



UPDATE ON HOMELESSNESS
IN OZAUKEE COUNTY

2015

Janice Wilberg, Ph.D.





Table of Contents

Purpose of the Update on Homeless in Ozaukee County	3
Definitions of Homelessness	3
Homelessness as defined by HUD Continuum of Care	4
Homeless as defined by McKinney-Vento	5
Extent and Nature of Homelessness in Ozaukee County	5
IMPACT 2-1-1 Calls and Referrals	5
Homeless Students in Ozaukee County	6
Point in Time Count	8
Emergency Shelter Utilization by Residents of Ozaukee County	8
Demand for Homelessness Prevention Assistance	9
Causes of Homelessness	9
Households at Possible Risk of Homelessness in Ozaukee County	10
ALICE in Ozaukee County	12
Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness	13
Best Practices to Address Homelessness	13
Summary	14
Recommendations	15



PURPOSE OF THE UPDATE ON HOMELESSNESS IN OZAUKEE COUNTY

The primary purpose of this update on homelessness is to make sure that Ozaukee County's homeless services and resources are directed toward solving the right problem. Homelessness is different in every community. Some communities are experiencing high numbers of people who are literally homeless, that is, living on the street or in places not for human habitation. Other communities have very few people on the street but many people who are at imminent risk of homelessness. These are people who may have experienced a job loss, unexpected medical bills or a rent increase they cannot afford. Others may be doubled or tripled up with friends or relatives on a temporary basis.

In order to make the best possible use of scarce resources and to ensure that people in greatest need are served, each community must examine its own unique situation and devise the solutions with the best fit. **That is the purpose of this update: to provide information that will enable Ozaukee County stakeholders to make the best possible decisions regarding homeless services, policies and programs.**

DEFINITIONS OF HOMELESSNESS

Dictionary definitions of homelessness reflect the average person's view: a person is homeless if s/he has no home or permanent place of residence."¹

However, there are different definitions of homelessness. These definitions have been created by the federal government to regulate who is eligible to receive homeless assistance that is funded with federal dollars. In Wisconsin, as in every other state, federal funding supports the continuum of homeless services including coordinated entry, homelessness prevention assistance, emergency shelter, safe haven, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing. State and local funding generally have federal origins (federal funding passed through these governmental entities in the form of block grants) so they carry the same requirements as direct federal funding, say, for instance, in the form of a permanent supportive housing grant made to an individual agency.

The reasons why the federal definitions of homelessness are important are as follows:

- 1) Homeless services that are paid for with federal funds (including federal funds passed through state or local government) can only be provided to individuals and families that meet the official definition of homelessness.
- 2) The definitions of homelessness are connected to solutions, meaning that different types of homelessness require different types of programs and services.
- 3) The official definitions of homelessness provide a standard language pertaining to homelessness, thus allowing measurement and comparison across all fifty states.
- 4) The distinctions between definitions are extremely valuable to localities in understanding the specific nature of homelessness in their communities. For example, many large cities like New York and San Francisco have significant numbers of 'literally homeless' individuals, e.g. people living on the street, while other areas, including Milwaukee and the State of Wisconsin, are more likely to have people at 'imminent risk of homelessness.'

¹ www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/homeless



- 5) Non-governmental funding sources such as United Way and private foundations are increasingly aligning their efforts to address homelessness with the federal definitions.

Homelessness as defined by HUD Continuum of Care

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Continuum of Care Program defines homelessness in four categories: 1) Literally Homeless; 2) Imminent Risk of Homelessness; 3) Homeless under other Federal Statutes; and 4) Flee/Attempting to Flee Domestic Violence.² The HUD Continuum of Care guidelines are the guidelines used to determine eligibility for the full continuum of federal and state funded services including emergency shelter, transitional housing, safe haven, permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing.

<p>Category 1</p>	<p>Literally Homeless</p>	<p>An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation; • Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotels and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state and local government programs; <u>or</u> • Is exiting an institution where s/he has resided for 90 days or less <u>and</u> who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution.
<p>Category 2</p>	<p>Imminent Risk of Homelessness</p>	<p>An individual or family who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, provided that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residence will be lost within 14 days of the date of application for homeless assistance; • No subsequent residence has been identified; <u>and</u> • The individual or family lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.
<p>Category 3</p>	<p>Homeless under other Federal Statutes</p>	<p>Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or families with children and youth, who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition, but who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are defined as homeless under the other listed federal statutes; • Have not had a lease, ownership interest, or occupancy agreement in permanent housing during the 60 days prior to the homeless assistance application; • Have experienced persistent instability as measured by two moves or more during the preceding 60 days; <u>and</u> • Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time due to special needs or barriers.
<p>Category 4</p>	<p>Fleeing/Attempting to Flee Domestic Violence</p>	<p>Any individual or family who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence; • Has no other residence; <u>and</u> • Lacks the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing.

² “Criteria and Recordkeeping Requirements for Definition of Homelessness”

https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessDefinition_RecordkeepingRequirementsandCriteria.pdf



Homelessness as defined by McKinney-Vento

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Act U.S.C. 1143a (2)), defines the term “homeless children and youths” as follows:

(A) *Individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and*

(B) *Includes –*

- i. *Children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason, are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;*
- ii. *Children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;*
- iii. *Children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and*
- iv. *Migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses I through iii.*

EXTENT AND NATURE OF HOMELESSNESS IN OZAUKEE COUNTY

IMPACT 2-1-1 Calls and Referrals

IMPACT 2-1-1 serves Milwaukee, Waukesha, Kenosha, Racine, Ozaukee, Washington, Dodge, Jefferson and Walworth Counties. IMPACT 2-1-1 provides telephone service as well as text and online access. Its extensive (5,500+) program directory is also available online. Currently, 70% of Wisconsin is covered by IMPACT 2-1-1; in 2014, 2-1-1 handled 154,578 calls from people in its nine-county service area.³

IMPACT 2-1-1 records the location of each caller (by zip code area) and tracks referrals made for each caller. As a result, we are able to review not only the volume of calls from Ozaukee County during this period but also track the number of requests for community shelter.

Ozaukee County Callers to 2-1-1 by Zip Code Area: 2011-2014

Zip Code Area	2011		2012		2013		2014		Total	
53004 (Belgium)	12	4.1%	8	2.2%	4	1.4%	5	1.3%	29	2.2%
53012 (Cedarburg)	42	14.8%	50	13.9%	47	15.9%	44	11.5%	183	13.9%
53021 (Fredonia)	13	4.5%	13	3.6%	22	7.4%	17	4.4%	65	4.9%
53024 (Grafton)	45	15.9%	74	20.6%	48	16.2%	74	19.3%	241	18.2%
53074 (Port Washington)	56	19.8%	70	19.5%	44	14.9%	60	15.7%	230	17.4%
53080 (Saukville)	26	9.2%	40	11.1%	59	19.9%	75	19.6%	200	15.1%
53092 (Mequon)	67	23.7%	79	22.0%	59	19.9%	83	21.7%	288	21.8%
53097 (Mequon)	22	7.8%	25	7.0%	13	4.4%	25	6.5%	85	6.4%

³ “Largest 2-1-1 Providers by 2014 Call Volume,” www.impactinc.org/news-reports/reports/impact-2-1-1-reports/



Overall, calls to 2-1-1 from Ozaukee County callers have increased 35% between 2011 and 2014 from 283 to 383. However, it is important to note that the number of calls from Ozaukee County callers is very small compared to 2-2-1's total call volume which was 154,578 in 2014.⁴

Shelter-Related Calls to 211 @ IMPACT: 2011-2014⁵

The number of Ozaukee County callers seeking information about community shelter has generally represented about 10% of total Ozaukee County 2-1-1 calls. In 2011, there were 31 calls (11%), 2012 - 26 calls (7%), 2013 - 10%, and 2014 - 39 (10%).

Homeless Students in Ozaukee County

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction requires school districts to report on the number of homeless students every year. Data collected includes the number, distribution by grade and the nighttime living situation. The students are identified as homeless when their situations conform to the McKinney-Vento definition included previously.

Total Homeless and Nighttime Residence Data – Homeless Students 2013-14 End-of-Year Report⁶

School District	Total Homeless	Shelter	Doubled Up	Unsheltered	Hotel
Cedarburg	0	-	-	-	-
Grafton	7	0	6	0	1
Mequon-Thiensville	5	2	3	0	0
N. Ozaukee	6	6	0	0	0
Port Washington-Saukville	25	1	23	0	1
Total	43	9	32	0	2

Data from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction indicates a **total of 43 students** who met the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness at some time during the 2013-14 school year. The majority of these students (74%) were living in situations where their families were doubled up with other families. Another 21% were living in shelter, presumably Advocates of Ozaukee which housed 165 people in 2013.

Note that students who are unsheltered (0), living in shelter (9) or in a hotel, if paid for by a charitable organization or government (1 possibly) would fall into the HUD Continuum of Care Category 1 Literally Homeless Category. This represents 23% of the total number of students determined to be homeless according to the McKinney-Vento definition.

⁴ Ibid. Note: IMPACT 2-1-1 has been taking calls from Ozaukee County since 2006 when the state phone systems were programmed so each county was covered by a 2-1-1 provider. While IMPACT has not received funding specifically for Ozaukee County, it does maintain information on service providers for its IMPACT Directory. 2-1-1 also distributes 211 'cards' to entities in Ozaukee County wishing to distribute them and always takes Ozaukee County calls. Also, 2-1-1 has developed an understanding with COPE Services that they would transfer any calls that did not fit within their mission of providing talk line and supportive listening services. Per Bob Waite, IMPACT, 9/23/15

⁵ Bob Waite, Director, IMPACT 2-1-1

⁶ Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction



Distribution of Homeless Students (McKinney-Vento-eligible): 2013-14 School Year⁷

Grade Level	Cedarburg	Grafton	Mequon-Thiensville	Northern Ozaukee	Port Washington-Saukville	Total
Age3-4	0	0	0	2	1	3
K	0	0	0	1	5	6
01	0	1	0	0	3	4
02	0	2	1	1	3	7
03	0	2	0	0	3	5
04	0	1	0	1	5	7
05	0	0	0	0	1	1
06	0	0	1	0	2	2
07	0	0	0	0	0	2
08	0	1	2	0	2	3
09	0	0	0	0	0	2
10	0	0	0	1	0	1
11	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total	0	7	5	6	25	43

The majority (77%) of students identified as homeless in the 2013-14 school year were Ages 3-4 through Grade 5, suggesting that homelessness may be more prevalent among younger families.

The three-year trend (2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14) shows an increase in the number of students determined to meet the McKinney-Vento homeless definition.

Total Homeless Students (McKinney-Vento-eligible): 2011 to 2014 End-of-Year Reports⁸

School District	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Cedarburg	3	1	0
Grafton	0	3	7
Mequon-Thiensville	0	2	5
N. Ozaukee	12	9	6
Port Washington-Saukville	9	14	25
Total	24	29	43

The number of homeless students in the five Ozaukee County districts increased 21% between the 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years and 48% between the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school years. Between 2011-12 and 2013-14, the number increased 79%. Three districts: Grafton, Mequon-Thiensville and Port Washington-Saukville showed increases during this period. Two districts: Cedarburg and Northern Ozaukee showed declines.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid



Port Washington-Saukville School District has the majority (58%) of homeless students with 25 in 2013-14. The other districts are in the single digits: Grafton (7), Mequon-Thiensville (5) and Northern Ozaukee (6).

Point in Time Count

Ozaukee County is part of the Balance of State Continuum of Care. Twice a year, in January and July, all of Wisconsin’s Continuums of Care conduct a Point in Time (PIT) Count of homelessness. Included in the count are people in emergency shelter, safe haven and transitional housing as well as people who are unsheltered. The 2013 January PIT counted 1,847 homeless persons in the Balance of State Continuum of Care service area (21 Continuums of Care/69 counties). Of this total, 171 were unsheltered people, representing 9% of the total. In past years, the only people counted as homeless for Ozaukee County were those at Advocates of Ozaukee’s domestic violence shelter; there has only been one individual found who was unsheltered in the history of PIT’s being conducted.

Emergency Shelter Utilization by Residents of Ozaukee County

Ozaukee County does not current have an emergency shelter for the general population. Advocates of Ozaukee provides emergency shelter for people fleeing domestic violence. Although this population often shares many of the characteristics of the general homeless population, the circumstances of homelessness and ongoing service needs are sufficiently different to warrant its own needs assessment. For that reason, the population fleeing domestic violence has not been included in this analysis.

Another way to assess the extent of homelessness in Ozaukee County is to determine the extent to which people from the county seek emergency shelter in other areas. Information entered into the State of Wisconsin Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) by emergency shelters funded by state and federal dollars includes “zip code of last permanent address” as information collected from each emergency shelter client.

The people who utilized emergency shelter in other counties would have been determined to be eligible according to the HUD Continuum of Care definition.

Emergency Shelter Clients with Prior Permanent Address in Ozaukee County: 2014

Emergency Shelter Clients from Ozaukee County Served by State of Wisconsin Shelters	Number	Percent
Total from Ozaukee County	25	100%
Veterans	1	4%
Singles	25	100%
Families	0	0%
Female	3	12%
Male	21	84%
Gender Not Known	1	4%
Children (Under 18)	0	0%
Ages 18-34	12	48%
Ages 35-64	12	48%
Age 65+	1	4%
Served in Milwaukee County	14	56%



Served in Dane County	1	4%
Served in Lakeshore CoC	5	20%
Served in Washington CoC	3	12%
Served in Waukesha CoC	3	12%
Served in Winnebagoland CoC	1	4% ⁹

Demand for Homelessness Prevention Assistance

From October 2014 through August 2015, Advocates of Ozaukee averaged 3.18 calls for homelessness prevention services per week. Of the total callers who either received homelessness prevention and those who received referrals to other help (N=148), 68% were families and 32% were single adults.

About one third of callers (34%) received cash assistance, generally to prevent a pending eviction. Several families also receive rent assistance to help with security deposits, a move from a hotel to a permanent living situation or to relocate out of state.

Callers Assisted by Homelessness Prevention Services: October 2014 to August 2015¹⁰

Month	Total Calls	Received Rent Assistance for Prevention/Re-housing			Received referral for other services		
		Individuals	Families	People in Families	Individuals	Families	People in Families
October 2014	17	0	6	20	3	6	15
November 2014	10	1	4	13	1	3	7
December 2014	20	3	4	13	3	10	35
January 2015	14	1	0	0	4	9	23
February 2015	8	1	1	4	1	4	11
March 2015	13	1	3	11	2	7	16
April 2015	19	1	6	25	4	8	20
May 2015	11	0	2	9	3	6	16
June 2015	14	2	2	6	3	6	19
July 2015	9	0	5	16	2	2	6
August 2015	18	5	4	14	6	3	14
Total	153	15	37	131	32	64	182

CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS

An overview published by the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty cites these as the top causes of homelessness for families: “(1) lack of affordable housing, (2) unemployment, (3) poverty, and (4) low wages.”

⁹ Percentages for ‘where served’ tally more than 100%; likely reflects the count being unduplicated

¹⁰ Advocates of Ozaukee, monthly HPP reports



For individuals, the top causes were (1) lack of affordable housing, (2) unemployment, (3) poverty, (4) mental illness and the lack of needed services, and (5) substance abuse and lack of needed services.”¹¹

Those causes were echoed in the reasons why people sought help from Advocates of Ozaukee:

“Family of 4, Advocates of Ozaukee assisted family with first month’s rent, was evicted in September, stayed with friends and was able to find own housing.”

“Advocates was able to assist a family of 4 with partial month’s rent to prevent eviction and avoid homelessness.”

“Single man, provided rent assistance to prevent a pending eviction and assisted in setting up a repayment plan with landlord for rest of arrears.”

“Mother of mentally ill woman called seeking services for daughter. Mother states daughter is no longer able to stay in her home due to mental health issues and has been staying in hotel. Mother has custody of daughter’s children. Mother stated daughter has been chaptered multiple times for mental health issues, is unable to work or live sufficiently on her own.” (Referred to Adult Protective Services)

Assistance provided by other sources also provides insight into causes. St. Vincent de Paul reported assisting four cases between April and June 2015 with people citing job loss, rent arrears and unexpected expenses as the reasons for seeking assistance. It was noted that the most prevalent type of callers over the past few years were single mothers in the Saukville area and single mothers/couples in the rest of the area. There are also 3 to 5 calls per year dealing with pre-release planning for people being released from prison.

Ozaukee County Department of Human Services indicated providing assistance to five cases a year where homelessness presented as the primary problem; in 2-3 of those cases, homelessness was associated with mental illness or addiction. It was noted that assistance to people who are homeless is possible only if they are in one of the designated groups for the program, e.g. substance abuse, child welfare. The Ozaukee County Sheriff indicated having provided only 1-2 motel vouchers a year, noting that the biggest current need was for sober housing for people recovering from heroin addiction.

HOUSEHOLDS AT POSSIBLE RISK OF HOMELESSNESS IN OZAUKEE COUNTY

Ozaukee County is a home-owning community. The U.S. Census counts 34,108 occupied housing units with 26,522 (78%) owner-occupied and 7,586 (22%) renter-occupied. Median monthly housing costs is \$1,235 reflecting a median monthly rent of \$812 and a median monthly mortgage cost of \$1,811.

Looking at housing costs vs. income is one way to estimate a population at some risk of homelessness. The following data from the U.S. Census Bureau provides a five-year estimate of income and housing costs based on the annual American Community Survey.

¹¹ National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, Homelessness in America: Overview of Data and Causes, 2015



Household Income and Housing Tenure: 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates¹²

Annual income level/% of income spent on housing costs	% of households in occupied housing units (N=34,108)	% of households: owner-occupied units (N=26,522)	% of households: renter-occupied units (N=7,586)
Less than \$20,000/			
- Less than 20% of income	7.9%	4.4%	0.4%
- 20-29% of income	0.2%	0.1%	1.5%
- 30% or more	7.3%	4.1%	18.2%
\$20,000 - \$34,999/			
- Less than 20% of income	1.0%	1.1%	0.5%
- 20-29% of income	3.2%	2.5%	5.5%
- 30% or more	7.6%	4.9%	16.8%
\$35,000 - \$49,999/			
- Less than 20% of income	4.0%	3.6%	5.3%
- 20-29% of income	4.0%	1.9%	11.5%
- 30% or more	4.5%	4.6%	4.4%
\$50,000 - \$74,999			
- Less than 20% of income	6.5%	6.3%	7.1%
- 20-29% of income	5.6%	5.7%	5.3%
- 30% or more	4.2%	4.9%	1.6%
\$75,000 or more			
- Less than 20% of income	33.6%	39.2%	14.2%
- 20-29% of income	12.1%	15.0%	2.2%
- 30% or more	4.5%	5.5%	0.7%

The intersection between low income and high housing costs represents potential risk of homelessness. In Ozaukee County, 18% of households with annual incomes below \$20,000 pay more than 30% of their income for rent. This is 1,280 households. Seventeen percent (17%) of households with incomes between \$20,000 and \$34,999 pay more 30% or more for rent, representing 1,274 households.

Poverty in Ozaukee County: 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Population Group	Total	# below Federal Poverty Level ¹³	% below Federal Poverty Level
Total county population	85,751	4,478	5.2%
Under age 18	19,792	1,157	5.8%
- Related children under 18	19,765	1,130	5.7%
18 to 64 years	52,499	2,780	5.3%

¹² American Factfinder, U.S. Census Bureau

¹³ 2013 Federal Poverty Level Guidelines: Family of 1: \$11,490; Family of 2: \$15,510; Family of 3: \$19,530; Family of 4: \$23,550



65 years and over	13,460	541	4.0%
Male	42,031	1,818	4.3%
Female	43,720	2,660	6.1%
White	81,609	4,259	5.2%
Black/African American	1,066	138	12.9%
Hispanic or Latino	2,017	317	15.7%
Unemployed	2,695	290	10.8%

Family Composition/% Below Federal Poverty Level	Total	% Below FPL
All families	24,285	3.0%
Families with related children under age 18	10,556	5.1%
Married couple families with related children under age 18	8,531	1.7%
Female householder-no husband present with related children under age 18	1,447	23.0%
- With 1 or 2 children	1,303	20.9%
- With 3 or 4 children	144	42.4%

Overall, Ozaukee County has a low poverty rate with 5.2% of the total population and 3.0% of families living below the Federal Poverty Level. However, there are pockets of significantly higher poverty including Black/African American (12.9%), Hispanic or Latino (15.7%) and Unemployed (10.8%). Female householders, defined as female parents with children under age 18, with no husband present, had a significantly higher poverty rate than other groups with 23.0% having below poverty level incomes. The rate increases with the number of children. Female householders with 1 or 2 children had a poverty rate of 20.9%; with 3 or 4 children, the poverty rate increased to 42.4%.

ALICE in Ozaukee County

ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed. This is a category of households with incomes above the federal poverty line but below what is required to live adequately in a particular community. In a report developed for United Way of Northern Ozaukee, the UW-Extension indicated that 21.8% of the population in Ozaukee County fits the ALICE definition. The calculation for ALICE looks at what income level would be required to sustain a Household Minimal Survival Budget in Ozaukee County and then compares that figure to income levels in the county.

The research conducted by UW-Extension with United Way indicates that for a household with two working adults and two children, an annual wage of \$66,384 would be required to support the Household Minimal Survival Budget. This would mean both adults would have to be working fulltime (40 hours/week; 50 weeks/year) at a minimum of \$16.60/hour. For a single adult, \$22,356 or 11.18/hour wage would be required to support the Household Minimal Survival Budget.

Looking at all households in Ozaukee County in 2012, it was determined that 74.1% were financial stable, 21.8% ALICE and 4.1% with incomes below the Federal Poverty Level.¹⁴ The ALICE data provides another way of looking at households in Ozaukee County that may be vulnerable to housing instability.

¹⁴ "ALICE in Ozaukee County," United Way Northern Ozaukee



OPENING DOORS: FEDERAL STRATEGIC PLAN TO PREVENT AND END HOMELESSNESS

Opening Doors, created by the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, is the federal government's strategic plan to end homelessness. As such, it serves as the guidance for the federal expenditure of resources to address homelessness and as the blueprint for states and localities in their efforts. It is important to note that the primary homeless services funding sources such as HUD's Continuum of Care program require local and state alignment with the Opening Doors.

The goals of Opening Doors are:

- 1) Prevent and end homelessness among Veterans in 2015.
- 2) Finish the job of ending chronic homelessness in 2017.
- 3) Prevent and end homelessness for families, youth and children in 2020.
- 4) Set a path to ending all types of homelessness.

Note: Important to the goal of ending homelessness is the concept of 'functional zero.' When a community achieves functional zero, it will mean that if someone becomes homeless, the experience is as brief as possible and that person is quickly returned to permanent housing

BEST PRACTICES TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS

Since the 1980's communities across the country have struggled to address homelessness. Generally, the first response was the creation of shelter. In Milwaukee and other cities, these were unfunded programs organized by churches and intended for people living on the street. Gradually, emergency shelters were established with local, state and federal funding. Next came transitional housing, a longer stay (up to 24 months) than emergency shelter (up to 90 days), which focused on helping people acquire employment and address issues keeping them from maintaining permanent housing. Last, and led by the financial incentives offered by the federal government, was Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), long-term (open-ended) subsidized housing with case management and other supportive services. PSH was developed for people with disabilities with a high priority for people who were chronically homeless (homeless for a continuous year or 4 or more times in 3 years).

Many communities have the full continuum of services for people who are homeless but are finding that the number of homeless people remains the same. Faced with the challenge of meeting ambitious national and local goals to end homelessness for veterans and chronically homeless and to set a path for the elimination of homelessness across the board, communities are turning to a set of best practices that have undergone extensive implementation and evaluation and are endorsed by homeless advocates such as the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

These best practices include Coordinated Entry, Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing.¹⁵

Coordinated Entry (CE) provides people facing homelessness with a single number to call rather than expecting them to go from place to place seeking aid. CE conducts an assessment of each caller's situation using a standardized instrument. Many communities are using a variation of the Vulnerability Index (for single adults

¹⁵ Housing First is also an important best practice but is more oriented toward single adults with significant mental health and/or substance use issues and those who are chronically homeless.



and families). This instrument assesses current housing situation, income, family composition, problems related to physical health, mental health and substance abuse and other issues and generates a vulnerability 'score' which helps the resource specialist identify appropriate services. Services are focused on homelessness prevention, helping callers access resources that will help them stay housed. When callers are literally homeless, e.g. living on the street or a place not fit for habitation, or at imminent risk of homelessness due to a pending eviction or other event and they have issues which increase their vulnerability, they are prioritized for shelter.

Homelessness Prevention (HP) provides landlord-tenant dispute resolution, eviction prevention, utility assistance, credit counseling, limited rent assistance and case management to help people avoid homelessness and prevent their entry into the homeless services system. Also central to HP is coordination with other systems to a) prevent discharge into homelessness especially from foster care, hospitals, mental health inpatient facilities and corrections (jail and prison); b) ensure that policies of other systems do not increase the risk of homelessness; and c) maximize the use of mainstream resources such as TANF (W-2), SSI and SSDI, child care assistance, employment and training resources and other services to prevent homelessness and promote long term housing stability. HP is a significantly less costly service than emergency shelter and less disruptive. Families are able to keep their belongings, maintain their routines and relationships and avoid the stigma of being homeless that is felt by many adults and children.

Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) is aimed at significantly reducing length of stay in shelters as well as repeat shelter visits. RRH focuses on the speedy connection of families to permanent housing in the community. Consistent with the Housing First philosophy, RRH places the highest service priority on the acquisition of permanent housing, organizing case management and supportive services to maintain housing stability. RRH recognizes that shelter stays are difficult and disruptive for families so the goal is to minimize both the length of the stay and to establish supports to prevent a repeat visit. Supports include security deposit, rent assistance, stabilization services and case management. Most RRH utilize a 'light touch' approach providing just enough services to get families stabilized and back on track to maintain safe and affordable housing.

SUMMARY

1. Ozaukee County households with incomes below \$20,000 that are paying more than 30% of their income for rent (N=1,280) are potentially at risk of homelessness if an economic crisis arises such as job loss, unexpected household or medical bills or other emergency.
2. Ozaukee County's ALICE population represents 21.8% of all households (2012).
3. Female householders (with no husband present) with children under age 18 have a significantly higher poverty rate than other segments of the population. Nearly 1 out of 4 (23.0%) such households lives below the Federal Poverty Level. If the household has 3 or 4 children, that rate goes up to 42.4%. This is a population vulnerable to economic and other crises that could precipitate homelessness.
4. Calls to IMPACT 2-1-1 by Ozaukee County residents have increased over the past several years (383 in 2014) as has the number of requests for community shelter (39 in 2014). In both cases the numbers are comparatively small.
5. The number of students determined to be homeless according to the McKinney's Vento definition increased 48% between 2012-13 and 2013-14. The largest number of homeless students (25) is in the Port Washington-Saukville School District.
6. Twenty-five (25) Ozaukee County residents (people whose last permanent address was in Ozaukee County) utilized emergency shelter elsewhere in the State of Wisconsin. Nearly all of these (21) were male. They used shelter in Milwaukee (14), Lakeshore Continuum of Care (5) and other nearby counties.



7. From October 2014 through August 2015, there were 153 callers to Advocates of Ozaukee seeking homelessness prevention assistance with 52 households (34%) receiving cash assistance to prevent eviction or to relocate. Another 96 households did not receive assistance.
8. Ozaukee County has zero Category 1 homelessness; that is, there have been no people identified as living on the street or in a place not meant for habitation. Rather, Ozaukee County's homelessness is all Category 2 and Category 3 (homeless by other Federal statutes, namely McKinney-Vento) except for persons fleeing domestic violence (Category 4).
9. What this means (#7 above) is that people (excluding those fleeing domestic violence) who request homeless assistance or are identified as McKinney-Vento eligible are already housed; they are experiencing housing instability but they are not literally homeless.
10. The size and nature of Ozaukee County's homeless challenge align with the directions supported by best practice research and federal and state funding, i.e. Coordinated Entry, Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Ozaukee County should continue its efforts to develop a strong homelessness prevention network that includes the coordinated use of public and private resources to address the needs of individuals and families at imminent risk of homelessness.
2. Ozaukee County should utilize the Coordinated Entry process, including the assessment of vulnerability through the Vulnerability Index or similar priority ranking tool, to identify the people most in need for services.
3. Ozaukee County should continue its efforts to rapidly re-house individuals and families who become homeless so that shelter stays can be avoided or made as brief as possible.