



Development of a Homeless Call Center for an Effective Coordinated Entry System

Since 2013, the annual Point-In-Time (PIT) count in Pinellas County has shown that the number of individuals and children experiencing homelessness fluctuates, with no sign of a steady reduction. The PIT numbers are as follows:

PIT Count 2013-2016	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total Number Homeless	6,593	5,887	6,853	6,307
Total Number of Children	2,057	2,026	2,748	2,680

To improve the coordination of serving individuals and families who may potentially enter, or who have entered the homeless system, the Homeless Leadership Board (HLB) has adopted a Coordinated Entry System (CES) for homeless individuals/families to regain housing. The goal of CES is to assess all persons who touch the homeless system and to employ prevention and diversion services to help them avoid homelessness. If the individual/family is already experiencing homelessness, the goal is to quickly rehouse so the episode of homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring.

Through the 2015 HUD grant process, three CES staff were added to the HLB. Two Community Navigators ensure that clients are able to be located when a housing opportunity becomes available, along with helping them become document-ready. A Housing Specialist ensures that FloridaHousingSearch.org is updated with current housing information and builds relationships with landlords to work with homeless individuals/families, especially those who may be difficult to place.

The CES System Flow map begins with an initial contact with the individual/family who then ideally flow quickly through the process into a permanent housing placement. However, challenges to easily accessing assistance at initial contact have been identified, such as long waits for assistance and the inability of clients to navigate the complex system of services. There is a significant need for individuals/families to have more intensive assistance at the front door, as it can sometimes feel cumbersome and overwhelming for those who are struggling with basic need issues. Providing referrals is helpful, but Call Center staff would maximize their ability to offer greater support if they could immediately contact service providers on behalf of the caller and provide a warm hand-off, taking much less time for the client and likely reducing their stress.

The ideal Call Center model is designed to be available to all homeless populations, seven days a week from 7 AM to 7 PM. After the initial contact, a triage assessment is conducted to evaluate the caller’s situation, along with an attempt to prevent/divert entrance into the homeless system. If the individual/family is assessed to be literally homeless, staff will provide linkages to appropriate temporary housing options or to CES Navigators. Conducting assessments requires in-depth, compassionate conversations and to avoid longer waits for other callers, sufficient staff are needed to assure there is ample time for a thorough assessment. Call Center staff will then assist the individual/family with navigating the complex system of care by contacting service providers directly. Below is the proposed one-year budget for the ideal Call Center, which can be scaled back by either reducing staff, operating hours, diversion funds, and/or targeting a specific population.

Personnel – 7 FTE’s	Operating	One-Time Capital	Diversion Funds	Total
\$344,358	\$68,126	\$19,250	\$24,000	\$455,734

In 2016, additional local and federal funding was allocated to increase Rapid Rehousing and Permanent Supportive Housing services, which will be a tremendous benefit to our community. However, improvements are needed in how people are diverted from the homeless system upon initial contact and if they do enter into the homeless system, how quickly they are rehoused. This additional funding has been in the community for just a short time and the HLB is excited to see how these additional resources impact the HLB’s goal of making homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring.



MEMORANDUM

TO: Providers Council
FROM: Cliff Smith
DATE: February 28, 2017
SUBJECT: Local Funding Workgroup Recommendations-FY 2018

Background Information

At the January 20, 2017 Providers Council Meeting, a workgroup was appointed to make recommendations for local funding of homeless programs and services in FY 2018. The workgroup met on February 23, 2017.

Members in attendance were:

Members listed: Lourdes Benedict, Beth Houghton, Kevin Marrone, Zachary White, Mark Dufva, Sheila Lopez, Terrance McAbee, Susan Finlaw-Dusseault, Gary MacMath, Cliff Smith

The Local Funding Workgroup requests the supplemental dollars allocated in FY 2017 by Pinellas County (\$1,500,000), and the City of St. Petersburg (\$500,000) for funding of homeless programs be renewed for FY 2018 and recommends they be utilized for the following purpose:

Table with 2 columns: Funding Category and Amount. Includes sections for Pinellas County Government, City Governments, and Total Requested Supplemental Homeless Funding by Local Government*.

*Note: These figures are in addition to the significant amount of funding for homeless services by Pinellas County, City of St Petersburg, Clearwater, Pinellas Park, Largo and other local municipalities.

Additional Notes

- Additional permanent supportive housing beds will become available in FY 2019. Local Funding Workgroup should take this into consideration when making funding recommendations for FY 2019. HUD CoC guidelines are expected to be released in May or June 2017. Local Funding Workgroup will need to take this into consideration when making funding recommendations for FY 2019. Local Funding Workgroup supports the continued funding of Safe Havens for the highest acuity homeless as a key component of ending chronic homelessness.