

COMBATTING HOMELESSNESS

NYSAC LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

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Combatting Homelessness

Background:

- **DSS has established contracts with not-for-profit shelter providers for singles and families**
- **Hierarchy of placement settings**
 - **Non contract community shelters**
 - **County contracted not for profits**
 - **Overflow – motels**
- **Have had an on-call system for nights and weekends**
- **Historical Profile: Primarily Single Men**
- **Current State : Single women, families and single men**

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Schenectady City Demographics and Housing

- **City built for 45,000 GE employees**
- **Currently GE Plant has 4,000**
- **Aging two and multi-family housing units built for a different era**

Gradual Increase in Demand for Shelter Beds – started 2010
assumption: recession driven and it will decrease

Dramatic Increase 2014 and 2015

- **Peaked in 2015**
- **Likely not declining without an intervention**
- **Required a Systems Evaluation and Response**

In 2015 – initiated multi-disciplinary systems review and approach

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Systems Response

- **Established an Internal Multi-disciplinary Team:**
 - County Manager and staff**
 - DSS Commissioner**
 - Director of Temporary Assistance**
 - Director of Children and Families**
 - Director of Office of Community Services (MH/SA)**
 - Single Point of Entry Coordinator (MH)**
 - Management and Budget**
 - Information Services**
- **Data Review**
- **Process Review**
- **Develop a singles and family case profile**
- **Established Objectives and Strategies**

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Initial Systems Findings:

- **No one person responsible for managing the issue**
- **No one could define in real time the cases, locations and lengths of stay**
- **Data on cases difficult to retrieve and very limited in scope**
- **Cases lingered in shelters**
- **Increasing number of families and single women**

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General Reasons for Seeking Shelter

- **Singles**
 - **Mental Health/Substance Abuse**
 - **Release from NYS DOCCS**
 - **Evictions - Building Code Issues/Destruction/Nonpayment**
 - **Couch Surfing has run its course**
 - **Relocation**
- **Families (Non DV Cases)**
 - **Evictions – failure to pay rent**
 - **City code enforcement - eviction**
 - **Living with others and asked to leave**
 - **Relocation**

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Identified Objectives:

- **Keep Children Safe**
- **Reduce the Length of Stays in Shelters**
- **Secure permanent long term housing**
- **Coordinate with Federal and NYS programs and resources to finance long term secure housing. There are a many well funded programs but there was no strategic approach to move singles and families from the shelter to permanent housing**
- **Limit Revolving Door**
- **Create linkages to other resources:**
 - **Basic needs services**
 - **Family prevention services**
 - **Mental Health /Substance abuse clinical intervention & support services**

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Strategies

- **Established Data Management System**
 - **Created electronic authorization form which feeds a data base**
 - **In real time we want to know who, where and for how long**
 - **Automatic distribution updates to all team members**
- **RFP for case assistance provider: Home Connections**
 - **Establish relationships with landlords**
 - **Create banks of available permanent units**
 - **Engage clients face to face**
 - **Match apartments to client s based on income/family size**
 - **Transport clients to apartments; assist in communication with Landlords**

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Strategies

- RFP for case assistance provider: Home Connections (cont'd)
 - Coordinate with/maximize HUD and NYS funded housing programs
 - Participate with the community network of homeless prevention providers
 - Liaison with mental health and substance abuse providers
 - Participate in county coordinated housing/behavioral health meetings on identified cases
 - Maintain relationship with singles/families & landlords for 60 days
 - Address tenant – landlord issues

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Home Connections – Systems Review and Monitoring

- **DSS/OCS and Provider meet 2 times per month to review cases**
- **Quarterly Performance Reviews with Full County Team and Provider**
 - **Establishing and Reinforcing Expectations**
 - **Work through differences in values**
 - **Identify process issues and needed changes in process;**
 - **Ex: length of authorizations; DSS-Provider communication**
 - **Identify/address barriers related to cases**
 - **Ex: Role of MH/SA**

Project Modifications:

- **A behavioral health clinician to the singles case assistance program.**

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Results of Home Connections

- **38% reduction in the average number of cases per day than in 2015**
- **Protooled DSS CPS interface with Families in Motels**
- **Families and Singles placed in permanent housing**
- **Better Outcomes with Singles than Families**
- **Increased engagement with mental health and substance abuse systems**
- **Limited Revolving Door of Cases**
- **Improved communication with provider community and landlords**

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Code Blue Plan

Built off of our existing shelter system

Use a hierarchy of placements

Use our on-call system for after hours

Use Community Based Providers for outreach

DSS meets with the shelter and referral community multiple times through the season

Integrated Law Enforcement Protocols

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Other Connected Strategies

- **Development of Affordable New Housing Options**
 - **With case management**
- **Development of Additional Supported Housing Units**
 - **With case management**
- **City and County created Landbank**
- **Coordination between and among the strategies**

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Future

Address need for additional family shelter

Can we get at the root cause of demand for shelter?