



## STATE OF GEORGIA FY 2011 and 2012 Accomplishments

*Homeless persons have increased their independence and been restored to the mainstream of society because State and local resources have ensured optimal opportunities through the creation of an integrated and seamless system of quality services. As a result of these actions, the State of Georgia will have the resources to prevent homelessness, to transition homeless families back to self sufficiency and to end chronic homelessness within ten years.*

*To accomplish this vision, the State of Georgia Interagency Homeless Coordination Council (GIHCC) offered the following six goals and accompanying activities as a Plan of Action.*

### **Goal One**

**Expand access to and use of the Federal mainstream housing and support service programs by homeless families and chronically homeless individuals. HUD-identified mainstream service programs include Medicaid, TANF, SSI, CHIP, Workforce Investment Act, Food Stamps, Adult Literacy, Vocational Rehabilitation and Veterans Benefits. Mainstream housing programs include the affordable and supported rental and homeownership programs administered by HUD, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), and local agencies.**

#### **Outcome:**

Appropriate referral and enrollment procedures will result in individuals and families receiving or maximizing their opportunity to receive the mainstream housing and/or support services to which they are entitled or can benefit.

#### **Accomplishments:**

In 2011 and 2012, DCA conducted sixteen (16) regional Continuum of Care workshops to discuss local and regional needs and to provide a forum for local providers to discuss mainstream resources.

Through September 30, 2011 (Federal FY 12 information is not yet available), and based on three years of data, there were 710 SOAR approvals (71%) out of 998 decisions in Georgia. This approval rate is average for the U. S. In Georgia, SOAR decisions averaged 131 days. In FY 2012, DCA implemented a SOAR Pilot Program with First Step Staffing in order to secure benefits for Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) and Shelter Plus Care clients.

DCA funded nine (9) street outreach programs from July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2012. Two of these programs were associated with PATH programs funded by the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD), but seven (7) programs are



smaller-scale programs serving the communities of Albany, Athens, Atlanta, Gainesville, Griffin, Toccoa, and Valdosta. The Atlanta grant to Covenant House Georgia provides street outreach to homeless youth.

First created in 2008, the Common Point of Access to Social Services (COMPASS) system used by the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) now screens for eleven (11) different benefit programs and includes online applications for food stamps and child care. Since 2011, clients have had online access in order to report changes in family status, income, etc., and renew food stamps, TANF, Medicaid, and child care assistance through the MyCOMPASS account functionality.

## **Goal Two**

**Provide supported housing for chronically homeless individuals and families that are both affordable and appropriate for the delivery of supported services.**

### **Outcome:**

There will be an increase in supported housing units added annually.

### **Accomplishments:**

DCA secured 162 new units of Shelter Plus Care (S+C) supported housing through the 2010 and 2011 (announced in FY 2011 and FY 2012) HUD Continuum of Care funding processes.

DCA implemented a Harm Reduction Pilot program with the River Edge and New Horizons Community Service Boards. DCA provided increased funding for supportive services, and in exchange, these two providers agreed to admit service resistant populations to their S+C programs and, for these populations, not impose any service requirements.

During 2011 and 2012, renovations were completed on O'Hern House through DCA's Permanent Supportive Housing Program. These seventy-six (76) units of permanent supportive housing are now occupied. Construction loans were closed for two developments, Quest Village III and Oak Ridge Apartments, and both are under construction. When completed and occupied during FY 2013, sixty-three (63) additional supportive housing units will be available to vulnerable homeless individuals and families.

DBHDD hired a permanent supportive housing director to manage the agency's efforts to permanently house persons with serious and persistent mental illness and others within covered classes under the Department of Justice (DoJ) Settlement Agreement with the State of Georgia. As a part of this effort, the Georgia Housing Voucher and Bridge Funding Programs were created, and through June 30, 2012, 650 persons within the settlement class secured permanent supportive housing. The six (6) month stability rate for consumers housed has been 89%.



Forty-seven percent (47%) of referrals to date have been “homeless” by Federal definition, many chronically homeless.

The Georgia Housing and Finance Authority (operated under the DCA umbrella) obtained a HUD waiver for its Housing Choice Voucher Program (f/k/a “Section 8”) that allows the agency to establish a preference for persons within the Department of Justice’s settlement class within its 149-county service area. Beginning in FY 2013, about 700 vouchers per year are expected to be put into place; largely for persons with serious and persistent mental illness, many of whom are homeless or formerly homeless.

DCA currently has 1,636 units of Shelter Plus Care housing under contract with HUD. Inasmuch as is possible, DCA will work with its 45 sponsors to emphasize a preference among new admissions for homeless persons with serious and persistent mental illness.

DCA is seeking funding through an application to HUD under the new HUD 811 program which will provide 150 units of project-based rental assistance (PRA) to low income persons with disabilities, many of whom are either homeless or formerly homeless. If funding is successful, the new PRA will be attached to existing tax credit rental units and will not exceed 20% of the overall rental units in the development. The new 811 demonstration program is designed to integrate families and individuals with disabilities into market rate rental developments as opposed to concentrating person with disabilities all in one location. This new program is a collaboration between the Departments of Community Affairs (DCA), Community Health (DCH), and Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD). The rental assistance will be targeted to applicants that meet the eligibility requirement for either the State DoJ Settlement Agreement or the State’s Money Follows the Person (MFP) program. Grant decisions are expected in FY 2013.

### **Goal Three**

**Develop and adopt state policies to end the discharge of institutionalized individuals (to include discharge from correction facilities, public health or mental hospitals, treatment facilities, foster care, or juvenile justice programs) directly to homeless facilities which are unprepared and unable to meet the supported service needs of the individual.**

#### **Outcome:**

Adoption of discharge policies by agency heads. Expand and Replicate Successful Programs for Individuals Discharged from Institutions.

#### **Accomplishments:**

The Departments of Community Health (DCH) and Human Services (DHS) are partnering to implement the Money Follows the Person (MFP) Initiative that seeks to transition and discharge



1,312 individuals from institutions to the community. Populations under this program include older adults, adults and children with physical disabilities and/or Traumatic Brain Injury, and adults or children with mental retardation and/or developmental disabilities. The goals are to transition individuals from nursing facilities, hospitals, and intermediate care facilities for mental retardation (ICF-MR) to qualified community residences and rebalance the long-term care system by offering enhanced transition services for 12 months to qualified persons transitioning from a qualified institution to a qualified community-setting. MFP policy changes now allow for the cost of home modifications to be made such that persons with accessibility issues can have the proper modification performed to reduce barriers to community-based and integrated placements. DCA also aided this partnership by assisting multiple housing authorities to respond to the HUD NOFA for Non-Elderly Housing Choice Voucher for Persons with Disabilities. Through this effort, the Decatur Housing Authority was awarded 35 Housing Choice Vouchers specifically for MFP participants. DCA has provided 12 housing choice vouchers available to persons transitioning from institutional care under the MFP initiative.

DCA has allocated a portion of its HOME funding and is preparing to implement a program in FY 2013 to provide transitional rental assistance to persons exiting institutional settings through the Money Follows the Person Initiative. Over the long term, DCA anticipates that these individuals will move in to permanent housing options using assistance offered through local public housing authorities and DCA. MFP will provide funds to cover the expenses related to leaving the institution and setting up to live in a traditional apartment. MFP funds pay for moving expenses, furniture, deposits, home modifications, and adaptive equipment. MFP funding also covers a temporary living allowance which provides an income equal to their benefits while the person's benefits are directed back to them from the institution where they were living. The MFP program also has access to Medicaid Waivers that will fund the needed support services for the person to be able to live independently in the community, including such services as home based health care and a personal care attendant. DCA expects to issue 60 to 75 vouchers in the first twelve months of implementation.

Continuity of Care Transition Planning is provided through all state mental health hospitals for all individuals being discharged. The plan addresses all needed services, including housing and residential supports. Staff conducts assessments to identify those individuals who are at risk of readmission and their housing status and are linked with community based service providers. A Person Centered Transition Plan provides for receipt of appropriate community services at discharge. The DoJ Settlement Agreement with Georgia requires the placement of 100 persons in community integrated housing by June 30, 2011 and 2,000 by 2015. State allocated funds have been appropriated by the legislature to provide supportive housing options for persons being discharged from institutional facilities and state operated psychiatric hospitals. NW Regional Hospital in Rome was closed during this reporting period and DBHDD has provided rental assistance through these state funds for individuals being discharged. The allocation of state funded resources is scheduled to continue through FY 2015.

The Re-entry Partnership Housing Program (RPH) continued to provide a collaborative effort between the State Board of Pardons and Parole, the Georgia Department of Corrections (DoC)



and DCA to facilitate the transition of individuals who are eligible for parole but lack a residence necessary for the parole to occur. The program provides participating organizations with short term financial assistance in exchange for the provision of stable housing and food. In addition to RPH, the DoC has several re-entry initiatives for individuals maxing out of prison. Two Pre-Release Centers exist across the State to address re-entry needs of offenders with two years or less to serve with the focus of locating suitable housing and meaningful work upon discharge. DoC also implements a Faith and Character Based Initiative to match ex-offenders with faith based organizations that assist with housing and mentoring upon release.

#### **Goal 4**

**Develop replicable community planning model(s) to enhance local implementation of integrated housing and service delivery strategies for homeless persons. This model will include Guiding Principles in areas of collaboration, governance, authority, and finances.**

#### **Outcome:**

Local housing and service collaboratives will adopt guiding principles as a prerequisite to State-supported funding.

#### **Accomplishments:**

During FY 2011 and 2012, DCA presented 23 regional workshops to discuss policy, application guidelines and best practices associated with the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) program. In this same period, DCA has conducted approximately 20 Shelter Plus Care workshops for grantees. And lastly, along with Pathways Community Network, DCA has sponsored two (2) state-wide conferences on the use of and planning capabilities associated with its Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS).

Over the past two years, DCA has dramatically improved the ways in which the agency can use data for reporting and evaluation. Previously, reporting involving our Homeless Management Information System was an extremely tedious and inefficient process. This process has become almost completely automated thanks to new technological capabilities. The improvement has made tracking data quality vastly easier while also providing grantees with tools that help them streamline the data cleaning process. Aided also by stricter data policies this enhancement has resulted in improved data quality, allowing DCA to report on outcomes that were previously unavailable. Since July 2011, the rate of missing data for one of our key housing outcome statistics has dropped from 48% to 10% among DCA grants serving the homeless.



## **Goal 5**

**Engage State leadership (Department Heads, Legislature and Governor's Office) in the adoption of strategies, allocation of resources and the implementation of these and future recommendations of the Council.**

**Outcome:** Present the Georgia Homeless Action Plan and Accomplishments to the Office of the Governor, state agency officials, and others.

### **Accomplishments:**

The State Interagency Council met quarterly during FY 2011 and 2012. This report will be submitted to the Governor and posted on DCA's website at:

<http://www.dca.ga.gov/housing/specialneeds/programs/sihc.asp>.

## **Goal Six**

**Take the necessary actions to fully utilize and maximize the available Federal, State, public, and private funds available to address the needs of the homeless and to meet the goal of ending chronic homelessness in five years.**

### **Outcome:**

Georgia continues to secure 100% of the annual HUD Continuum of Care pro rata share funding and other Federal funding with identified match provided through State, local and private funding.

### **Accomplishments:**

Federal Continuum of Care awards for both Federal FY 2010 and 2011 (received during State FY 2011 and 2012) exceeded Federal pro rata (formula) shares. The 2010 award of \$3.9 million dollars represented 179% of the \$17.3 million dollar pro rata. \$33.5 million dollars was received as part of the 2011 award in FY 2012.

Through June 30, 2012, Georgia has secured 1,475 federal VASH Housing Choice Vouchers for vulnerable (mostly chronic) homeless veterans. VASH vouchers are located within the service area of the Atlanta, Augusta, and Dublin VA hospitals. As of June 30, 2012, approximately 75% of those allocated to public housing authorities in Georgia were being used by Veterans.



## **Goal Seven**

**Identify and implement strategies to decrease the number of homeless families with children and unaccompanied youth in Georgia.**

### **Outcome:**

Decrease the number of homeless families with children in Georgia as reported to HUD by the seven continuum of care and as measured by the Department of Education.

### **Accomplishments:**

Metro Atlanta providers and advocates have determined that a formal system of care must be developed immediately to ensure the physical safety of homeless and unaccompanied youth ages 12 - 24 within Atlanta, Fulton, and DeKalb Counties. Thirty (30) agencies are meeting monthly and an action plan is being developed for a) prevention/education, b) development of a triage center to provide a "point of entry" for youth to come off the street, c) emergency housing/services, d) transitional and permanent housing/services, and e) after care. The group is also working to conduct a specialized youth street count using youth enumeration teams that will know the congregation areas.

Through its ESG program, DCA provided a July 1, 2012 grant to Covenant House Georgia to aid in the activation of a street outreach team targeted to homeless youth.