

Strategic Homelessness Action Plan

for

The Pinellas County Area



Working Draft - Inventory Report - Phase I of VII Phases

for

City of St. Petersburg

by

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January 14, 2011

Phase I Scope

During Phase I (October through December 2010) an inventory study of homeless services was conducted using in person site visits to homeless service providers throughout Pinellas County.

For the most part, two to four site visits were performed per service agency for the purpose of inventorying services on a 168 hour (eg one week) cycle of service. “Formal” site visits were generally conducted 8a-5p, Monday to Friday, while “informal” visits occurred at night and weekends.

It is essential to have an accurate understanding of the types and capacities of service within Pinellas County to insure appropriate recommendations are submitted.

After visiting 237 homeless service providers in 12 states and the District of Columbia, the following *Seven Guiding Principles* were commonly found to be the best practices in the USA. These *Seven Guiding Principles of Transformation* are used as the key measuring stick when reviewing homeless service providers in Pinellas County.

The Seven Guiding Principles of Transformation ***Moving from Enablement to Engagement***

1. Move to a Culture of Transformation (versus the Old Culture of Warehousing):

Homeless individuals must be engaged and no longer enabled. Everybody within the services delivery system (eg general public, media, elected politicians, appointed officials, monitors, boards, staffs and volunteers of service agencies and most importantly the homeless themselves) must embrace a culture of transformation. A culture, that through the help of others, homeless individuals can transform and integrate themselves back into society. For moral and fiscal reasons, homelessness must become an unacceptable condition that is not tolerated in the USA.

2. Co-location and Virtual E-integration of as Many Services as Possible:

In order to increase success, all services within a service area must be e-integrated. Virtual e-integration improves coordination of services, enhances performance, reduces “gaming” of the system, engages individuals on the margin of society and increases cost efficiencies within and between agencies. Furthermore, whenever financially possible, services should be co-located. Co-location goes beyond virtual e-integration by increasing the number of “service hits” into a shorter period of time through the reduction of wasted time in transit and minimization of mishandled referrals. Co-location also increases the supportive “human touch.”

3. Must Have a Master Case Management System That is Customized:

Because there are so many different service agencies helping homeless individuals (eg government at multi-levels, non-profits and faith-based), it is critical that ONE person coordinates the services an individual receives and to do so in a customized fashion. The types of service provided is critical, but what is more important is the sequencing and frequency of customized services.

4. Reward Positive Behavior:

Positive behavior of individuals should be rewarded with increased responsibilities and additional privileges. Privileges such as higher quality sleeping arrangements, more privacy and elective learning opportunities should be used as rewards. It is important that these rewards be used as “tools” to approximate the “real world” in order to increase sustainable reintegration into society.

5. Consequences for Negative Behavior:

Too often there are no consequences for negative behavior of individuals. Unfortunately, this sends a message that bad behavior is acceptable. Within the transformational process, it is critical to have swift and proportionate consequences.

6. External Activities Must be Redirected or Stopped:

External activities such as “street feeding” must be redirected to support the transformation process. In most cases, these activities are well-intended efforts by good folks; however, these activities are very enabling and often do little to engage homeless individuals.

7. Panhandling Enables the Homeless and Must Be Stopped:

Unearned cash is very enabling and does not engage homeless individuals in job and skills training which is needed to end homelessness. Additionally, more often than not, cash is not used for food and housing but is instead used to buy drugs and alcohol which further perpetuates the homeless cycle. Homeless individuals who are panhandling should be engaged into the transformational process. Furthermore, most panhandlers are not truly homeless but are preying on the good nature of citizens to get tax free dollars.

Service Inventory Visits and Tours

ALPHA House of Pinellas County

St. Petersburg

Transitional Housing and Supportive Services for Homeless Pregnant Women, Mothers with Infants and Families Experiencing Crisis Pregnancies

ASAP Homeless Services

St. Petersburg

Transitional Housing for Men, Women and Families with Supportive Services

Bayview Park Bridge Encampment

24/7 Outdoor Sleeping Area

Beacon House

St. Petersburg Free Clinic

St. Petersburg

Temporary and Transitional Housing for Men, and Evening Meals for the Community

Boley Apartments

Boley Centers

Pinellas County

Permanent Supportive Housing and Safe Haven

CASA (Community Action Stops Abuse)

St. Petersburg

Emergency and Transitional Housing for Victims of Abuse

“Chicken Man”

Mirror Lake

Street Feeding

CHIP (Clearwater Homeless Intervention Project)

Clearwater

Transitional Housing for Men and Women with Supportive Services

Christ United Methodist Church
St. Petersburg
Nighttime Encampment and Services

Clearwater City Council
City of Clearwater

Daystar Life Center
St. Petersburg
Variety of Services Including ID Recovery, Mail, Food Pantry, Toiletries and Utility Assistance

Food Bank - RCS
Religious Community Services, Inc. (RCS)
Clearwater
Food Bank

Grace House - RCS
Religious Community Services, Inc. (RCS)
Clearwater
Emergency Housing for Families with Children

HEP Campus (Homeless Emergency Project)
Clearwater
A Full Service Transformational Homeless Campus for Men, Women and Families

Homeless Leadership Network: General Membership and Executive Committee
Pinellas County
Coordination of Services

Johnnie Ruth Clarke Health Center
Community Health Centers of Pinellas, Inc.
St. Petersburg
A Wide Variety of Medical Services for the Uninsured

Juvenile Welfare Board (JWB) Staff
Pinellas County
Funder and Coordinator of a Variety of Services for Children and Families

Metropolitan Ministries
Tampa Bay
Wide Variety of Services for Homeless and Poor Families

Mid-Pinellas County Cold Night Shelter
Boys and Girls Club of the Suncoast
Pinellas Park
Cold Night Shelter

Mobile Medical Unit 1 and Mobile Medical Unit 3
Pinellas County Health Department for Pinellas County Health and Human Services
Pinellas County
Homeless

Mustard Seed Inn
WestCare
St. Petersburg
Transitional Housing with Supportive Services for Men

PAR Village
Operation PAR Inc.
Largo
A Full Continuum of Substance Abuse, Mental Health and Residential Services

PEMHS (Personal Enrichment through Mental Health Services)
A Wide Variety of Emergency Screening, Crisis Intervention and Adult/Child Inpatient Services

Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners (three commissioners)
Pinellas County
Elected Officials

Pinellas County Coalition for the Homeless, Inc.
Pinellas County
Coordination of Services

Pinellas County Health Department
Pinellas County
Medical Services and Coordination

Pinellas County Health and Human Services
Pinellas County
Medical Services and Coordination

Pinellas County Public Defender
Pinellas County
Public Defense and Several Social Service Programs

Pinellas County Sheriff's Office
Pinellas County
Variety of Law Enforcement Services

Pinellas Domiciliary Co-occurring Residential Treatment
ACTS (Agency for Community Treatment Services, Inc.)
Pinellas County
Residential Services Men and Women with Mental Health and Substance Abuse Disorders

Pinellas Hope
Catholic Charities - Diocese of St. Petersburg, Inc
Clearwater
Temporary Emergency Shelter and Supportive Services for Men and Women

Pinellas Park City Council
City of Pinellas Park

Pinellas Safe Harbor
Clearwater
Pinellas County Sheriff's Office
Indoor and Outdoor Safe Sleeping "Courtyard"

Safe Place to Be
St. Petersburg
Family Resources
Emergency and Transitional Housing for Teens

"Sandwich Man"
St. Petersburg City Hall
Street Feeding

St. Cecelia Catholic Church Cold Night Shelter
Clearwater
Cold Night Shelter

St Peter's Episcopal Cathedral
St. Petersburg
Nighttime Encampment and Services

St. Petersburg Center
Pinellas County Health Department for Pinellas County Health and Human Services
St. Petersburg
Primary Medical Care Services for Uninsured

St. Petersburg City Council
City of St. Petersburg

St. Petersburg City Hall Encampment
St. Petersburg
Nighttime Outdoor Sleeping Area

St. Petersburg Free Clinic
St. Petersburg
Medical and Food Services

St. Petersburg Outreach Team
City of St. Petersburg
St. Petersburg
Intervention Services by a Police Officer and Social Worker Outreach Team

St Vincent de Paul Conference - Soup Kitchen Clearwater
Clearwater
Meals

St. Vincent de Paul - South Pinellas District
St. Petersburg
Emergency and Transitional Housing for Veterans, Women and Men with Supportive Services
and Meals

TBIN and HMIS
2-1-1 Tampa Bay Cares, Inc.
Clearwater
Tampa Bay Information Network and Homeless Management Information System

TBIN Oversight Group Members
Pinellas County

The Haven of RCS
Religious Community Services, Inc. (RCS)
Clearwater
Domestic Violence Safe Haven

The Princess Martha
St. Petersburg
Active Adult Living

The Salvation Army, Clearwater Citadel Corps
Clearwater
Transitional Housing for Men, Women and Families, Utility Assistance and Food Pantry

The Salvation Army, St. Petersburg Area Command
St. Petersburg
Emergency Residential Services for Men, Women and Families and “One-Stop” Service Center

Thrift Store - RCS
Religious Community Services, Inc. (RCS)
Clearwater
Community Thrift Store

Turning Point
WestCare Inc.
St. Petersburg
Alcohol and Drug Detox Services

Unity Park Encampment
St. Petersburg
Daytime Encampment

Variety of Civic Leaders
Pinellas County

Vincent House (Clubhouse)
Pinellas Park
Mental Illness Recovery Services

Williams Park Daytime Encampment
St. Petersburg
Daytime Encampment

YWCA/USF Family Village and Child Development Center
YWCA of Tampa Bay
St. Petersburg
Short-term and Transitional Housing for Families and Child Care

Phase I - Initial Observations and Critical Success Issues

Pinellas County is Service Rich but There is Very Little Formal Strategic and Systematic Integration of Homeless Services:

- Pinellas County has more service providers than most communities, and these services are provided by very dedicated and thoughtful staff members and volunteers, but for the most part these services are not coordinated. There is a wide variety of homeless service providers scattered throughout the County; however, these service providers are not formally and strategically integrated, especially at the tactical level.
- There are a significant number of “informal” and “one-off” relationships that help homeless individuals, but the level of help is inconsistent, unsystematic and is often delivered inefficiently. Real solutions will only be found at a county-wide “systems” level.
- The overall homeless service system is disjointed and lacks an unified action plan.
- The overall community needs to develop a “common end vision” with an internal bias for action.

The Homeless System in Pinellas County Lacks “Connective Tissue”:

- There are very few forms of formal agency-to-agency connectivity and, with the notable exception of TBIN, there is very little functional accountability between individual service providers and the overall system of care.
- TBIN is serving a very positive role and provides at least one level of formal connectivity.
- Service providers need formal, direct and strategic connectivity to the overall service system of care and formal connectivity to functionally related agencies.
- It is critical that all agencies “buy into” a common culture of transformation.
- All agencies need to be accountable to a unified command.
- A common base level of operations must be developed (eg common nomenclature, policies, protocols, procedures, measurements, etc.).
- Inter-agency relationships need to be strategically created then formalized.

- In order to be successful, a central intake system must be created.
- Need to create a Master Case Management system that develops and customizes a service recovery action plan for each homeless individual receiving services. Master Case Managers will need to hold both homeless individuals and service agencies accountable.
- Need to create transportation loops between major homeless service providers.

Lack of “Unity of Command” and Clear Leadership within the System:

- After meeting with staff members and volunteers from over 50+ service providers, no two agencies have articulated a common view of the homeless service structure and its leadership within Pinellas County.
- A system will never be fully functional if everyone within the system has a different view of the system and its leadership. There are many ships trying to do good things, but there is no one harbor master to provide a point of central command.
- The most accurate diagram of the system was presented by the Staff Director of Pinellas County Leadership Network [See Attached Diagram]. When reviewing this diagram, there are arguably 11 or more organizations that have a part of the homeless leadership pie.
- Basic good management and governance practices call for the streamlining of this system into a coherent and integrated chain of command. There needs to be a realignment of thinking.
- The lack of clear and unified leadership within the homeless service community leads to:
 - a poor decision making process
 - delays in decision making
 - critical solutions die a death by committees
 - critical decisions often do not get made because they are not politically correct
 - bold initiatives become “water-downed”

Every Service Provider Needs to Adopt a Culture of Transformation:

- With a few notable exceptions, most of the service providers operate with outdated culture.
- The leadership within the civic, local government, funder, advocate, service provider and homeless communities all need to embrace the transformational best practices that have worked throughout the USA.

Look, Feel and Smell:

- Environmental quality varies widely across service providers. There are some outstanding service providers in the community that are providing top notch services in high quality environments; however, over half of the places visited fall significantly below the national best practice standards of “*look, feel and smell.*”
- All service providers in the system need to have a high quality of look, feel and smell:
 - All areas need to be organized neatly and uncluttered (look)
 - All areas need to be warm and nurturing (feel)
 - All areas need to smell like a nice home - not smell dirty and soiled nor smell like cleaning solutions (smell).
- Safety, hygiene and communicable diseases are all negatively impacted by dirty, soiled and cluttered environments.
- Having high standards in this area dignifies the folks we are helping while fostering higher standards for everyone. Individuals respond to their surroundings. Neat, clean and warm feeling environments will lead to more positive responses than dirty, soiled and cluttered environments.
- High quality environments increase resources in four ways:
 - Increases volunteers
 - Increases funding
 - Increases staff member and volunteer productivity
 - Extends the useful life of the physical plant and infrastructure
- Tight funding may explain some of this, but most of this can be explained by a culture of low standards.
- Organizing, thorough cleaning, using bleach and painting of the facilities go a long way to improve conditions.
- Every agency, regardless of where their funding comes from, should strive to meet national best practice standards.
- It is recommended that a community wide effort be done as soon as possible to clean up, unclutter and then paint each service provider.
- None of these comments should take away from the good hearted efforts of so many organizations, staff members and volunteers. In many cases service providers work tirelessly but feel like there is no help for their organization.

Peer Support and Coaching:

- Service providers need to move from being competitors to partners (eg “we are all part of the same team”). This problem is too big for one agency. Like great sport teams, we need to adopt a team winning attitude that the team is first while our individual agency is second. We all have roles to play. Collectively we can help more individuals and families if we work together rather than compete.
- There are some outstanding service providers and leaders in Pinellas County who can provide peer support and coaching to other agencies.

Create Master Case Managers:

- Each homeless individual and family needs their own Master Case Manager who creates a customized recovery action plan. Master Case Managers then need to proactively monitor and manage each recovery action plan.
- These Master Case Managers need to have the full authority to place and move individuals and families throughout the county system, and to adjust their recovery action plans as needed.
- Because of the significant importance of Master Case Managers, their case loads need to be low (about 20-25 active individuals and/or families).
- Master Case Managers need to be able to follow all individuals throughout the transformation process and between all agencies.
- NOTE: We may want to name these Master Care Managers.

The Lack Housing and Services for Families with Children is at Crisis Level:

- There is a critical lack of units and services for families with children. This is at crisis level.
- Every family service provider visited are turning away 10-20 families per day. Because there is no central case management tracking system and there is no master wait list, it is impossible at this time to ascertain how many families are not getting help.
- Dealing with families with children is so important since the children are innocent victims, and if not helped now, will create more expensive problems later. We need to stop the cycle.

- Many, if not most, of the families who need services have a single parent whom has a job or recently lost a job, but due to domestic violence and/or finances have lost their housing.
- The homeless sub-group of families with children has been the sub-group most hurt by the recession.
- Entry and service requirements need to be standardized, streamlined and coordinated between agencies.
- It is strongly recommended that we create a master list of families who are being denied services so as determine the unduplicated number of families in need.

Lack of Services for Chronic Homeless Individuals:

- Chronic homelessness as a percentage of the overall homeless population is running around 29% in Pinellas County which is about 145% above the national average. Chronic homelessness is defined as someone who has been living on the street for the last 365 days or has been in 4 different shelters in the last 365 days.
- Existing data is inconclusive as to why this percentage is so high in Pinellas County, but an educated guess is this number is high because there has been very little customized services for the chronic homelessness.
- The Pinellas Safe Harbor is a perfect initiative to address this group.

Pinellas County Lacks Affordable Housing Especially for the Working Poor:

- Over the last 20 years or so, about 12,000 units of affordable housing have been lost within the County. Some of this has occurred because of urban conversion to higher-end housing and retail establishments; while some has been caused because of new hurricane and flood plain requirements.
- This has hurt families with children the most.

Street Feeding and Street Services” Are Not Aligned with Other Services:

- Street feeding and other street service efforts (eg clothing and blanket distribution), although well intentioned and good hearted, are very enabling and do not engage homeless individuals. Providing services and feeding in the parks, at street corners and under bridges only acts to exacerbate homelessness and actually increases the number of street homelessness.
- Groups and individuals feeding homeless individuals need to move from enabling behaviors to engaging efforts by holistically aligning feeding efforts with other engaging services at formal programs sites. This is a critical issue for the faith based community to address.

Medical Care Needs:

- The Mobil Medical Unit system was set up in 1986 and is no longer adequate to serve the needs of the homeless. Since 1986, the number of homeless seeking medical care has grown exponentially, yet the Mobil Medical Unit has been functioning basically as it did 1986.
- The Mobil Medical Unit is a very ineffective delivery system for the current needs. For example, in January, the Mobil Medical Unit has been operating at a 56.9% basis (based on a 40 hour work week). Furthermore, since services are limited to on-site patients almost ½ of the time means the Mobil Medical Unit is only available to an average homeless person 13-15 hours a week. This in turns puts an unnecessary strain on the emergency rooms.
- More patients can be seen if the Mobil Medical Unit was open 8 hours a day and patients were brought to the Medical Unit.
- There is a significant and urgent need for dental, vision and podiatry services.

Pinellas Hope:

- Pinellas Hope is a critical service provider within the overall County-wide system.
- Pinellas Hope provides critical services to a significant number of individuals (in terms of number of individuals, Pinellas Hope is the 2nd highest residential homeless service provider in the County).
- The physical plant at Pinellas Hope needs to be upgraded to meet national best practice standards (eg more permanent structures, better drainage, more SROs, etc.). Furthermore, the feasibility of increasing the capacity of Pinellas Hope should be studied.

Pinellas Safe Harbor:

- The opening of Pinellas Safe Harbor this week is a critical first step toward helping the chronic homelessness. This will help many homeless individuals while providing major system savings through jail and emergency room diversions.
- This will align the “service magnets” (eg food, bathrooms, showers, shelter and safety) at one site for the chronic homeless.
- Pinellas Safe Harbor will do the right thing for those in need by holistically helping individuals; additionally, it will do the right thing financially for the overall community.
- Because of the overlap between populations, the feasibility of moving Turning Point to Pinellas Safe Harbor should be studied.
- Medical, dental, vision and podiatry services are critically needed.
- Hopefully the faith-based and civic communities will be able to help provide meals.
- It is important to understand that the chronic homeless segment is about 1/4 of the overall homeless count within the County. Furthermore, it is important to remember that Pinellas Safe Harbor is not appropriate for families with children.

Possible closure of CHIP (Clearwater Homeless Intervention Project):

- CHIP is one of largest residential service providers in the County and 2nd largest in Clearwater.
- According to the CHIP staff, this agency is likely to close in the 3Q/2011 due to lack of funding. If CHIP does close, it will create a major problem in the Clearwater area which will likely affect the overall County.

TBIN (Tampa Bay Information Network):

- TBIN is one of the best HMIS (Homeless Management Information System) systems in the USA.
- TBIN is providing critical connectivity between service providers and the overall system, and will become the cornerstone building block to build a truly integrated system.

- The implementation of the new scanner card system needs to be expedited, and biometric capabilities need to be incorporated.
- To deal with future needs, TBIN will have to become more robust (eg more sophisticated with increased capacity). Furthermore, TBIN needs to move from a passive recording system to a proactive case management tracking system.

Ordinances:

- Ordinances vary widely throughout the county. These need to become standardized and uniformed throughout the County.

Palm Trees and Golf Courses:

- Where there are palm trees and golf courses, there will always be homeless individuals because of the moderate climate.
- Homelessness does not increase with improved and expanded services. Homelessness actually decreases when holistic and comprehensive services are put in place. Homeless individuals come for the weather not for the services.

Branding:

- As part of the governance restructuring process (eg unity of command and leadership), the overall system needs to be “re-branded.”
- Re-branding the overall system will act to provide connective tissue to the overall system by internally integrating service partners under one umbrella.
- Re-branding also will help increase the resources (eg value-in-kind donations, funding and volunteers) to many of the service providers and to the overall system.
- The new brand will act as a external “seal of approval” for the service providers within the system.

Other Issues:

- There is a need for animal care services for homeless individuals who have pets. Not having animal care services acts as a barrier of entry to needed services.
- The overall system needs to embrace a bias for action, rather than forming committees to study issues.
- Some family shelters do not allow teen boys and fathers (due to security concerns of mixing genders) to stay with their families which is very bad for the families and the boys/fathers. Every effort possible must be made to keep the family intact.

Important Milestones to Date

Pinellas Safe Harbor:

Have actively worked as a Subject Matter Expert (SME) with the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office staff and other organizations in developing the concept design, layout, systems flow, operating procedures, protocols and start-up of Pinellas Safe Harbor. In addition to support in Florida, facilitated a Haven for Hope site tour and training in San Antonio. Pinellas Safe Harbor is a major first step in helping chronic homeless individuals in Pinellas County.

Law Enforcement Access to TBIN:

Worked with the TBIN Oversight Group to facilitate a change in TBIN policy to allow law enforcement officers access to TBIN client information on an as needed basis. It is critical that all service providers (including law enforcement offices) have open and complete access to as much information as possible. We need to all be on the same team.

"Street Feeding":

With the help of the media and one-on-one meetings we have started to redirect some of the street feeding efforts.

