



RIVER VALLEYS
CONTINUUM OF CARE
MN-502 ROCHESTER/SOUTHEAST

CoC Plan: Ending Homelessness Together

2018 - 2028

Approved 4/19/2018 by the members of River Valleys Continuum of Care.

Homelessness in the River Valleys CoC

When most people imagine what homelessness looks like, they often picture a single man living on the streets of an urban center. In reality though, homelessness occurs in even some of the most rural communities in our state. And those experiencing homelessness in the River Valleys CoC are almost as likely to be families with children as they are single individuals.

During the annual one-day count of homelessness in the River Valleys CoC in January 2017 (called the Point-in-Time or PIT Count) 552 people were identified as homeless. This includes 290 people in families (including 185 children), 255 adults without children, and 7 unaccompanied children. Of these, 10% were identified as unsheltered homeless, meaning they were living on the streets, in cars, or other places not meant for human habitation.

The 2017 PIT Count results show a 30% increase in total measured homelessness across the River Valleys CoC from the previous year. Much of the increase was due to substantially improved outreach, including use of Coordinated Entry contact lists and youth-specific activities. Improved outreach also contributed to a 300% increase in measured unsheltered homelessness (57 persons identified in 2017). At the same time, Coordinated Entry data demonstrates significant reductions in chronic homelessness and long-term homelessness in parts of the region where providers have embraced prioritization of resources for the most vulnerable households. We look forward to seeing that impact as other portions of the region make progress to fully implement Coordinated Entry. But progress notwithstanding, the River Valleys CoC still has much work to do if we are going to end homelessness in our 20 counties.

The River Valleys CoC Plan to End Homelessness

The River Valleys CoC Plan to End Homelessness seeks to set a path to ending all homelessness in the region in 10 years. The identification of Strategic Plan principles, goals, and associated strategies will help guide our work as we progress towards our ultimate goal of ending homelessness across all 20 counties of the CoC.

Ending Homelessness in the River Valleys CoC

Ending homelessness does not mean that no one will ever have a housing crisis or need to spend a night in emergency shelter. Ending homelessness means preventing homelessness whenever possible, and when that is not possible, the experience of homelessness is rare, short-term, and does not recur.

Strategic Plan Vision: To end homelessness in the River Valleys Continuum of Care in 10 years.

Measuring Progress

To measure progress in meeting our goal of ending homelessness in the River Valleys CoC in 10 years, we will use data collected through annual Point-in-Time (PIT) Counts, HUD System Performance Measures, and Coordinated Entry System outcome reports.

PIT Counts are one-day, unduplicated counts of sheltered (in emergency shelters and transitional housing programs) and unsheltered homeless persons. Although PIT count data is problematic, we believe it provides a consistent and historical context for understanding how well our CoC is doing as a whole in preventing, reducing, and ultimately ending homelessness for our community members. In particular, data on the number people sleeping on the streets or other places not intended for human habitation (also called unsheltered homeless) may provide the greatest indication of progress in meeting our strategic plan vision. PIT Counts of unsheltered homeless should provide a picture of those persons who are absolutely in need of homeless program beds/units, but who have been unable to access those resources. As their numbers decrease, this should serve as an indication that those in need of homeless services are being served by appropriate programs and that those who can be served by other systems/providers have been appropriately connected and referred away from the homeless system.

HUD System Performance Measures and Coordinated Entry System outcome reports are new to our efforts to measure outcomes, but these data sources provide more context to our understanding of needs and progress toward meeting our goals. The CoC needs to explore these new data sources and develop a process for using them in ongoing evaluation of efforts to reduce time homeless, ensure prioritization of the most vulnerable households, seek successful housing solutions, increase income, prevent returns to homelessness, and more.

Achieving the Vision

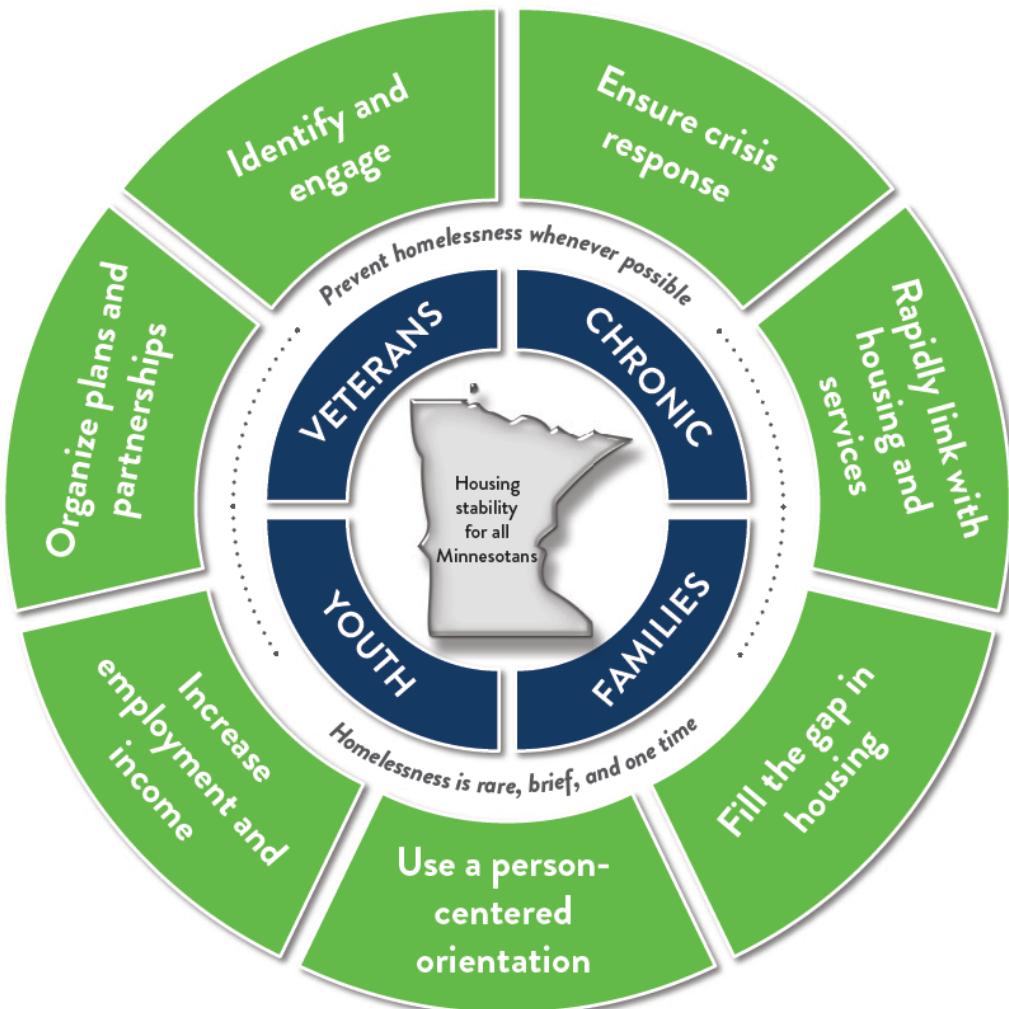
How will we know that we've reached our goals and achieved our vision? The River Valleys CoC will reduce total homelessness by 80% in 10 years. By achieving these measurable goals, we will have effectively ended homelessness in the River Valleys CoC. Using 2017 PIT data as the baseline, reducing CoC homelessness by 80% in 10 years means that, by 2028, no more than 99 persons will be counted.

Additionally, the River Valleys CoC will reduce unsheltered homelessness by 80% in 10 years. Again, using 2017 PIT data as the baseline, this means that by 2028 no more than 11 people will be sleeping on the streets and other places not meant for human habitation during the PIT Count.

River Valleys CoC Strategic Plan Principles

The River Valleys CoC has adopted the following principles to guide the identification of strategic plan goals and related strategies. These principles are shared with partners across Minnesota and represented in the statewide Heading Home Together plan adopted by the Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness in March 2018.

1. Identify and engage all people experiencing homelessness.
2. Ensure that everyone experiencing or at risk of homelessness can access a safe and appropriate crisis response through diversions, prevention, shelter, or crisis housing with appropriate services.
3. Rapidly link people experiencing homelessness with housing and services tailored to their needs, prioritizing the most vulnerable.
4. Prevent the loss of affordable and supportive housing opportunities available to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.
5. Use a person-centered, trauma-informed, Housing First orientation in our response to homelessness.
6. Help people experiencing or at risk of homelessness increase employment and income.
7. Organize plans and partnerships and increase system capacity to prevent and end homelessness on an ongoing basis.



River Valleys CoC Strategic Plan Goals

To help the River Valleys CoC achieve its vision of ending homelessness in 10 years, the following goals have been identified, and are organized around four key goals.

Several strategies have been identified for each of the Strategic Plan Goals. These strategies include actionable items that will move the River Valleys CoC forward in meeting each of the Strategic Plan goals and ultimately end homelessness in the River Valleys CoC. Each strategy connects to one or more principles identified in the previous section. These are highlighted in parentheses at the end of each strategy.

Prevent Homelessness Whenever Possible

Preventing homelessness is a critical piece to any plan to reduce or end homelessness. Not only does effective homelessness prevention keep people from entering the homeless system in the first place, but it is often significantly more cost effective than providing assistance to someone who has already become homeless. Thus, CoCs have greater resources to devote to those who may have more barriers or need higher amounts of assistance. Additionally, by keeping people out of the homeless system, we are keeping them connected to their communities and support networks and minimizing the impact of housing crises on children.

Strategies

- Improve targeting of homelessness prevention resources (1, 2)
- Increase the use of quality diversion strategies and begin to measure their impact and effectiveness (1, 2)
- Prioritize project models that emphasize preventing returns to homelessness (4, 5)

When Homelessness Does Occur, End it Quickly

In some cases, homelessness simply cannot be prevented. When this happens, homeless services providers and systems should work to end homelessness as quickly as possible by moving the individual or family into permanent housing. This should be done in a way that moves families or individuals into permanent housing right away, providing services once in housing. Not only is this rapid re-housing approach more cost effective than keeping people in shelter or transitional housing programs, but it also helps people return to stability more quickly (Note: the River Valleys CoC recognizes that transitional housing programs may be beneficial for certain target populations including homeless youth, persons in recovery, and victims of domestic violence).

Strategies

- Increase the use and availability of rapid re-housing resources (2, 3)
- Shorten the length of time persons remain homeless in emergency shelters and transitional housing programs (2,3)
- Increase access to and receipt of mainstream resources and cash and non-cash benefits for those experiencing homelessness (6)
- Ensure that emergency shelter programs quickly connect residents to Coordinated Entry and mainstream services (1, 2, 3, 6, 7)

Homeless Programs Operate Effectively and Efficiently

Effective and efficient homeless programs maximize resources and successfully and quickly end homelessness for families and individuals. These programs also maintain good HMIS data quality and are able to evidence their success through this data.

Strategies

- Regularly monitor programs on their effectiveness and efficiency in preventing and ending homelessness and make measurable improvement when indicated (2, 7)
- Target Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) resources to those experiencing homelessness with the greatest barriers and longest terms of homelessness (3, 5)
- Deliver or facilitate training and technical assistance to increase use of person-centered, trauma-informed, culturally appropriate practices (5, 7)

Homeless Systems Operate Effectively and Efficiently

Effective and efficient homeless systems plan and operate in a coordinated fashion that maximizes current resources, identifies gaps and needs, and develops responsive and effective systems and processes. These systems include quality homeless programs that prevent or end homelessness for persons experiencing it in a way that is effective and efficient as well.

Strategies

- Develop, implement, and monitor Coordinated Entry processes within the region (2, 3, 7)
- Regularly monitor systems on their effectiveness and efficiency in preventing and ending homelessness and make measurable improvement when indicated (2, 7)
- Monitor level of need and gaps in services, and work to make system-level program adjustments as warranted (7)
- Continue to advocate for increased development of affordable housing and educate providers about how they can develop resources within their local communities (4, 7)
- Ensure adequate ongoing funding for systemic supports, including Coordinated Entry management and the Homeless Management Information System (7)

Implementing the Strategic Plan

The River Valleys CoC Membership is ultimately responsible for implementing the strategies and meeting the goals laid out in this Strategic Plan. All members together own the strategies adopted and the outcomes of our work together. The CoC works with the Collaborative Applicant, Three Rivers Community Action (TRCA), and CoC Coordinator to identify and carry out necessary tasks and workplans to implement the Strategic Plan strategies.

Beginning in 2019, River Valleys CoC will provide annual written reports on the progress of Strategic Plan implementation, as well as progress in achievement of the goals laid out in this plan. These annual reports will also allow the River Valleys CoC to update stakeholders on changes in the environment, such as new opportunities or challenges, as well as new research and information about best practices.

Priority Populations

Background

In alignment with Opening Doors, the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, the River Valleys CoC agrees to prioritize efforts to end Veteran and chronic homelessness in the CoC. The CoC prioritizes this work in part, because the lessons learned through the process to achieve an end to Veteran and chronic homelessness could be applied to the CoC's efforts to also end youth and family homelessness and, ultimately, to set a path to end all homelessness.

In 2015, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) released much more specific guidance about what it means to end Veteran and chronic homelessness in CoCs across the country, and how to demonstrate that a functional end has been achieved. Criteria and benchmarks for other priority populations followed in 2016-2018. Together, they provide a complete picture of a community's response to homelessness. The criteria focus on describing essential elements and accomplishments of the community response, and the benchmarks serve as indicators of whether and how effectively the system is working towards the goal(s).

End Veteran Homelessness

The River Valleys CoC seeks to functionally end Veteran homelessness by 2019. Functionally ending Veteran homelessness means that the River Valleys CoC has achieved the federal criteria and benchmarks that demonstrate a functional end to Veteran homelessness, and that USICH has provided formal support of the River Valleys CoC claim. The following strategies for ending Veteran homelessness align with federal criteria and benchmarks for achieving the goal of ending Veteran homelessness, as well as with the River Valleys CoC Policies and Procedures for Coordinated Entry.

Strategies

- Identify all literally homeless Veterans in the River Valleys CoC
- Provide immediate shelter to all unsheltered homeless Veterans who want it
- Provide immediate access to permanent housing to all homeless Veterans who desire it
- Prevent homelessness and returns to homelessness for Veterans
- Prioritize for non-VA homeless resources those Veterans who are not VA eligible
- VA and non-VA funded providers coordinate with VA staff to provide services/housing assistance to homeless Veterans
- Comply with the River Valleys CoC Policies and Procedures for Coordinated Entry

End Chronic Homelessness

The River Valleys CoC will functionally end chronic homelessness by 2020. Functionally ending chronic homelessness means that the River Valleys CoC has achieved the federal criteria and benchmarks that demonstrate a functional end to chronic homelessness, and that USICH has provided formal support of the River Valleys CoC claim. The following strategies for ending chronic homelessness align with federal criteria and benchmarks for achieving the goal of ending chronic homelessness.

Strategies

- Convene a Chronic Homelessness workgroup to guide the system efforts to end chronic homelessness
- Identify all individuals experiencing chronic homelessness or at risk for chronic homelessness
- Provide immediate shelter to all unsheltered chronically homeless persons who want it

- Implement community-wide Housing First orientation that includes consideration of preferences of individuals being served
- Provide immediate access to permanent housing, with appropriate level of supportive services, to all chronically homeless persons who desire it
- Prevent chronic homelessness and returns to homelessness whenever possible

End Youth Homelessness

The River Valleys CoC seeks to functionally end youth homelessness by 2028. Functionally ending youth homelessness means that the River Valleys CoC has achieved the federal criteria and benchmarks that demonstrate a functional end to youth homelessness, and that USICH has provided formal support of the River Valleys CoC claim. For our strategic plan purposes, homeless youth are defined as unaccompanied youth under age 18 or unaccompanied young adults ages 18 to 24, including parenting youth.

The following strategies for ending youth homelessness align with federal criteria and benchmarks for achieving the goal of ending youth homelessness, as well as with the River Valleys CoC Policies and Procedures for Coordinated Entry.

Strategies

- Convene a Youth Homelessness workgroup to guide the system efforts to end youth homelessness
- Identify and engage youth at risk for or experiencing homelessness and connect with them in trauma-informed, and culturally and developmentally appropriate ways
- Provide immediate, safe shelter to all unsheltered homeless youth who want it
- Develop coordinated entry systems to identify youth for appropriate types of assistance and prioritize resources for the most vulnerable youth
- Create individualized services and housing options tailored to the needs of youth – both through the development of youth dedicated programs and through the improvement of existing homeless programs
- Prevent youth from becoming homeless by identifying and working with families who at risk of fracturing, and by coordinated with other systems of care to ensure youth exiting those systems do not become homeless at exit

End Family Homelessness

The River Valleys CoC seeks to functionally end family homelessness by 2028. Functionally ending family homelessness means that the River Valleys CoC has achieved the federal criteria and benchmarks that demonstrate a functional end to family homelessness, and that USICH has provided formal support of the River Valleys CoC claim.

The following strategies for ending family homelessness align with federal criteria and benchmarks for achieving the goal of ending family homelessness, as well as with the River Valleys CoC Policies and Procedures for Coordinated Entry.

Strategies

- Identify all literally homeless families in the River Valleys CoC
- Provide immediate shelter to all unsheltered homeless families who want it
- Provide immediate access to permanent housing to all homeless families who desire it
- Prevent homelessness and returns to homelessness for families
- Family-specific and non-family-specific funded providers coordinate to provide services/housing assistance to homeless families and children
- Comply with the River Valleys CoC Policies and Procedures for Coordinated Entry

2018 Work Plan

Strategic Activities

Activity	Strategy Plan Goal Alignment (see pages 5-6)	Responsibility	Anticipated Completion
Finalize and adopt Written Standards for Assistance	Prevent homelessness End homelessness quickly	Coordinated Entry Committee	December 2018
Standardize a transparent and predictable process for regular needs assessment	Improve system	Data & TA Committee	July 2018
Update project review and monitoring processes	Improve programs	Project Review & Rating Committee	November 2018
Develop a Training Policy and Plan	Improve programs Improve system	Executive Committee	December 2018
Develop targeted strategies to increase youth engagement and increase youth-specific programming	Prevent homelessness End homelessness quickly	Youth Homelessness Demonstration Workgroup	December 2018
Begin research on racial equity in homeless response system	Improve system Improve programs	SPARC project team	December 2018

Ongoing Activities

As required for compliance with HUD requirements for Continuums of Care, the CoC will work together through its staff, committees, and members to complete the following ongoing activities:

1. Maintain a fully-functioning statewide HMIS in collaboration with Minnesota's CoCs, HMIS Lead, and CoC members.
2. Coordinate a housing and service system that meets the needs of the homeless individuals and families, including outreach, engagement, and assessment; shelter, housing, and supportive services; and prevention strategies.
3. Plan and conduct annual PIT count of homeless persons that meets HEARTH Act requirements, and support broad participation in the triennial Statewide Homeless Study throughout the CoC region.
4. Conduct an annual gaps analysis of the homeless needs and services available in the CoC region.
5. Provide current and accurate information to Consolidated Plan jurisdictions in the region.
6. Consult with ESG recipients on the plan to allocate funds and to report on and evaluate the performance of ESG projects.
7. Hold regular and open CoC meetings and conduct outreach to invite new members to participate.
8. Select a board to act on behalf of the CoC and appointing committees/workgroups to accomplish specific tasks.
9. Review and update the governance charter at least annually.
10. Work with grantees to evaluate project performance and improve performance.
11. Coordinate the CoC application submission and project application solicitation.
12. Build provider expertise and capacity with trainings, information sharing, and TA.

Project Type Priorities

In an effort to target limited resources to the communities and populations that most need assistance to end homelessness, the following priorities have been identified. The Continuum of Care sets these priorities based on data collected from each county. Primary data sources are the most recent Point in Time Count and Housing Inventory Chart, and current Coordinated Entry data.

Priority Household Type Options were: Single Adults, Families with Children, Youth Singles, and Youth with Children (Youth are defined as age 24 and younger). In all cases where Youth with Children was selected as the priority, data supporting this priority identified youth 18-24 (young adults) as the primary youth population with children, not minor youth.

New Rapid Rehousing

Blue Earth	Families with children	Mower	Families with children
Brown	Families with children	Nicollet	Singles
Dodge	--	Olmsted	Singles
Faribault	Families with children	Rice	Singles/families with children
Fillmore	--	Sibley	Families with children
Freeborn	Families with children	Steele	Youth
Goodhue	--	Wabasha	Singles/families with children
Houston	Families with children	Waseca	Singles/families with children
Le Sueur	Families with children	Watonwan	Families with children
Martin	Families with children	Winona	--

(Families with children in this category include families headed by youth age 18-24 with children.)

Chronic or Dedicated Plus-designed supportive housing

Blue Earth	--	Mower	--
Brown	Single adults	Nicollet	Single adults
Dodge	--	Olmsted	Single adults
Faribault	--	Rice	Single adults
Fillmore	--	Sibley	--
Freeborn	--	Steele	--
Goodhue	Single adults	Wabasha	--
Houston	--	Waseca	--
Le Sueur	Single adults	Watonwan	--
Martin	--	Winona	--

Non-chronic supportive housing

Including 2018 Minnesota Housing multifamily funding round

Blue Earth	Youth w/children	Mower	Families with children
Brown	Families with children	Nicollet	Families with children
Dodge	Singles	Olmsted	Families with children
Faribault	Families with children	Rice	Families with children
Fillmore	Singles	Sibley	Youth w/children
Freeborn	Singles	Steele	Families with children
Goodhue	Youth w/children	Wabasha	Families with children
Houston	Singles	Waseca	Families with children
Le Sueur	Youth w/children	Watonwan	Families with children
Martin	Families with children	Winona	Youth/Singles

Reallocation Priorities

To continue improving CoC program and system outcomes related to preventing and ending homelessness, the CoC may reallocate Continuum of Care program resources to best match the needs of people experiencing homelessness in our region. Based on current needs identified in the population and geographic priorities summary, as well as CoC efforts to improve programs throughout the region, these are the reallocation priorities for 2018:

1. New Rapid Re-Housing or Joint Rapid Re-Housing/Transitional Housing for identified target populations (youth, recovery, DV) or in communities without adequate shelter resources.
2. New PSH or RRH targeted to unmet needs and/or that increase client choice

- Specialized programs that offer choices such as culturally-specific programming, recovery-based models, family reunification programs, or work/employment partnerships are encouraged.
 - Existing projects that choose to reallocate and reapply to target current community needs and gaps are encouraged.
3. Expansion of existing high performing PSH or RRH programs to serve more households

Full detail on the 2018 reallocation process, including voluntary and involuntary reallocations will be included in the 2018 Reallocation Policy and Priorities document and the 2018 Project Applicant Guide.