

Lines of Business

LOB #155:

LEADERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT

Purpose

The Office to Prevent and End Homelessness, under the leadership of the Director, provides overall direction and oversight of agency-wide operational and administrative functions, to include establishing departmental strategic direction and promoting program accountability through performance measurement. The OPEH leadership also provides direction and support to the Fairfax-Falls Church Partnership to Prevent and End Homelessness, which includes the Governing Board and Consumer Advisory Council. In addition, OPEH oversees General Fund, state, and Continuum of Care federal resources directed to prevent and end homelessness. Through the active facilitation of partnerships with nonprofit, faith-based organizations, and businesses, resources are leveraged, awareness is raised and stakeholders are engaged to effectively prevent and end homelessness in the community.

Description

The Ten Year Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, adopted by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in 2008, lays out a new road map for the Fairfax-Falls Church community that focuses on keeping people from becoming homeless in the first place, increasing and preserving affordable housing, delivering integrated social services to those who need it, and creating a community partnership that ensures accountability and funding. The plan requires partnership and collaboration between government, business, faith and non-profit communities, as does the operation and support of the County's current homeless services. Ending homelessness will require a high level of commitment and cooperation and active participation from all sectors. Partnership efforts are led by the OPEH Partnership manager who works to achieve the following principles: community acceptance and support of the Housing First approach; strong political will to provide leadership, commitment, resources, support, and government flexibility; strong participation from the business community; cooperative leadership and management throughout the community; collaboration across all agencies to make the necessary organizational, policy, practice, and process changes needed to implement the plan; meaningful opportunities for input from persons who are or have been homeless; diverse funding and resources throughout the community and accountability of all participating organizations.

OPEH manages and provides contract oversight of nonprofit organizations for the operation of the following homeless services: emergency shelters, the hypothermia prevention program, motel placements, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing funds, Continuum of Care grants, and Housing Opportunities Support Teams (HOST). Homeless support services are also provided by other County agencies, such as the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board, the Department of Family Services, and the Health Department. OPEH works closely with these agencies to facilitate coordination that ensures effective and efficient service delivery. In addition, OPEH responds to community concerns raised to the Board of Supervisors and others concerning the homeless in the community. The Director and OPEH staff also represent Fairfax County in regional and national discussions and conferences.

Office to Prevent and End Homelessness

Leadership responsibilities of the Director include:

- Administratively established within the Fairfax County government to manage, coordinate, and monitor day-to-day implementation of the Ten Year Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness,
- Assure coordinated execution of the work and staff the Governing Board,
- Track successes and trends,
- Communicate with the larger community, and
- Coordinate with the Consumer Advisory Council.

Engagement initiatives facilitated by OPEH to increase awareness and community participation include:

- Jeans Day (Denim Day) is an international event held to show support for many “causes.” In Fairfax, Jeans Day has been implemented to help those experiencing homelessness in the community. Partnering with non-profit service providers and local businesses, Jeans Days are held as awareness campaigns and fund raising. Participants donate \$5 (or more) for the privilege to wear denim/jeans to work on the day identified as Jeans Day. In most areas corporations encourage their employees to be involved by paying or donating to wear jeans for a cause. Some participating corporations match the funds raised by their employees. All funds raised provide services to clients.
- 100,000 Homes is a national movement to identify the most vulnerable people experiencing chronic homelessness. They are identified as particularly vulnerable because of co-existing health and/or substance abuse issues so significant that they are the most likely to die on the streets if not housed. It has been estimated that living on the streets shortens lifespan by 25 years. Ultimately, the campaign’s mission was to find permanent homes for 100,000 such people. States and localities joined the campaign to operationalize and implement it in their communities. The 100,000 Homes Fairfax has identified 300 unsheltered people at high risk of mortality, and housing them is an OPEH priority.
- The Mayor’s Challenge is an effort announced by first lady Michelle Obama and amplified by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness and the National League of Cities. The Mayors Challenge calls for mayors (and other jurisdiction leaders) to make a commitment to ending veteran homelessness in their communities in 2015.
- The Mannequin Campaign was designed to raise awareness that homelessness does exist in Fairfax County despite its wealth. Mannequins are on display in locations throughout the County, representing the faces of homelessness in the area. Each mannequin holds a placard asking residents “Do You Know Me? Can You See Me?” and a profile that tells the story of individuals/families actually experiencing homelessness in the community.
- Build a Village – Business, civic, faith and community-based organizations, and individuals will be asked to be engaged in ending homelessness through their involvement and financial support. Donors may buy a virtual brick or house online by providing monetary donations to the Fairfax-Falls Church Partnership to Prevent and End Homelessness. Proceeds will go to further the partnership’s programs and to provide housing solutions for those who are currently homeless.

Office to Prevent and End Homelessness

Benefits

The essence of the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness Leadership and Engagement LOB is defined in the Fairfax County Ten Year Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness. The plan establishes a coordinating office to bring about an unprecedented level of collaboration among the many diverse actors in what was a highly fragmented homeless services system. These partners include more than 20 non-profit organizations, as well as County human services agencies like the Department of Neighborhood and Community Services, the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board, the Department of Family Services, and the Department of Housing and Community Development. Beyond these organizations, there is also active engagement needed with numerous faith communities, business and community partners who have an interest and role in preventing and ending homelessness in Fairfax County.

Providing leadership for the County's efforts with such a diverse group of partners requires maximum and ongoing effort. Gaining the trust of so many partners requires transparency and development of reliable data and reporting mechanisms. Gaining commitment requires engagement in a variety of formats, including coordinating policy boards, community forums, social media, special fund raisers and events designed to raise awareness of the need for and support of the mission to end homelessness. These reasons represent why the Leadership and Engagement LOB is a necessary and critical piece in the community's effort to end homelessness.

The value of this LOB is a consistent, publicized effort around making homelessness for families and individuals rare and brief in Fairfax County. A safe and caring community requires that all of its residents have their basic needs met, including adequate housing. The poor outcomes for homeless families and individuals are well documented and include reduced children's health outcomes and school achievement and poor health, early death for unsheltered adults, and increased involvement in the criminal justice system. All of OPEH's programs and services are coordinated through the Leadership and Engagement function with the singular focus on preventing and ending homelessness in Fairfax County.

Mandates

There are no mandates for the establishment of the Partnership to Prevent and End Homelessness. However, the Ten Year Plan, approved by the Board of Supervisors on March 31, 2008, established specific strategies that must be utilized to prevent and end homelessness. It is the Ten Year Plan that guides the work in the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness.

Trends and Challenges

The goal is that every person who is homeless or at risk of being homeless in the Fairfax Falls Church community is able to access appropriate affordable housing and the services needed to keep them in their homes. Even after homelessness has ended in the community, people will continue to experience crises that put them at risk of homelessness. Additionally, there will always be some people who choose homelessness over other options that are available to them.

The goal of ending homelessness in Fairfax County is not about any one organization or the particular services that they provide. The partnership relies on OPEH working with seasoned and capable nonprofits, the faith community, businesses, and other County agencies to implement a collective community response to the circumstances that make an individual vulnerable or homeless, and then rapidly placing them in safe and affordable housing. The community plan references high level goals and strategies for ending homelessness. In order to measure the community's progress, the goal is that the total number of people who are homeless and not in permanent housing decreases every year over the course of the Ten Year Plan. There has been a 34 percent decrease in the number of literally homeless persons in Fairfax County since 2008.

Office to Prevent and End Homelessness

The Point-in-Time (PIT) count is a count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons on a single night in January. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires that Continuums of Care conduct an annual count of homeless persons who are sheltered in emergency shelter, transitional housing, and Safe Havens on a single night. This provides a national snapshot of the numbers of people experiencing homelessness. It also provides localities with a snapshot of their community. In the January 2015 Point in Time count there were 1,204 people who were reported as literally homeless in the Fairfax-Falls Church community. The 34 percent decrease represents the difference between people who were reported as literally homeless in 2008 and those who were reported as homeless in 2015.

The largest challenge for the community in preventing and ending homelessness continues to be the lack of affordable housing. Market rates far exceed the earning capacity for the homeless in the community. Spending more for housing than what is affordable threatens the stability of households and puts them at risk of homelessness or makes it difficult for them to become stable in the community. Over 60 percent of adults in local family shelters are working one or two jobs and are still unable to remain self-sufficient. Housing options for people with limited job skills or employment opportunities, as well as those individuals with other challenges like mental illness or substance abuse, are scarce. It will be difficult to maintain progress in preventing and ending homelessness without additional affordable housing opportunities.

Resources

Category	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Adopted
LOB #155: Leadership and Engagement			
FUNDING			
<u>Expenditures:</u>			
Compensation	\$329,536	\$346,599	\$333,958
Operating Expenses	6,817	21,580	14,219
Total Expenditures	\$336,353	\$368,179	\$348,177
General Fund Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0
Net Cost/(Savings) to General Fund	\$336,353	\$368,179	\$348,177
POSITIONS			
Authorized Positions/Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)			
<u>Positions:</u>			
Regular	3 / 3.3	3 / 3.3	3 / 3.3
Total Positions	3 / 3.3	3 / 3.3	3 / 3.3