

DeKalb County Access to Prevention and Homelessness Assistance

Positive Stories / Lessons Learned from HPRP: Community Success Story

HPRP Grantee:	DeKalb County, GA
CoC Name and Number:	GA-500 – Atlanta/Roswell/DeKalb, Fulton Counties CoC

Latest CoC Point-in-Time Count:

Total persons in ES:	2,427	Total persons in TH:	2,000
Total persons in Safe Haven:	0	Total unsheltered persons:	2,378
Total persons, sheltered and unsheltered:	6,805		

In the fall of 2008, DeKalb County, Georgia convened 65 non-profit agencies, mainstream service providers, housing developers, and volunteers in a forum to share their work in the field of homeless services and discuss the unmet needs of the local homeless population. The topics included their intake and referral processes, the service gaps they saw in their clients' case plans, and the difficulties they had working with other providers. Ultimately, DeKalb County officials realized that households were suffering from the lack of coordination among providers, calling agency after agency for piece-meal services and often falling through the cracks if their needs could not be met by one organization.

Based on recommendations from the forum's working groups, DeKalb County developed an Access Model – a standardized method for all providers to accept and refer clients – so people seeking help no longer had to "stumble into access." The Access Model also aims to encourage and facilitate collaborative effort and will be evaluated, expanded, and changed accordingly. HPRP funding was announced shortly thereafter, and DeKalb County saw a chance to implement components of their new model.

DeKalb County subgranted HPRP to 14 organizations and built the tenets of the Access Model into their contractual agreements. Specifically, the County required subgrantees to: use one standardized HPRP application that mirrored the information inputted in HMIS; refer applicants deemed ineligible for HPRP to other subgrantees for further services, using a coordinated referral process; meet weekly with the lead HPRP team of DeKalb County staff to discuss complicated cases and implementation issues, and to receive ongoing training; and participate in quarterly meetings with non-HPRP-funded homeless service providers.

DeKalb County staff chose subgrantees based on their expertise in case management, financial assistance, housing search, and HMIS. Subgrantees then decided who among them would be the lead contacts for the at-risk of homelessness, mental illness, and substance abuse subpopulations. This system established a contact at each subgrantee for case managers to communicate services or specialties that one of their participants needed. Since every subgrantee conducted initial screenings and eligibility determinations, households could contact the organization nearest to them and be guaranteed at least a referral.

Implementing HPRP with the Access Model has both improved access to homeless and homelessness prevention services and created an inter-organizational network that will outlast HPRP. The weekly meetings among subgrantees encouraged provider cooperation regarding each household, while quarterly meetings kept non-HPRP agencies involved and interested. DeKalb County is adding the Access Model to their Substantial Amendment for ESG and, thanks to the attention garnered outside of the HPRP community by the quarterly meetings, many agencies that did not receive HPRP and will not receive ESG funds also plan on participating. DeKalb County plans to share their policies and procedures with Atlanta and other local jurisdictions to help them develop similar models to implement under ESG.

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