

# *Voices, Values and Vision*

*Recommendations for Action  
from the Special Task Forces  
2001*



*Final Report – 1999 Needs Assessment*

*Voices, Values and Vision*

**Recommendations for Action**

from

The Special Task Forces

March 2001

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*Recommendations*  
for  
Shelter and Housing



CONCLUSIONS FROM THE ORIGINAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT STUDY

Nursing home care is needed for some low-income elderly, while others need support services to enable them to remain independent; affordable housing is needed for low-income persons; and temporary shelter needs to be provided to adults and families in crisis situations.

**SHELTER & HOUSING TASK FORCE  
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Membership is comprised of public and private funders, housing developers, representatives of local government, human service providers, and representatives from Centre County United Way.

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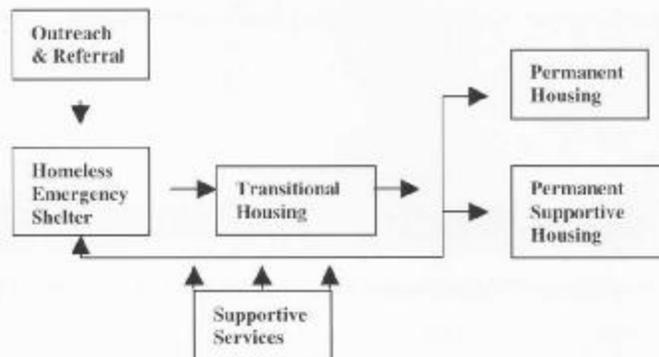
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## SHELTER AND HOUSING TASK FORCE

### HOUSING CONTINUUM MODEL

IDENTIFIES CURRENT SHELTER SERVICES & HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES



\*For a visual method of segmenting existing programs/services, and distinguishing the distribution of resources along the housing continuum, please see Appendix IV.

## Shelter and Housing Task Force (cont'd)

### Emergency Shelter

Short-term housing for homeless families and individuals, victims of domestic violence, and runaway youth

#### GAPS AND LIMITATIONS

Existing shelter services/programs are typically denied to:

- ❖ Mental Health (MH) consumers with acute mental health service needs requiring intensive supervision;
- ❖ Persons who have a dependency on and are actively using drugs or alcohol (D&A consumers);
- ❖ Persons being released from prison with criminal histories that include conviction for a crime of violence or a crime of a sexual nature;
- ❖ Transients and persons wishing to relocate to Centre County without employment or resources.

Public funding for the operation of existing shelters remains limited. Lack of new funding sources creates difficulty in creating new service initiatives.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Local professionals within mental health and drug and alcohol agencies, along with shelter providers, explore:
  - ❖ The development of a pilot project that would expand the service capacity of existing shelters to benefit consumers who may have been deemed ineligible. Additional staffing and support services would be required.
  - ❖ The development of specialized emergency shelter services providing immediate response for the residential needs of homeless Mental Health (MH) or Drug and Alcohol (D&A) consumers who do not meet designated thresholds for hospitalization.
- Community shelter/housing case management services and criminal justice professionals should develop a program whereby each has a working knowledge of the opportunities and limitations of the others' services, and the facilities and professionals within each system that can expedite requests for pertinent information. This would address the following service gaps for persons within the criminal justice system:
  - ❖ Those who have been convicted of a specific crime that is cause for denial of service;
  - ❖ Those persons recently released from prison and in need of shelter.
- Explore the following options for those individuals not eligible for present shelter service:
  - ❖ The expansion of the hotel voucher program. Currently the system provides for two or three nights of motel stay. Up to two weeks of motel stay should be considered. A modest increase in funding from existing resources would be necessary.
  - ❖ The development of a new shelter facility for homeless persons who will not participate in a goal oriented program. Resources may be available through the Salvation Army, which has expressed an interest in expansion into Centre County.
- Public and private funding organizations need to be aware of:
  - ❖ Funding has remained flat for the operation of homeless programs and services. To assure present program continuation, as well as addressing above recommendations, funds will need to be identified.
  - ❖ The need for close coordination between public and private funding organizations as to each other's resources and limitations.

### **Transitional Housing**

A housing option that acts as a "bridge" between emergency shelter and a more autonomous living arrangement with a service limit of between one and two years.

#### **GAPS AND LIMITATIONS**

Lack of affordable permanent housing alternatives creates increased demand for existing transitional housing:

Length of stay may not be sufficient to serve families who are enrolled in specific educational or employment programs.

Person ineligible for emergency shelter are also ineligible for transitional housing.

Transitional site development is often restricted due to lack of public transportation near site and public fear of residential "programs"

Uncertain long-term funding and difficulty in attracting qualified entry-level residential staff can threaten program stability

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### **Recommendations requiring the cooperation of the public and private sectors:**

- Key community leaders participate in the planning process to encourage the development of affordable permanent housing options.
- Public education in addition to careful planning is necessary when considering placement of a program. Community leaders need to be involved in the initial planning and then willing to "step up" and publicly support programs that are considered essential.\*
- Human service organizations should pool efforts to attract and retain employees. Efforts could include joint professional development opportunities geared to entry-level staff and a "career day" that focuses exclusively on human service providers.\*
- Funding for transitional housing is largely single-source funding for three to five years, with no guarantee beyond this period. If funding is not renewed, emergency financial assistance or a shift in financial support by local funders should be considered. The creation of an "emergency fund" and establishment of a process to evaluate such a crisis would address this problem.

##### **Recommendations for the public sector to address:**

- Transitional housing providers should formally engage funding sources to consider a more flexible approach to length of stay, whereby length of stay requirements would be influenced by the service needs of the consumer.
- Current transitional providers need to be challenged to find a means to serve more persons currently considered ineligible.\* This may require referring agencies to share additionally in the program oversight responsibilities. It may require the creation of a new transitional housing program for those individuals not eligible for current services.

\*Resources to initiate these recommendations could be available through the Centre County Affordable Housing Coalition and/or the Centre County United Way, and in some cases in conjunction with case management.

### **Permanent Supportive Housing**

A housing option that includes nursing home care, personal care, Family Self-Sufficiency rental assistance for low-income families, on-going rental assistance for special need populations, and supervised living arrangements for special need populations.

#### **GAPS AND LIMITATIONS**

Availability of supportive housing services for special needs populations (MH/MR, D&A, criminal justice) is very limited and typically has restrictive qualifications.

Waiting lists persist for developmentally disabled persons seeking in-home support services and community residential placement.

Supportive housing specifically for low-income persons is time limited.

Nursing Home care:

- ❖ A shortage of service exists for the low-income population;
- ❖ Pennsylvania's In-Home Skilled Nursing Care funding structure impedes its use by Centre County residents;
- ❖ Waiting lists exist for Dementia Care in Centre County nursing homes;
- ❖ A total of 714 Skilled Nursing beds are provided by 8 nursing homes. Medicaid certifies only 4 facilities.

Personal Care facilities:

- ❖ Of the 640 personal care beds in Centre County, only 69 are eligible for SSI/Medicaid reimbursement;
- ❖ Only one of 16 Personal Care facilities is specifically designed to provide assisted living to persons with dementia;
- ❖ Placement of persons representing special needs populations is difficult. This is primarily due to the provider's concern that additional staffing may be required.

Administration of permanent supportive housing programs is staff intensive. Paperwork and changing regulations make it difficult to initiate new programs.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

(See following page)

## Permanent Supportive Housing

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop and build a Mainstream and Section 811 housing facility. Resources necessary for this effort would include matching monies from local funders.
- Strategically examine the need to expand additional supportive housing options for low-income and special need populations. Involve housing organizations that are not traditionally seen as supportive housing program/service providers. The Supportive Housing Subcommittee and the Centre County Affordable Housing Coalition could help initiate this action.
- Review and recommend improvements in the reimbursement structure for services delivered to special need populations.
- Nursing Home care:
  - ❖ Rates for services requires review for both inclusiveness of care items and the type of beds certified through the Dept. of Health's determination process;
  - ❖ Reimbursement structures need to be revised to provide a higher level of reimbursement for beds serving special needs populations;
  - ❖ More Alzheimer's/Dementia care beds are needed in Centre County;
  - ❖ Encourage efforts that promote on-going public awareness of services offered by PA's Aging program.
- Personal Care facilities:
  - ❖ There is a need to pursue higher reimbursement levels from the Commonwealth so more low-income persons can afford Personal Care Services;
  - ❖ Pursue the creation of a higher reimbursement structure for special needs Assisted Living Care when additional staffing is required.
- Support the need for adequate staffing level for the administration of supportive housing programs.

## Shelter and Housing Task Force (cont'd)

### Permanent Housing

Permanent Housing includes First-Time Homebuyer programs, Section 8 Voucher Program, Rural Development, Veteran's Affairs, and Section 42 Housing.

#### GAPS AND LIMITATIONS

Lack of public/consumer awareness of housing programs that assist lower income families in securing permanent housing. Existing programs can appear to be complicated and often are.

Lack of housing development within certain areas of Centre County, geographical restrictions of funding for homeownership programs, and the rising costs of single-family homes - all contribute to limiting the options available to lower-income families seeking home ownership.

A lack of community awareness, misinformation, and fear of unchecked sprawl hinders the development of rental housing that targets lower-income families.

Lack of developable land within the State College Borough is an impediment to the creation of housing stock that would benefit families seeking affordable housing.

Lack of funding to provide security deposits assistance, the growing list of landlords unwilling to accept Section 8 vouchers, and market rents influenced by PSU student housing needs, all make it difficult for working persons with lower incomes to live within the Centre Region.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a booklet listing the various permanent housing programs. This Booklet will include standard information on each program available within Centre County.
- Establish an ongoing permanent housing committee that will meet at least every six months to discuss service gap issues. In addition this group could provide input on regional planning issues relating to housing development.
- The permanent housing committee and housing program/service providers should become more visible within the community. This includes creating opportunities to educate the general public on issues relating to affordable housing.
- Prepare information for distribution at various service agencies (e.g., food banks) and businesses. This information could also be included in the Council for Human Services newsletter.

(Also see: Appendix IV. Housing Services Continuum of Centre County)