless populations missed by current programs and counts
  o Improve communication between silos
• Count homelessness in places other than shelters
  o Questions about homelessness, housing should be asked at other locations
    ▪ Food pantries, police stations
  o Are there other community organizations which run services which could provide additional data on the homeless population?
• Use bar codes (House of Hope) or IDs (Crossroads)
• Military discharge numbers
• Community Action Agencies
• Voting records of elected officials
  o Identify lawmakers who support homelessness programs

3. What are potential goals to lay out in the 2010-2015 Consolidated Plan?
• Assess outreach efforts in communities – how well are agencies reaching the homeless community?
  o Talk to mental health agents on the streets
  o Communicate with programs run through churches, faith groups
• Develop more supportive housing
  o Shelter and Care type program for drug and alcohol abusers
    ▪ Housing First, “wet house” model which provides housing even if individuals struggle to beat an addiction
  o Successful model in Chicago
• Develop more SROs or rooming house-style units
  o Food prepared, communal facilities, socialization
• Emphasize mitigation of foreclosure crisis
  o Educate consumers about lease-to-buy models
  o Publicize the broad range of services available to individuals in need
• Bolster hotel voucher program
  o Match case management with temporary housing programs to prevent people from continuously cycling through the system
  o Improve follow-up procedures to ensure that people can move towards self-sufficiency
• Improve agencies’ ability to track long-term housing stability
  o Increase funding for long-term tracking programs
  o Work to move people into permanent housing, SROs to prevent return to shelters – ensure long-term success
• Collect information on agency programs from constituents – are programs giving them the tools they need?
  o Train a pool of licensed people who can assist agencies with data entry and feedback collection
    ▪ General technical/data collection training
    ▪ RICH is training Brown U. students to administer new client/constituent feedback tool
• Develop programs to provide better housing opportunities for individuals re-entering the community
  o Sex offenders
  o Individuals with children
  o Combat discrimination which prevents ex-offenders from securing housing
  o Utilize Second Chance funds for re-entry
    ▪ Providence has applied, but other cities and the state haven’t
      • Entitlement cities only?
  o Reevaluate BCI checks to facilitate voucher issuance to ex-offenders
Many are denied vouchers based on criminal backgrounds
What are the related regulations?

- Use new HPRP money to shift the structure of homelessness prevention and assistance
  - Shelter State to Housing State
    - Fewer shelter beds and more permanent supportive housing
- Direct funds towards programs with proven records of success
- Improve coordination between state agencies and governments
  - More forums for Project Homeless Connect, more working groups, more codified plans in communities
- Develop mechanisms which market hard-to-house individuals so that they can secure housing
- Emphasize employment programs (with jobs above minimum wage) to move people towards economic independence and self-supported housing
- Ensure that programs which are not HUD-funded are still monitored
  - Use standards similar to HUD’s
    - Will allow agencies to integrate data across monitoring levels and funding sources
- Determine and share best-practices across communities, state, regionally, nationally
  - Annual forum
- Standardize reporting time frames
  - Currently, reports and evaluations cover different time frames and therefore present different, often irreconcilable data
Homelessness Terms
These terms appear in the Homelessness PowerPoint and related discussions.

ART (Advanced Reporting Tool): A comprehensive electronic system that produces reports on homeless trends based on HMIS data input.

BCI: Bureau of Criminal Identification.

Continuum of Care: A funding application and evaluation submitted to HUD for homeless-targeted housing resources and services. The Continuum of Care measures the how the state serves its homeless population using shelters and transitional units, measure progress against Rhode Island's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness. Additionally, it evaluates providers’ usage of HMIS and the quality of their data input, and it serves as both a renewal application for existing grants and a request for new program funding.

HMIS (Homeless Management Information System): A tracking program which collects data about shelter stays and homeless individuals for use in data analysis aimed at improving the efficacy of homelessness-prevention programs.

Housing First: A method of alleviating homelessness through permanent supportive housing, functioning under the assumption that homeless individuals can make better use of supportive services if they have their own permanent homes instead of cycling in and out of shelters.

HPRP (Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program): A component of the ARRA bill (see general terms), which was passed in February of 2009, that contains about $1.5 billion in funding from the federal government to supplement ESG funding (see general terms).

McKinney-Vento Programs: A set of programs funded by HUD through the McKinney-Vento Act which provides federal support for shelter and supportive services as well as provisions to support the rights and educations of homeless children. In May of 2009, congress passed the Hearth Act, a bill which reauthorizes, expands, and works to centralize the programs funded by McKinney-Vento. The Hearth Act also extends the definition of homelessness to cover individuals at imminent risk of homelessness.

Point In Time Count: A census of the sheltered and unsheltered homeless population in Rhode Island carried out over a one-day period in each municipality. Counts are compiled and submitted to HUD as an assessment of funding need in the state.
Project Homeless Connect: A one-day event that brings together in one place services for homeless families and individuals.

RICH: Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless.

SAMHSA: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Second Chance Act: A federal law passed in 2007 to provide grants to state and local governments to be used in helping individuals re-enter their communities following incarceration.

SRO (Single Room Occupancy): A multiple tenant building that provides single rooms to individuals, often at low rents for low-income people or individuals with disabilities.
# Attendees

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>First Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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<tr>
<td>Archambault</td>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Rhode Island Housing</td>
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<td>Bourne</td>
<td>Annette</td>
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<td>Buhler</td>
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<td>Calcina</td>
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<td>Cola</td>
<td>Jeanne</td>
<td>Citizens Bank</td>
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<td>Dumin</td>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>Kent Center for Human &amp; Organizational Development, Inc</td>
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<td>John</td>
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<td>Evangelista</td>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>Office of Veteran Affairs</td>
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<td>Fisher</td>
<td>Janis</td>
<td>RI Family Shelter</td>
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<td>Fitzgerald</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>AIDS Care Ocean State</td>
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<td>Frumerie</td>
<td>Caitlin</td>
<td>Housing Resources Comission</td>
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<td>Gailloux</td>
<td>Debbie</td>
<td>Providence Community Action, Inc</td>
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<td>Gallo</td>
<td>Juan</td>
<td>HousingWorks RI</td>
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<td>Garland</td>
<td>Rev. Betsy</td>
<td>Rhode Island Council of Churches</td>
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<td>Husband</td>
<td>Melissa</td>
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<td>Jarosz</td>
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<td>Roy</td>
<td>Corinna</td>
<td>Dept. of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals</td>
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<td>Ryczek</td>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>RI Coalition for the Homeless</td>
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