



***STRATEGIC PLAN TO PREVENT AND END
HOMELESSNESS IN THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA,
VIRGINIA***

FY2014 – FY2020

VISION

Within the City of Alexandria, no one should experience homelessness - no one should be without a safe, suitable, and stable place to call home

MISSION

To ensure the planning, coordination, and implementation of an effective and efficient continuum of care to prevent and end homelessness in the City of Alexandria, Virginia

HISTORY

The original Ten Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness and Other Forms of Homelessness was approved by the *Homeless Services Coordinating Committee (HSCC)* October 2004 and by the Alexandria City Council on March 8, 2005. The plan was updated, renamed the Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in the City of Alexandria, VA, and adopted by the HSCC on October 19, 2010.

The ***Ten Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness and Other Forms of Homelessness***, approved by City Council in March 2005, set an ambitious agenda for the homeless services providers. The *Homeless Services Coordinating Committee* was determined to end homelessness in the City of Alexandria by: planning for outcomes through data collection and analysis; “closing the front door” by preventing homelessness; “opening the back door” by creating permanent housing; and building the infrastructure by maximizing mainstream resources. At the midway point of the *Ten Year Plan*, the HSCC revised its goals and strategies, adopting the ***Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in the City of Alexandria***. The goals aligned with the City Council’s Strategic Plan initiatives and Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness.

From 2005-2011, the HSCC accomplished the following:

- Established a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) utilized by all emergency shelter, transitional, and permanent housing programs in the City of Alexandria to provide real time reports and data collection;
- Utilized HMIS and other data to determine priorities for annual gap analyses;
- Initiated discharge planning protocols with local systems of care (criminal justice, medical and psychiatric hospitals, youth and mental health) to prevent individuals from being discharged into homelessness;
- Successfully advocated for funding and implementation of the Alexandria Community Services Board’s Safe Haven program providing 12 beds for homeless individuals with a mental illness or co-occurring mental illness and substance use disorders and unable to utilize current emergency shelter system;

- Trained staff in Disability and Presumptive Decision Making to increase the numbers of homeless individuals receiving entitlements, disability and other mainstream benefits;
- Revised HSCC By-Laws and Mission Statement and restructured the HSCC to be the City of Alexandria's Continuum of Care entity as required by the Department of Housing and Urban Development;
- Increased active participation of HSCC membership resulting in a coordinated annual homeless point in time count, identifying gaps in services, prioritizing needs and coordinating grant applications to the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

In 2012, the HSCC adopted a new name - *The Partnership to Prevent and End Homelessness in the City of Alexandria (The Partnership)* - more reflective of their mission. Since that time, accomplishments have included:

Reduction in overall homelessness within the City of Alexandria

- Point in Time homeless count showed a 16% reduction in persons experiencing homelessness;
- Created Rapid Re-housing programs;
- Increased Homeless Prevention resources;
- Increased the number of beds dedicated to chronically homeless individuals.

Increased collaboration

- Created a centralized assessment system for persons seeking homeless services;
- Actively participated in the development of the adopted Housing Master Plan;
- Collaborated on regional homeless strategies and initiatives;
- Participated in the development of the new commission on children and youth; and
- Advocated on affordable housing and homelessness issues at a federal, state and local level.

Improved Organization and Governance

- Increased the breadth of membership on The Partnership;
- Completed governance documents and HMIS procedures;
- Created committees to focus on specific tasks/activities.

Increased the quality and scope of data collection and analysis

- Created and filled a position dedicated to data collection and analysis.

MEMBERSHIP

**Alexandria DCHS/Center for Aging and Adult Services
Alexandria DCHS/Center for Economic Support
Alexandria DCHS/Center for Children and Families
Alexandria City Public Schools
Alexandria Code Enforcement
Alexandria Community Services Board
Alexandria Department of Health
Alexandria Domestic Violence Program
Alexandria Fire and EMS Department
Alexandria Housing Development Corporation
Alexandrians Involved Ecumenically
Alexandria Neighborhood Health Services, Inc.
Alexandria Office of Housing
Alexandria Police Department
Alexandria Redevelopment & Housing Authority
Arlington-Alexandria Coalition for the Homeless
Carpenter's Shelter
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington
Christ Church Lazarus Ministry
Community Lodgings, Inc.
Community representatives
Diocese of Arlington - Christ House Men's Shelter
Friends of Guest House
Homeless Consumer Representatives
INOVA Alexandria Hospital
JobLink/Workforce Investment Board
K.I. Services, Inc.
New Hope Housing, Inc.
Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance
Offender Aid and Restoration
Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria
Salvation Army Transitional Housing
Veterans Administration-Northern Virginia
Wesley Housing Development Corporation
Virginia Department of Corrections**

Goals and Objectives

GOAL 1: INCREASE LEADERSHIP, COLLABORATION, AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Objective 1: Provide and promote collaborative leadership at all levels of government and across all sectors to inspire and energize Alexandrians to commit to preventing and ending homelessness

Objective 2: Strengthen the capacity of public and private organizations by increasing knowledge about collaborations, homelessness, and successful interventions to prevent and end homelessness

GOAL 2: INCREASE ACCESS TO STABLE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Objective 1: Provide affordable housing to people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness

Objective 2: Provide permanent supportive housing to end chronic homelessness

Objective 3: Advance housing stability for vulnerable populations, including youth aging out of the foster care and juvenile justice systems, Veterans, and persons who are being discharged from hospitals and criminal justice institutions.

GOAL 3: INCREASE ECONOMIC AND HEALTH SECURITY

Objective 1: Increase meaningful and sustainable employment for people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness

Objective 2: Improve access to mainstream programs and services to reduce people's financial vulnerability to homelessness

Objective 3: Integrate primary and behavioral health care services with homeless assistance programs and housing to reduce people's vulnerability to and the impacts of homelessness

GOAL 4: RETOOL THE HOMELESS CRISIS RESPONSE SYSTEM

Objective 1: Transform homeless services to crisis response systems that prevent homelessness and rapidly return people who experience homelessness to stable housing

Targets for FY2014/2015

Targets are measurable outcomes the Partnership will strive to achieve through implementation of the strategic plan.

- **Reduce Homelessness.** Reduce the number persons experiencing homelessness by 15 percent.*
- **Reduce Stays in Shelters.** Reduce the average length of stay with positive outcome for those who are in shelters from 130 to 100 days for households with children and from 104 to 70 days for households without children. **
- **Increase Movement to Permanent Housing.** Increase the percentage of households in transitional housing who successfully move to permanent housing from 75% to 80% and increase the percentage of households in safe haven who successfully move to permanent housing from 70% to 80%. **
- **Prevent Homelessness.** Increase the percentage of households who are assisted to avoid homelessness due to a loss of permanent housing (i.e., prevention efforts) from 65% to 70%.**
- **Increase Affordable Housing.** Increase the permanent supportive and affordable housing options within the City by securing 10% of the affordable rental units that include financing from City resources each year as affordable and available to extremely low income households and those with high barriers to housing (e.g., history of substance abuse, incarceration or non-payment of rent).
- **Increase Household Income.**
 - Increase the percentage of households without children in emergency shelters whose incomes increase while in a shelter from 23% to 50%.
 - Increase the percentage of households with children in emergency shelters whose incomes increase while in a shelter from 37.5% to 50%.
 - Increase the percentage of households without children in transitional housing whose incomes increase while in transitional housing from 29% to 70%.
 - Increase the percentage of households with children in transitional housing whose incomes increase while in transitional housing from 47% to 70%.**

*As measured by the annual Point in Time count.

**As measured through HMIS data.

Strategies for FY2014/FY2015

Strategies are developed annually and incorporated into the City's Consolidated Plan action planning process. Strategies will be implemented using best practices and based on Continuum of Care priorities.

GOAL 1: INCREASE LEADERSHIP, COLLABORATION, AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Objective 1: Provide and promote collaborative leadership at all levels of government and across all sectors to inspire and energize Alexandrians to commit to preventing and ending homelessness

Strategy: Engage City Council in the adoption of the ***Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in the City of Alexandria***

Strategy: Disseminate information to local media to develop stories on the homeless issue in Alexandria and successful efforts to address the problem

Strategy: Develop a portal for homeless information on the City's website

Strategy: Develop a fact sheet on homelessness in Alexandria and disseminate at community meetings and events

Objective 2: Strengthen the capacity of public and private organizations by increasing knowledge about collaborations, homelessness, and successful interventions to prevent and end homelessness

Strategy: Identify organizations (private, non-profit and faith-based) that address issues affecting the homeless and create opportunities to share information and leverage resources

Strategy: Coordinate with the various groups within the City who are developing strategic plans that impact homeless individuals/families and those at risk of becoming homeless

Strategy: Collaborate with ARHA to identify available resources to achieve the Partnership's goals

GOAL 2: INCREASE ACCESS TO STABLE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Objective 1: Provide affordable housing to people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness

Strategy: Work with City Council to strengthen and implement the Alexandria Housing Master Plan, including the dedication of funding to affordable housing

Strategy: Increase public sector funding for subsidy and financial assistance programs to prevent and end homelessness

Strategy: Increase funding from private sources for subsidy and financial assistance programs to prevent and end homelessness

Strategy: Identify and coordinate with private groups providing emergency funds to those experiencing or at risk of homelessness

Strategy: Educate property managers about the resources available to tenants at risk of losing their housing

Objective 2: Provide permanent supportive housing to end chronic homelessness

Strategy: Increase the inventory of beds designated for chronically homeless persons within our community

Strategy: Standardize and coordinate the prioritization of access to permanent supportive housing

Objective 3: Advance housing stability for vulnerable populations, including youth aging out of the foster care and juvenile justice systems, Veterans, and persons who are being discharged from hospitals and criminal justice institutions.

Strategy: Actively participate in discharge planning initiatives with foster care, hospitals, psychiatric facilities, jails and prisons.

Strategy: Identify and coordinate with agencies funded to provide supportive services to Veterans in Alexandria.

Strategy: Research and implement best practices

Strategy: Work with Alexandria City Public School system to provide transition services to youth who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless

GOAL 3: INCREASE ECONOMIC AND HEALTH SECURITY

Objective 1: Increase meaningful and sustainable employment for people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness

Strategy: Develop employment strategies for those persons experiencing or at greatest risk of homelessness

Strategy: Improve coordination and integration of employment programs with homelessness assistance programs

Objective 2: Improve access to mainstream programs and services to reduce people's financial vulnerability to homelessness

Strategy: Ensure that the DCHS CommonHelp representative educates homeless services organizations about the on-line access for benefit and income support program applications

Strategy: Ensure that all providers in the Continuum of Care work with clients to actively assist with participation in benefit programs and expanded health care enrollment as part of individual housing/service plans

Strategy: Partner with private groups to ensure that the persons they serve are linked to public services.

Strategy: Identify (if available) and determine the sufficiency of credit repair programs to meet the needs of persons experiencing or at risk of homelessness

Objective 3: Integrate primary and behavioral health care services with homeless assistance programs and housing to reduce people's vulnerability to and the impacts of homelessness

Strategy: Explore expansion, or increase homeless community utilization, of the Neighborhood Health Services Inc. (NHSI) initiative that provides integrated primary and behavioral health services

Strategy: Develop a mechanism to collaboratively utilize the continuum's existing health-related resources

GOAL 4: RETOOL THE HOMELESS CRISIS RESPONSE SYSTEM

Objective 1: Transform homeless services to crisis response systems that prevent homelessness and rapidly return people who experience homelessness to stable housing

Strategy: Increase the availability of Rapid Re-Housing resources to allow for increased permanent housing opportunities and the reduction of homelessness within the community

Strategy: Develop landlord partnerships for participation in rapid re-housing of persons experiencing homelessness

Strategy: Develop a process for continuing to serve those who leave shelters, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, or a rapid re-housing placement and return to homelessness

Strategy: Screen all persons experiencing a housing crisis for diversion and prevention services, utilizing shelter services as a last resort.