



# Response and Recommendations for the Homeless Housing System

*Durham Collaborative to End Family Homelessness*

May 10, 2018

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## Recommendation Summary

Per a request from Mayor Steve Schewel and in response to the recent Performance Measure Report from Focus Strategies to the City of Durham (February 2018), the Durham Collaborative to End Family Homelessness (DCEFH) offers the following recommendations and requests for funding support. Note: projected funding amounts are estimates and based on annualized project timelines.

### YEAR ONE

1. Expand the **Eviction Diversion Program** to support approximately 250 DSS emergency assistance applicants each month who are not yet in court proceedings. Cost estimate: \$400,000 to fund four lawyers and one paralegal.
2. Expand the **Shelter Diversion Program** at Urban Ministries of Durham to support 304 additional households (704 individuals). Cost estimate: \$448,200 to fund direct client assistance (54%) and diversion support staff (46%).
3. Expand the **Rapid Rehousing Program** at Housing for New Hope to support approximately 40 additional households (140 individuals) annually in moving out of

**Eviction Diversion** – programming to prevent evictions or mediate the lease damaging result for tenants as a method to address imminent risk of homelessness. Includes legal assistance and mediation.

**Shelter Diversion** – programming targeting households that technically qualify for shelter but may have support systems in place or other means to remain housed without entering the shelter system. Includes financial assistance and brief case management.

**Functional Zero** - functional zero is reached when the number of households within a specific population group experiencing homelessness is less than the average number of that population connecting with permanent housing each month.

homelessness. Cost estimate: \$200,000 to fund direct client rental assistance (80%) and housing case management (20%).

4. Create an independent **Housing Navigation Team** to support landlord cultivation across services and housing location for 180-200 households per year. Cost estimate: \$175,000 to fund one Housing Coordinator and three Housing Locators.
5. **Define priority levels by risk factors** (adhering to HUD requirements and community values) and define typical pathways across the homeless service system by priority level, addressing the needs of families, singles, and unaccompanied youth. In addition, **define system-wide outcome expectations and timelines** for moving highest risk populations to functional zero. Cost estimate: unknown
6. Develop a plan for **home visiting and child care support** for the highest risk households in hotels, on waiting lists, and when receiving diversion support, to strengthen shelter diversion and reduce likelihood of reverting to literal homelessness. Cost estimate: none in year one
7. Develop a plan to a) Ensure all households with a Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) have supportive services (**aftercare**) and b) Address the lack of **Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)** by moving more stable PSH households to HCV units with added supports. Cost estimate: none in year one.
8. Continue efforts to develop and expand **affordable housing** stock in Durham while removing system barriers to housing individuals and families outside of Durham.

## YEAR TWO

1. Continue Year One funding based on successful outcomes and assessment of community needs.
2. Ensure that **priority levels and pathways** become policy. Develop and implement policy training across the homeless service system. Develop and implement a method for overseeing appropriate use of these policies. Ensure measurement and accountability to system-wide outcomes for moving highest risk households to functional zero status according to projected timelines.
3. Implement project to support **home visiting and child care** for the highest risk households in hotels, on waiting lists, and when receiving diversion support.
4. Expand **Aftercare**, at a minimum for all families and singles moving to Housing Choice Voucher units or public housing, to ensure long-term housing stability.
5. Create supportive services linked with Housing Choice Vouchers, supplementing lack of **Permanent Supportive Housing** availability.
6. Plan for **bridge housing** options for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness to supplement lack of permanent supportive housing availability.
7. Continue efforts to develop and expand **affordable housing** stock in Durham while removing system barriers to housing individuals and families outside of Durham.

## YEAR THREE

1. Continue Year Two funding based on successful outcomes and assessment of community needs.
2. Implement **bridge housing** options for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness to supplement lack of permanent supportive housing.
3. Resource Public Housing similarly to the supportive services provided for Housing Choice Voucher program, creating additional supplement to the lack of **Permanent Supportive Housing** availability.
4. Continue efforts to develop and expand **affordable housing** stock in Durham while removing system barriers to housing individuals and families outside of Durham.



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## A Broader Context of Homelessness

The Durham Collaborative to End Family Homelessness (Durham’s Partnership for Children, Families Moving Forward, Housing for New Hope, and Urban Ministries of Durham) is working together across various system levels to address the unique needs of families experiencing homelessness. The team of Executive Directors and lead staff meet monthly where we engage in joint program planning and resource development. Our boards of directors gather annually to review our progress and focus our joint efforts. Our staff work collaboratively to coordinate services for individual families across services as they move toward stability. While we embrace the concepts and strategies of Housing First, we encounter system barriers in the lack of Permanent Supportive Housing and other affordable housing options in our community. In addition, we embrace the special needs of children and seek to ensure that they are supported in ways that a) address the trauma that we know often accompanies homelessness and b) increase their resiliency for building a more positive future.

In Durham we are fortunate to have a very caring and collaborative community. We have been working to end homelessness for many years and have had success in improving the end-to-end system and coordinating care among providers. While we are proud of the progress we have made in recent years, we know there is much more that needs to be done to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring.

On a given night, about 350 total individuals (single and members of families) are known to be literally homeless in Durham (about 30-50

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
<b>Students identified as homelessness</b>	861	976	935
<b>% of total students</b>	2.56%	4.34%	2.82%

unsheltered and the rest in shelters). Approximately 1,250 individuals come through the shelter system each year. This does not include the thousands of unstably housed households and those paying virtually their entire income to stay in a hotel. Durham Public Schools reports over 900 school age children a year are experiencing homelessness by McKinney Vento definition, however only 10-15% are coming through the shelter system.

Our end-to-end service system for families, called Durham’s Collaborative to End Family Homelessness, has utilized best practices before they were known to be best practices, including:

- Initiating a coordinated intake system at DSS in 2012
- Adding systematic Shelter Diversion at Urban Ministries of Durham in 2015
- Directing more resources to Rapid Rehousing at Housing for New Hope and away from transitional housing with the merger of Genesis Home and Durham Interfaith Hospitality Network to become Families Moving Forward in 2016
- Adding Aftercare and a two-generational approach to services, also in 2016.

**Literally Homeless** definition (HUD) includes those living in places not meant for human habitation (car, street, abandoned building), living in a shelter, or exiting an institution when the stay was 90 days or less and the prior status was homeless.

**McKinney Vento** definition also includes those living in hotels/motels and moving from place to place and staying with others.

The Durham Collaborative to End Family Homelessness is serving about 120 families through shelter and Rapid Rehousing per year, and another 140 are being diverted through the Shelter Diversion program. We continue to be challenged by lengths of stay extending much longer than desired. This is driven largely by the affordable housing crisis and compounded by the lack of a significant



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increase in wages over the last several years. As the Shelter Diversion program continues to successfully help families stabilize without entering shelter, virtually all the families who come into shelter now experience the highest barriers to housing. In addition, these families typically have very complex and intertwined needs between the parents and children, requiring intensive case management. Many families would qualify for Permanent Supportive Housing, however there is none available. In addition, families that do not technically qualify because they may not have experienced a year of literal homelessness in the past three years, still need the kind of longer term supports that Permanent Supportive Housing is designed to provide to prevent returning to homelessness due to the complexities they are experiencing.

The system for singles in Durham is somewhat further behind the family system, though it too is doing some very innovative work. For example, Urban Ministries of Durham added a workforce development component to their shelter services. They have also successfully piloted a model for exiting residents into shared housing with each other, thus making it much more affordable.

We are encouraged by the energy and commitment from the City of Durham and other community partners in working to end homelessness as we know it in our community. As we work together towards a Coordinated Entry system for all (singles and families), there is opportunity to address key gaps in the system to ensure that we increase our impact in clear, measurable ways. We are eager to move towards a more Housing First model, while as a system, realizing that families also need unique supports to break the generational cycles of poverty that lead to homelessness. We also encourage the City of Durham and other community leaders to consider a holistic approach to ending homelessness, considering

- Up-stream strategies that reduce the flow of individuals and families from entering homelessness
- Mid-stream strategies that impact moving individuals and families as quickly as possible from homelessness into housing while supporting children and youth in ways that strengthen resiliency
- Down-stream strategies that reduce returns to homelessness

We also recognize that the goals and strategies identified through the Focus Strategies report and identified here are interdependent and that without increased capacity of Permanent Supportive Housing options and affordable housing options through landlords who are willing to work with Rapid Rehousing and Housing Choice Voucher programs, the system bottle neck at shelter will continue to worsen. However, with strategic resourcing to expand capacity in specific areas, ending homelessness is achievable.

## DCEFHS Recommendations by City Adopted Goal Area

### **Coordinated Entry - Fully implement Coordinated Entry and lower program barriers to ensure that literally homeless and higher need households can be prioritized**

#### Proposed Goals:

FOCUS AREA	FY '18-19 GOAL	FY '19-'20 GOAL
Expand Coordinated Entry	Launch Coordinated Entry for singles at DSS	All shelter referrals meet the defined priority level and appropriate pathway adhering to HUD requirements and community values



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**Actions:**

- Define priority levels by risk factors (adhering to HUD requirements and community values) and define typical pathways across the homeless service system by priority level, addressing the needs of families, singles, and unaccompanied youth.
  - Meet with appropriate Coordinated Entry leadership to discuss what’s working, what’s not, and expectations (including communication) for all parties. Include review of certain types of households and how they would be served (high barrier, doubled up, low barrier with income, literally homeless, etc.).
- Define system-wide outcome expectations and timelines for moving highest risk populations to functional zero.
- Explore opportunities for using Coordinated Entry to link at-risk populations (i.e. children, vets, etc.) to additional services (child care, developmental screenings, health and mental health care, etc.).
- Clarify policies and procedures for management of waiting lists.
- Cross-train service providers across DSS and other homeless service agencies on the priority levels and how to direct individuals and families who are trying to access homeless services.
- Strengthen communications and coordination between Coordinated Entry and homeless service agencies.

**Resources Needs:**

- DSS will need to determine the cost associated with meeting these goals and seek funding through the County budgeting process.
- Service needs related to coordinated entry households that do not enter shelter or diversion would be borne by agencies outside of the collaborative (i.e. Public Health, DSS, DPS).

**Expand Diversion - provide shelter diversion and housing problem solving throughout the system**

**Proposed Goals:**

FOCUS AREA	FY '18-19 GOAL	FY '19-'20 GOAL
Strengthen Mid-stream Strategies: Expand Diversion Programs	Expand Shelter Diversion and housing problem solving for families and single adults according to system-wide priorities and associated pathways.	Achieve a reduction in the number of adults/singles entering homeless system.
	Expand Eviction Diversion program.	Achieve an increase in the number of evictions and move-outs avoided.

**Actions:**

- Define priority levels by risk factors (adhering to HUD requirements and community values) and define typical pathways across the homeless service system by priority level, addressing the needs of families, singles, and unaccompanied youth.



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- Clearly define criteria for ideal candidates for Shelter Diversion including use of hotel vouchers as a temporary solution for highest needs and most vulnerable households when shelters are full.
- Using baseline data from family Shelter Diversion program and Eviction Diversion program, set outcome projections and timeline for system impact and measurable goals for 2019-20 forward.
- Create an independent Housing Navigation Team to support landlord cultivation and to assist in housing location supporting individuals and families across the service system.
- Develop a plan for and then implement home visiting and child care support for the highest risk households in hotels, on waiting lists, and when receiving diversion support, to strengthen shelter diversion and reduce likelihood of reverting to literal homelessness.
- Expand linkages for children coming through the Shelter Diversion system.

**Resources Needs:**

- Increased funding for Eviction Diversion and Shelter Diversion.
- Expanded affordable housing options and reduced barriers for moving households out of county.

**Strengthen housing navigation: Invest in landlord recruitment and housing location services**

**Proposed Goals:**

FOCUS AREA	FY '18-19 GOAL	FY '19-'20 GOAL
Strengthen Mid-stream Strategies: Housing Navigation	Achieve increase in private landlords working with homeless service agencies that accept HCV or RRH support	Achieve increase in number of individuals and families housed out of homelessness.  Achieve a reduction in the length of stay in shelter or the length of homeless episode.

**Actions:**

- Create an independent Housing Navigation Team to support landlord cultivation across services and housing location supporting individuals and families across the service system.
- Remove barriers to housing individuals and families outside of Durham, including transportation.
- Address the reasons that landlords have stated that they will not accept the Housing Choice Voucher.
  - Continue pilot project support for Landlord Repair Fund partnership between private landlords and the City of Durham based on landlord feedback.
- Using baseline data from current programming and existing landlord base for affordable housing, set projection and timeline for system impact and measurable goals from 2018-19 forward.

**Resources Needs:**

- Funding for the Housing Navigation Team and to remove barriers for housing outside of Durham.
- Leadership to explore and address landlord concerns.
- Possible funding for initiatives to support landlords.



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## Invest in high-performing rapid re-housing

### Proposed Goals:

FOCUS AREA	FY '18-19 GOAL	FY '19-'20 GOAL
Strengthen Mid-stream Strategies: High-performing Rapid Rehousing	Increase placement in permanent housing by 40 households	Increase placement in permanent housing by 40 households.  Reduce lengths of stay within shelter programs by increasing timely housing placements.

### Actions:

- Expand the Rapid Rehousing Program at Housing for New Hope
- Define priority levels by risk factors (adhering to HUD requirements and community values) and define typical pathways across the homeless service system by priority level, addressing the needs of families, singles, and unaccompanied youth.
- Define system-wide outcome expectations and timelines for moving highest risk populations to functional zero.
- Develop a collaborative Partnership with Durham Housing Authority to prioritize highest barrier homeless households and target utilization of Project Based Housing and Housing Choice Vouchers.
- Establish partnership and levels of commitment supports with local congregations.
- Strengthen system impact projections for 2018-19 forward.

### Resources Needs:

- Increased funding support for Rapid Rehousing.
- Increased housing options for placement through Rapid Rehousing.

## Connect to affordable housing production by targeting new and existing affordable housing slots for people experiencing homelessness

In addition to the recommendations from Focus Strategies (Increase housing for incomes at or below 30% AMI; Ensure set aside for people experiencing homelessness within all new housing developed; Require set aside units to receive referrals directly from Coordinated Entry; Explore flexibility of resources to target here), DCEFHS proposes creative strategies to a) move households to the most independent option for housing that they can manage and b) increase supports for existing subsidized housing while loosening restrictions as a way of replicating and expanding options like Permanent Supportive Housing options.

### Proposed Goals:

FOCUS AREA	FY '18-19 GOAL	FY '19-'20 GOAL
Strengthen Mid- and Down-stream Strategies: Affordable and Permanent Supportive Housing Options	Achieve an increase in the number of available affordable housing units, including housing with supports such as Permanent Supportive Housing for highest risk individuals and families.	Achieve an increase in the number of available affordable housing units, including housing with supports such as Permanent Supportive Housing for highest risk individuals and families.



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## Actions:

- Develop and implement a plan to a) Ensure all households with a Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) have supportive services (aftercare) and b) Address the lack of Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) by moving more stable PSH households to HCV units with added supports.
- Develop a collaborative Partnership with Durham Housing Authority to prioritize highest barrier homeless households and target utilization of Project Based Housing and Housing Choice Vouchers.
- Expand Aftercare, at a minimum for all families and singles moving to Housing Choice Voucher units or public housing, to ensure long-term housing stability.
- Create supportive services linked with Housing Choice Vouchers, supplementing lack of permanent supportive housing availability.
- Plan for and implement bridge housing options for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness to supplement lack of permanent supportive housing availability.
- Resource Project Based Housing similarly to the supportive services provided for Housing Choice Voucher program, creating additional supplement to the lack of permanent supportive housing availability.
- Continue efforts to develop and expand affordable housing stock in Durham while removing system barriers to housing individuals and families outside of Durham.
- Using baseline data from current programming and existing landlord base for affordable housing, set projection and timeline for system impact and measurable goals from 2018-19 forward.

## Resources Needs:

- Funding support for expanded aftercare and supportive services linked with Housing Choice Vouchers and Project Based Housing
- Funding for bridge housing options for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness
- Funding and policy changes to support expanded affordable housing development

## **Improve data: Continue efforts to expand HMIS participation and improve data quality**

DCEFHS recommends we consider this a low priority over the other areas, due to the current changes in HMIS Lead Agency that are in process through the North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness (NCCEH). Housing for New Hope has already expanded use of HMIS to include their Assertive Engagement program.

As strategies are developed, we recommend the following:

- Included NCCEH in any strategy development for this focus area
- Ensure that agencies remain cost neutral with the change in HMIS Lead



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