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OFFICE OF COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT



FLEXIBLE RESOURCES, DATA-DRIVEN SOLUTIONS:
USING HMIS AND HEARTH TO END HOMELESSNESS

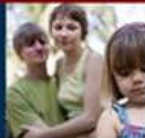
Service Delivery in Rural Areas





Presenters

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Objectives

- At the end of this session, participants will have a better understanding of how to:
 - Effectively engage the homeless, at risk and special needs populations in their communities
 - Link these populations with needed services
 - Develop strategies for how to work with the community as a whole to recognize the needs of people who are homeless and at-risk and how to best serve these needs





Factors to consider when addressing rural housing needs

- Mainstream service systems in rural areas often have interagency coordinating committees already in place. These groups can be important allies or leaders in organizing an approach to serve those with the most severe housing needs.
- Mainstream service systems are often under-funded, especially in rural areas. This needs to be considered when designing approaches for rural areas.
- Service delivery is complicated by long distances between population centers and lack of public transportation.





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Section 1

Outreach and Engagement





Assets of Rural Communities

- Rural communities have advantages that can strengthen outreach and engagement including:
 - In smaller communities, “everyone knows everyone” and information about homeless and at-risk people may be part of local collective wisdom.
 - When outreach workers come from the community, they are aware of local expectations and can create strategic partnerships designed to promote outreach and effective engagement.
 - Rural communities pride themselves on ‘taking care of our own’.





Barriers to Outreach and Engagement in Rural Communities

- Barriers to outreach and engagement in rural communities include:
 - Geographic isolation of homeless or at-risk individuals and families, including lack of congregate gathering places such as soup kitchens
 - Linguistic and cultural isolation among immigrant populations, including the fear of deportation among illegal immigrant populations
 - General scarcity of resources in mainstream systems





Overcoming Barriers

- Ensure lead agency representative understands needs of target populations
- Find a person with the trust and respect of target community to foster relationships in community
- Foster high level of stakeholder involvement
- Develop relationships with all services/agencies that work with homeless or those at-risk of homelessness
- Think creatively





Approaches to Outreach

- Focus on specific needs perceived by the homeless or at-risk individual to establish a connection of trust
- Provide resources, such as sleeping bags, camping gear, and food
- Provide interpreters, bilingual service providers to reduce fear associated with accessing needed services
- Involve public figures connected to target cultures
- Partner with agencies that provide services to target populations





Identify Those who Require Services

- Work with those likely to identify people who are homeless or those at risk of homelessness in rural areas
 - State and local government agencies and nonprofit organizations
 - Local law enforcement
 - Other homeless and formerly homeless people
 - Religious leaders
 - School employees
 - Community Action Programs





Distributing Information on Available Services

- Provide information on homelessness prevention initiatives to mainstream service providers
- Ask mainstream services to share information on programs available to homeless and at-risk households, including those intended for persons exiting institutions such as mental health facilities, nursing homes, hospitals, prisons, foster care system
- Distribute information to potential clients on available services during PIT count
- Provide information to potential clients and service partners by distributing flyers and other materials in non-traditional places (laundromats; grocery stores)





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Section 2

Linking Special Populations with Needed Services





Making Mainstream Service Providers Aware of Homelessness Issues and Services Offered in Your Community

- Educate them about your area's population; the needs and gaps in services
- Make mainstream providers aware of services offered
 - Lists of service providers – contact information and services they offer
 - Websites and listservs to distribute information
 - Update resources periodically





Methods for Engaging Mainstream Service Providers

- Effective outreach strategies for rural areas:
 - Organizing training events, distributing pamphlets, and providing tips and tools to mainstream service providers on ways to address needs of homeless clients and those in imminent danger of becoming homeless
 - Hosting luncheons, roundtable discussions, and other networking opportunities
 - Conducting face-to-face meetings with providers to discuss how to adapt their services to better serve the homeless
 - Facilitating discussions about collaboration and coordination between mainstream service providers and other homeless-specific organizations
 - Planning groups focused on housing might invite mainstream service providers to join the group.





Strengthening Relationships with Mainstream Service Providers

- Mainstream service providers in rural areas provide multiple types of care to multiple populations, including the people who are homeless and at-risk of homelessness
- Rural homeless providers can benefit mainstream service providers by:
 - Helping mainstream service providers target services to homeless and those at risk of homelessness who are most in need of services
 - Help match homeless and those at risk with existing services





Working with Mainstream Service Providers

- Help mainstream service providers analyze programs and determine how to make them accessible to homeless/at-risk households who need these services
- Help mainstream service providers see how to adapt their practices to serve the homeless/at-risk households more effectively
- Establish good, frequent communication with mainstream service providers





Working with Health, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Service Providers

- Very few health resources in rural communities
- Many rural individuals are uninsured
 - Can get them enrolled in Medicaid
- Ways to engage health service providers:
 - Meet with providers to discuss homeless community's needs
 - Conduct trainings on rural homelessness and health care issues
 - Establish relationships with individual providers
 - Negotiate agreements for reduced fees for service
 - Suggest different ways of providing services





Section 3

Strategies for Working with People who are Homeless or At-Risk of Homelessness in Rural Areas





Raising Awareness of Rural Homelessness and Housing Needs

- Outreach to community at large to gain financial, community, political support by:
 - Utilizing local media, such as local TV news, radio, and newspapers
 - Focus on “these are our neighbors” as an approach
 - Initiating a public awareness campaign to highlight homelessness
 - Lobbying local government and attracting support of well-respected politician(s) who can bring attention to homelessness





Maintain Visibility through Networking and Advocacy

- Work with agencies that administer CDBG and HOME programs to advocate for resources to serve the target population
- Highlight examples of local homeless families to tap into rural pride of taking care of their own
- Measure progress to sustain funding
 - Tap colleges and universities for assistance in designing/implementing program evaluation
 - Rely on basic data collection and presentation to document program activities
 - Provide concrete examples of program's effect on local families





Accessing Employment Assistance and Training in Rural Areas

- In rural areas, the employment of homeless and at-risk persons is complicated by several factors:
 - The seasonal nature of some employment opportunities
 - Lack of transportation to jobs or training programs
 - The movement of industries out of rural areas





Accessing Employment Assistance and Training in Rural Areas

Community planning groups focused on homeless and at-risk households can provide training and TA to mainstream employment services agencies about:

- The special needs of homeless population
- Coordinating with mainstream service agencies that provide supportive services
- Successful examples





Helping Rural Homeless to Obtain Employment

- Rural service providers can offer various services to clients:
 - Equipment such as boots, hard hats, tools, interview clothing
 - Internet access to aid in job search
 - Resume writing workshops
 - Being a point-of-contact for potential employers
 - Providing donated cars for homeless persons to remove transportation barriers





Partnering with Organizations to Address Domestic Violence

- Service delivery is complicated by lack of resources and transportation. Safe shelter might not be readily available.
- Engage mainstream providers likely to encounter abuse victims
 - Law enforcement
 - Emergency room personnel
- Use creative sources of outreach to reach DV victims
 - Posting flyers with tear-off phone numbers in ladies' rooms
 - Advertising emergency phone numbers on the back of grocery receipts





Referrals from Food and Nutrition Services

- Mainstream agencies that provide food and nutrition assistance can come in contact with people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness and direct them to services designed to meet their needs.
- Provide agencies with list of resources:
 - Foods stamps, WIC, free or reduced-price school meals
 - Cash benefits (e.g., TANF, SSI, SSDI, state and county resources)
 - Nonprofit or faith-based food programs





Referrals from Schools

- Service providers should work with schools to identify households that are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- Provide school personnel with list of “red flags” to help in determining housing status
- Provide list of resources to school personnel





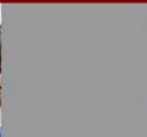
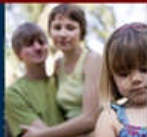
Outreach to Others in the Community

- Reach out to community partners not involved directly in serving homeless and those at-risk of homelessness
 - Businesses and foundations
 - Government agencies
 - Faith-based groups
 - Schools
 - Other community members





Questions/Comments?





Resources

For more information on the HEARTH statute, please visit HUD's Homelessness Resource Exchange at www.hudhre.info





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