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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Case Evaluation Findings

- **Singles:** Dramatic increase in women seeking shelter
  75-80% behavioral health issues
  Lack of affordable units based on Safety Net Basic Grant

- **Families:** 1/3 had or came to have CPS involvement
  Large families very difficult to place
  Lack of adult capacity to secure housing on their own
  Transportation with children involved
  Managing children’s needs
  Coordinating school for children
  Not a priority
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 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 clients 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
• Protocoled 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?