Prevention Strategies in Rural Areas
Moderators:
Norm Suchar, NAEH (Denver)
Bridget DeJong, HomeBase (Atlanta)

Panelists:
Jonathon Hardy, Utah (Denver)
Kathy Wahto, NW Washington (Denver)
Jonda Clemings, Ohio (Atlanta)
Nancy Fritz, Maine (Atlanta)
Kay McDivitt, Lancaster County (Atlanta)
Learning Objectives

• Learn and share strategies that increase the capacity of rural communities to implement effective homeless prevention strategies

• Improve planning and support of pioneering developments that can be implemented in rural localities
Rural America – Changing Landscapes

- Rural communities comprise 75 percent of U.S. land mass, 17% of total population.
- 1 in every 6 Americans live in rural area
- Today, only 6.5% rural labor force involved in farming
- Shifting Federal Attention, increased focus on specific needs of rural America; lessons learned from HPRP funds now spreading across urban and rural regions.

- Sources: *Rural Homelessness*, *Toward Understanding Homelessness: The 2007 National Symposium on Homelessness Research* and *Strengthening the Rural Economy - The Current State of Rural America* [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)
Rural-specific Challenges

- Community perceptions about homelessness
- Geographic disbursement of rural service systems/resources
- Resource constraints – Organizational capacity limit
- Difficulty creating regional leadership structures and regional networks
- Limited access to transportation and services
GAO Rural Homelessness Findings July 2010

- Comptroller General of the United States conducted a study to examine homelessness and homelessness assistance in rural areas and rural communities to outline:
  - Numbers and need of rural homeless
  - Existing rural services and gaps
  - Differences in funding streams between urban and rural areas
NAEH Report: Critical Success Factors in High Performing Rural Areas

- “Connector” - person who maintains high level understanding and details of activities, and policy changes
- “Champion” for ending homelessness - has trust, respect, skills to build relationships inside/outside homeless system
- High level stakeholder leadership in CoC planning process
- Coordinated implementation strategies that reinforce inclusion and collaboration across agencies / programs
- Willingness to think “outside of the box” to achieve goals
Presentations: Successful Prevention Strategies in Five Rural CoC Regions

• Maine Balance of State Continuum of Care
• Utah Balance of State Continuum of Care
• Wood, Seneca, Ottawa, Sandusky (WSOS) Continuum of Care
• Lancaster County Pennsylvania Continuum of Care
• Ohio 17 Rural Continuums of Care
Presentations in four domains of effective prevention strategies:

1. Collaborative policy-making leadership body
2. Centralized referral and assessment system
3. Shared belief/values that prevention and ending homelessness is a critical priority
4. Cross-agency collaboration to interconnect innovative practices and standardize service delivery
Utah - Leadership

• Collaborative group of relevant decision makers critical

• Chaired by local political leader (mayor, county commissioner)

• Includes business, government and non profit service providers

• Develop a shared focus and project to address local needs
Clallam County WA - Leadership

• State legislation requiring local Ten Year Plans - Governor, State Interagency Council and Dept of Commerce
• Local plan approved & adopted by county commissioners, assent from city councils
• Implementation task force includes business, government, non profit service providers, housing authorities
• Strong commitment to Ending Homelessness
Ohio BOSCOCC - Leadership

- Steering Committee
- Advisory Committee
- Local COCs

Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHIO)
Maine - Leadership

- Statewide Homeless Council
- 3 Regional Homeless Councils
- 3 Continuums of Care
- Working Group: Housing Finance Agency and Health & Human Service Agency
Lancaster County: Leadership

- Political “buy-in”/leadership from county officials - Recognize homelessness & prevention a “county-wide” issue

- Co-chaired by the Lancaster County Board of Commissioners and a local business leader
  - bi-partisan support and shared vision for ending homelessness
  - business leader recognized throughout the county

- Diverse group of leaders with common focus
  - County government and United Way provide staff support
Utah - Centralized Assessment

- Use 2-1-1 as initial contact point
- Build a standardized assessment process across a Continuum for focused projects identified by local committee
- Identify roles and responsibilities of non profit and government agencies in the assessment process
Clallam County, WA - Centralized Assessment

- Walk-in Housing Resource Centers in all three cities
- Standardized intake and assessment of housing vulnerability and eligibility, focus on prevention, rapid re-housing, proportionality of services
- Community and mainstream resources
- No wrong door to assistance
Ohio BOSCOC - Centralized Assessment

- BOSCOC HMIS System
- Rapid Re-Housing Ohio Demo Project
Maine – Centralized Assessment

- Common Housing Application

- New Plan for Funding Shelters: Resource Centers in Key Locations
Lancaster County: Centralized Assessment

- Central call in center thru United Way LINC
  - Lancaster Information Center expanded with HPRP

- Developed single screening/assessment tool for all prevention services
  - Targets prevention/resources to meet individual needs

- Partner with two recognized social service agencies
  - Community Action Program/Tabor Community Services
Utah - Collaboration Across Boundaries

• Shared vision of local committee and support from political leader key

• Focus on community benefits to overall goal and tailored to audience being addressed

• Measure Results

• Be Consistent in messaging
Clallam County, WA - Collaboration Across Boundaries

- Creating common vision, approach; consolidate funding across multiple providers around “Housing First”
- Fidelity Study performed by state
- HMIS Measurements / Report Results
- Strong ties to landlords/property managers
- Innovative partnerships to make projects work (Whatcom County/Family Therapeutic Court)
Maine - Collaboration Across Distance/Agency Boundaries

- Decisions About Use of HPRP Resources
- Two Target Groups
- Use of HPRP Resources in Rural Areas -- Allocating Factors, i.e. which areas receive funding and how much
  -- Best Practice Examples from Rural Counties
Ohio BOSCOC - Shared Belief

- Ohio Interagency Council on Homelessness and Affordable Housing

Report to the Ohio Interagency Council on Homelessness and Affordable Housing

Prepared by the Technical Assistance Collaborative
March 27, 2009
Lancaster County: Shared Vision

- Basic shared principals part of the messaging
  - Shift from system that “shelters and manages” to system that “prevents, diverts, rapidly re-houses”
  - County wide issue translates to county wide strategies
  - Everyone citizen in the county has a stake
- Develop clear communication strategy to relay the message across a rural community
  - Develop the “elevator speech” with key message
  - Tweak presentation to fit the audience/key targets
  - Identify who takes the message to whom
Maine - Shared Beliefs

- Our job will be done when the last person is housed. We know what to do and how to do it …. We end and prevent homelessness as resources become available

- Leadership from the top, political capital, and grassroots passion/frontline expertise are equally important

- Rural Cost Study
Utah - Champion and Connector

• Local areas need a “go to” person to staff the initiative

• Connectors are critical in operationalizing various aspects of the initiative and bridge gaps between non profits and government agencies

• Must build sustainable models for implementation
Clallam County, WA -
Champion and Connector

• Recognized, active partner to talk about the plan, report results to government, build new partnerships
• Housing Authority critical “Champion” to further goals of Ten Year Plan.
• Champion and connector work effectively to increase resources/capacity throughout county
Ohio BOSCOC - Champion/Connector

- Trainings & Technical Assistance
- Advocacy
- Information Dissemination
- Systems Change
Lancaster County: Champion and Connector

• The Champions- (Co-Chairs of Council)
  – Message out across systems, People trust & listen to
  – Large circle(s) of influence

• The Connector –
  – “go to person” builds bridges/connections across systems
  – Knowledge base person – stays on top of best practice and research
  – Connects with strategic partners in rural areas
  – Community Homeless Advisor Position created by Commissioners to play this role in Lancaster County
Questions/Comments?
Contact Info

Norm Suchar, NAEH  nsuchar@naeh.org
Bridget Dejong, HomeBase  bridget@homebaseccc.org
Nancy Fritz, Maine  nfritz@mainehousing.org
Kay McDivitt, Lancaster Co.  KMcDivitt@co.lancaster.pa.us
Jonathan Hardy, Utah  jhardy@utah.gov
Kathy Wahto, Washington  kwahto@yahoo.com
Jonda Clemings, Ohio  jondaclemings@cohhio.org