

No Place Like Home

Porter County, Indiana Plan to End Homelessness

January 2012

Faced with an increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness and a system strained doing what it can to address the issue, service providers, shelter and housing providers, community members, faith-based organizations and funders created a Plan to End Homelessness for Porter County, *No Place Like Home*. The plan lays a foundation to retool the homeless service system to most effectively prevent homelessness and rapidly re-house people experiencing homelessness.

THE PROBLEM

Homelessness is growing in Porter County:

- 154 adults and 75 children were experiencing homelessness in January 2011.
- Nearly 1 in 5 people homeless in Porter County had been homeless longer than 3 months and 15% report they had experienced homelessness more than once.
- In 2010 there were 215 homeless students in Porter County schools. Homeless students in Indiana have higher rates of suspensions and a 20% lower graduation rate.



Recent and current poverty and economic trends illustrate how financial and housing stability have eroded for many people in Porter County, putting them at greater risk of homelessness:

- In 2009, 10,673 individuals in Porter County had incomes below the official poverty line and over 2,200 Porter County children are living in poverty.
- Poverty is steadily deepening in Porter County: since 1989, the number of people living below half of the poverty line has grown by 44%.
- Median annual earnings have dropped by \$2,466 since 2000 and median household income has also declined, falling \$8,905 since 2000.

Porter County lacks certain types of housing to key preventing and ending homelessness, and some housing market activity is increasing housing instability:

- The vast majority of housing in Porter County is single unit (e.g. single family home) - only 17.2% of housing has 2 or more units (such as a duplex or apartment building).
- Rents rose by 38% in Porter County from 2000 to 2011. In 2009, 12.8% of all renters paid over 30% of their income toward rent, considered an unaffordable rent burden.

Top Reasons People Experience Homelessness in Porter County

Personal Reasons		System/Structural Reasons	
Inadequate income	92.3%	Lack of good paying jobs	73.1%
Lack of job skills	73.1%	Lack of affordable housing	65.4%
Credit problems	61.5%	Transportation issues	57.7%
Substance use issues	53.8%	Long housing waiting lists	46.2%
Domestic violence	46.2%	Limited supply of housing for families	30.8%
Disability	38.5%	Lack of housing with supportive services	23.1%

These trends, which are often out of the control of those experiencing them, influence people's housing stability in profound ways. Having stable housing is one of the most basic human needs. In its absence it becomes difficult to be a productive member of society – to find and hold a job, to access education, or to take care of health and family needs.

THE 10-YEAR PLAN VISION

All residents will have access to a safe, affordable home in Porter County including resources and support services necessary to prevent and end homelessness.



PLAN STRATEGIES

- ❖ **Increase Access to Stable and Affordable Housing**
Incorporate a Housing First approach at every possible opportunity, increase inventory and access to permanent supportive housing and more broadly affordable housing.
- ❖ **Focus on Homelessness Prevention**
The most cost effective way to address homelessness is to prevent it from ever happening to an individual or family. Expand outreach and service delivery to households at risk of becoming homeless.
- ❖ **Increase Economic Security**
Increase earning potential for households at risk of or currently experiencing homelessness, and mitigate the employment barriers that block households from success at work.
- ❖ **Improve Health and Stability**
Coordinate better access to physical and mental health care systems to improve quality of life and increase stability.
- ❖ **Increase Leadership, Collaboration and Civic Engagement**
Seek full engagement across the spectrum of community stakeholders to ensure the effective implementation of this Plan.
- ❖ **Retool the Homeless Crisis Response System**
Develop a 'single front door' process through which all households entering the system can enter. Focus programs on rapid re-housing, and promote greater participation in the Homeless Management Information System to better assess the populations at risk and retool programs and processes to best meet needs.

Participation in the development of this Plan was extraordinary, and there is no doubt Porter County can grow that participation and keep the momentum moving to accomplish this Plan's vision. Delivering the appropriate services, support and housing to people in need improves the quality of life for those households and the community at large. It is important that communities develop strong systems of response and actively plan to address the needs of those both facing homelessness and those at risk of becoming homeless. With the advent of its Plan to End Homelessness, Porter County is doing just that—developing solutions in the face of the many challenges facing the community.

The full plan can be downloaded from:

Housing Opportunities	www.housing-opportunities.com
Porter County Community Foundation	www.portercountyfoundation.org
Porter-Starke Services	www.porterstarke.org
United Way of Porter County	www.unitedwaypc.org
Social IMPACT Research Center	www.heartlandalliance.org/research

Plan Funders: The Caring Place, City of Portage, City of Valparaiso, Gabriel's Horn, Housing Opportunities, Inc., Porter County Commissioners, Porter County Community Foundation, Porter-Starke Services, Town of Chesterton, and the United Way of Porter County.

