

CHICAGO'S PLAN 2.0

SEMI-ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT FEBRUARY 2014



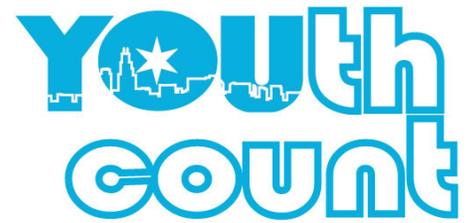


INTRODUCTION

The second year of Plan 2.0 implementation began with strong momentum in each of the plan's seven strategic priority areas. Through unprecedented collaboration, Chicago has accelerated efforts to house chronically homeless individuals, expanded shelter and service options for homeless youth, advanced planning efforts to coordinate access to crisis response services, and much more. As you will read in this third Plan 2.0 semi-annual progress report, our community of stakeholders has invested enormous urgency and passion in the pursuit of our shared goal to prevent and end homelessness in Chicago.

Please contact the Chicago Alliance at www.thechicagoalliance.org for more information about how you can participate in the work of Plan 2.0 and help Chicago realize the vision of a home for everyone.

PROGRESS WITH COUNTING YOUTH



One milestone worthy of special note was the implementation in the fall of 2013 of Chicago's first ever Youth Count, a census and survey of youth experiencing homelessness and housing instability. Many consumers, nonprofit providers and advocates collaborated with the Chicago Alliance to End Homelessness and the Department of Family and Support Services to develop the Youth Count survey tool, which was made available online and in person. Thanks to the strong outreach efforts of service providers, youth, Chicago Public Schools and others, 558 youth participated in the count, including 168 who were literally homeless. Researchers at the University of Illinois at Chicago are now analyzing the data gathered, and their report of findings will inform and enrich our response to youth in crisis.



PHOTO CREDIT: SARAH JANE RHEE

THE CRISIS RESPONSE SYSTEM

GOAL

Create an effective crisis response system that prevents homelessness whenever possible and rapidly returns people who experience homelessness to stable housing.

- ▶ Plan 2.0 and the HEARTH Act charge Chicago with improving methods of **matching appropriate resources and interventions with households as they enter the homeless system and adding diversion strategies to prevent homelessness** whenever possible. The Coordinated Access Steering Committee, delegated by the Chicago Planning Council on Homelessness to create a universal assessment for all persons requesting assistance that connects households to the appropriate intervention, has made significant progress in its planning process. The **steering committee drafted a system vision and principles for a coordinated access system**, which were affirmed by stakeholders who participated in a series of community feedback sessions on the process. The **steering committee drafted an aspirational systems map that streamlines the access, assessment, and referral process, and adds additional diversion options to our crisis response system**. Additionally, steering committee members met with three parallel systems of care --domestic violence, veterans, and child welfare -- to begin to establish referral patterns. In early 2014, the steering committee began work to create an evidence-based and data-driven pre-screening and assessment tool that will help connect consumers to the most appropriate intervention.
- ▶ Ensuring all housing programs support family preservation families with children of all ages and inclusive of all genders and partners is a key action item of Plan 2.0. **The Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) rolled out a new Family Preservation Policy**, effective January 1, 2014. With the new policy, **DFSS strives to support families experiencing homelessness by preventing the involuntary separation of families entering homeless programs for reasons other than bed or caseload availability** and in turn align with HEARTH Act requirements. With the support of Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), DFSS surveyed providers to find out what training or technical assistance they would need to ensure housing programs' ability to honor family preservation requirements, conducted two implementation trainings and provided individual consultation to programs. As the policy rolls out DFSS and CSH continue to provide technical assistance for agencies working to make structural, policy and service accommodations in their programs to implement the policy. The Continuum of Care and the Chicago Alliance to End Homelessness as CoC lead agency are also committed to family preservation and will be working with DFSS and the Planning Council to ensure system compliance.
- ▶ The Center for Housing and Health (CHH) issued a report on its citywide outreach coordination project which focuses on locating participants, typically chronically homeless and living on the streets or emergency shelters, who were identified for permanent supportive housing via the Central Referral System and supporting them through the housing application process. In 2013, **CHH Outreach Coordination and outreach teams located 213 of the 224 assigned CRS enrollees who were identified for permanent supportive housing and 129 individuals moved from the streets to housing**. CHH will continue to evaluate and modify coordination efforts to ensure outreach teams are coordinating to locate and engage as many highly vulnerable individuals and families as possible to access critical housing resources.

ACCESS TO STABLE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

GOAL

Create and maintain stable and affordable housing for households who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

- ▶ **The City of Chicago invested \$250,000 in its 2014 budget to re-launch a successful program model that addresses street and chronic homelessness. Coupled with a commitment of \$400,000 for approximately 50 housing subsidies from the Chicago Low-Income Housing Trust Fund, the Homeward Bound Project will engage individuals living on the street and work to facilitate a successful transition to permanent supportive housing. The project will leverage other permanent supportive housing options to serve up to 100 individuals. The new, dedicated unit commitment helps Chicago further its goal of ending chronic homelessness by 2015.**
- ▶ Plan 2.0 calls for Chicago to increase rapid re-housing opportunities to enable households with income to exit homelessness quickly. The Department of Family and Support services awarded **\$2.87 million for a new rapid re-housing program** in 2013. The Emergency Fund serves as the system coordinator and financial assistance administrator and contracts with four partners for housing location and placement services and housing stability case management services. The Rapid Re-housing partners include Catholic Charities, the Center for Housing and Health, Heartland Human Care Services and La Casa Norte.

Rapid re-housing includes short-to-medium-term rental assistance and housing stability services as tool to help households living on the streets or in shelters that have some income move to permanent housing. **In 2013, 200 households moved from shelter to housing.** The Rapid Re-housing partners along with DFSS and the Emergency Fund will begin evaluating project outcomes and program process to inform ongoing program implementation throughout the Continuum of Care and to advocate for additional sources of funding for this model.

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

GOAL

Create a comprehensive, developmentally appropriate menu of services for youth who experience homelessness in order to prevent homeless youth from becoming the next generation of homeless adults.

- ▶ The Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (CCH) and City of Chicago Task Force on Homeless Youth partnered with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Students in Temporary Living Situations (STLS) program to **educate CPS staff about services available for students experiencing homelessness**. A group of 1200 CPS clerks and homeless liaisons participated in twelve trainings over six days in August 2013 before the school year began. Leaders from Beacon Therapeutic, Chicago Alliance to End Homelessness, CCH, La Casa Norte, New Moms, National Runaway Safeline, The Night Ministry, Teen Living Programs, and Unity Parenting and Counseling provided information about their services and how schools can help young people access them. The group plans to make this an annual training for STLS liaisons which supports Plan 2.0's objective of increasing support for homeless youth in the STLS program and enhancing training for school-based liaisons.
- ▶ Chicago's **\$2 million investment in youth drop-in programs and low-threshold, low-demand overnight shelters was fully implemented in six community areas** throughout the city. Four drop-in centers in Lakeview, Humboldt Park, Back of the Yards, Bronzeville and five low-threshold shelters in Lakeview, Logan Square, Back of the Yards, North Lawndale, and Auburn – Gresham are now open and operating as comprehensive and collaborative network of services with some important results. In November, Catholic Charities Mobile Outreach Team began providing **transportation between the shelter programs when youth are turned away** because of capacity issues. The **collaborative mobilized to expand capacity and hours during three extreme weather emergencies in January and February 2014**. Shelters operated for 24-hours a day during each weather emergency and drop-in centers extended hours to ensure that youth had safe, warm spaces during the dangerous cold weather. In 2014, the collaborative will implement an evaluation plan in coordination with Loyola Center for Urban Learning (CURL).

EMPLOYMENT

GOAL

Increase meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities for people experiencing or most at risk of homelessness.

- ▶▶ The Plan 2.0 Employment Task Force, a group comprised of public and private sector partners and charged with the implementation of employment action steps, has made significant progress since it began meeting in July 2013. The Employment Task Force conducted an **assessment of the current workforce system in Chicago and Cook County** to determine the most effective strategies for connecting people experiencing homelessness to employment opportunities. Some major findings include:
 - ▶▶ **Most adults served by the homeless assistance system have significant barriers to employment and limited work history**, which requires an intensive and tailored regimen of supportive services and workforce preparation in order to succeed in employment.
 - ▶▶ The Task Group conducted **surveys of 44 agencies in order to assess the current landscape of employment services available to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness**. These agencies are able to provide employment services to nearly 26,000 Chicagoans a year with an average caseload of one employment service specialist for every 84 clients served. However, it is important to note that **individuals who are homeless represent a small number of the Chicagoans served** and workforce development funding dedicated to providing employment services to Chicagoans who are homeless is minimal.
 - ▶▶ Many agencies are able to blend public and private resources to offer innovative best practice programs, like transitional jobs or vocational training, but the **slots available each year cannot keep up with demand**. Flexible funding continues to be the most challenging barrier to providing employment services to this population.

The Task Force is currently working on finalizing recommendations for best practices employment program models to make informed policy and advocacy recommendations on issues such as aligning an employment readiness assessment developed by the Task Force with the new coordinated access system and making recommendations for systems-change strategies to achieve progress for people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.

EMPLOYMENT

SPOTLIGHT ON CENTER FOR CHANGING LIVES

- ▶▶ Going beyond employment placement and financial literacy, Center for Changing Lives (CCL) focuses on financial capability and ensures households are empowered to make financial choices that will lead to long-term housing stability. CCL provides a continuum of financial opportunity services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness that bridges the homeless services, workforce development and financial services fields. The only Center for Working Families program working in shelters throughout Chicago, **CCL provides both needed individualized employment coaching to Interim Housing residents in six programs on a weekly basis and also brings financial coaching services to these locations.** Financial coaching focuses on financial knowledge, access, and empowerment and specifically targets credit and asset building to maximize the likelihood that increased income will also lead to increased financial stability and consumer choice, including choice among housing options. CCL's community center, which also offers these services, functions as an important diversion strategy for those who are at-risk of homelessness.

The program is **sustained by a blend of private and public funds** and the national network of organizations that utilize the Center for Working Families model is supported by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), the Corporation for National and Community Services Social Innovation Fund, the United Way and many others. CCL is a fourth year recipient of Social Innovation Funds through LISC.

"I am so grateful for Center for Changing Lives' (CCL) assistance in helping me get to where I am now. My future definitely looks more hopeful than it ever has. From being a homeless single mother to full time employment and securing an apartment of my own. I love it! I am truly grateful for the CCL program and everyone who helped me with the resources I needed to get to where I needed!"

-Venus Martinez, Center for Changing Lives employment program participant

ADVOCACY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

GOAL

Engage all of Chicago in a robust plan that creates a path to securing a home for everyone in our community.

- ▶ Engaging a wide range of stakeholders in our plan to ensure a path to securing a home for everyone is an important tenet of Plan 2.0. The Chicago Continuum of Care hosted its **first All-Continuum of Care meeting** in October 2013. The goal of the meeting was **to engage new and existing stakeholders in CoC activities through Plan 2.0 implementation**. Nearly 200 stakeholders attended and received a thorough update on Plan 2.0 accomplishments through the first year of implementation. Members of the Plan Advisory Committee, HUD McKinney-Vento Committee, and the Chicago Alliance’s Consumers Commission facilitated breakout sessions on each of Plan 2.0’s strategic priorities, providing an opportunity for in-depth engagement on each of the issues and opportunities for CoC members to join initiatives working on specific Plan 2.0 action steps.

CROSS-SYSTEMS INTEGRATION

GOAL

Work across public and private systems of care to ensure ending homelessness is a shared priority.

- ▶ As a designated priority community, Chicago participated in several systems coordination activities convened by federal partners. The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) convened local leaders to launch the **Dedicating Opportunities to End Homelessness** initiative to help Chicago and Cook County identify opportunities to more **strategically target mainstream resources to achieve goals of ending homelessness**. The following are successful outcomes from 2013:
 - ▶ HUD convened a number of **Section 202 multifamily residence owners to discuss the adoption of a homeless preference** in their buildings. The owners were trained on the Central Referral System by Corporation for Supportive Housing as a possible referral source for homeless applicants. Recently, sample language to amend Tenant Selection Plans to adopt a homeless preference was sent to the trained owners. To date, **three building owners have submitted paperwork to adopt a homeless preference**.
 - ▶ The Housing Authority of Cook County implemented a homeless preference.
- ▶ A **local cross-systems implementation team** including partners from DFSS, the Chicago Housing Authority, the Corporation for Supportive Housing, the Chicago Alliance, the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center, and multiple housing providers launched a Rapid Results Boot Camp team as part of a project **convened by federal partners HUD, USICH and the United States Veterans Affairs to foster high-level systems coordination to end chronic and veteran homelessness by 2015**. Since May 2013, the team successfully completed two 100-day action plans that increased and then maintained Chicago's housing placement rate to permanent supportive housing of 30-50 individuals per month to 125 individuals per month, with 90% (115) of those placements being chronically homeless.

From June to December of 2013, Chicago housed 859 chronically homeless individuals of which 211 were veterans. Staff from Jesse Brown VA Medical Center, Corporation for Supportive Housing, Veteran Housing & Employment Services and Illinois Joining Forces Homelessness committee convened **briefings for 100 new landlords** to discuss VASH and other permanent housing subsidy programs. Additionally through this initiative, **Chicago expanded its HUD Shelter Plus Care portfolio by 50 units for chronically homeless** dedicated units created through use of historically unexpended grant funds. The Rapid Results Boot Camp Leadership team intends to continue meeting to establish and monitor goals to continue progress on reducing chronic and veteran homelessness in Chicago.

CROSS-SYSTEMS INTEGRATION

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- ▶ **New resources for planning and services at the state level** will add support to our goal to ensure ending homelessness is a shared priority across different systems of care. The Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse (DHS/DASA) received a three-year grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) to address the needs of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in Illinois. The grant supports the development of statewide infrastructure improvements, advocacy strategies to increase awareness of state policymakers around the issue of homelessness, **expansion of screening, referral, recovery and treatment support for up to 180 individuals newly entering permanent supportive housing**, and capacity building. As part of this grant, DHS/DASA has established a statewide Interagency Council on Homelessness and developed a draft state plan to reduce chronic homelessness that aligns with Opening Doors, the federal strategic plan to end homelessness, and Plan 2.0.

CAPACITY BUILDING

GOAL

Ensure a strong homeless assistance system capable of implementing Plan 2.0 goals and HEARTH Act performance standards.

- ▶ Plan 2.0 aims to ensure a strong homeless assistance system and includes action items that ensure training and support opportunities for homeless providers on harm reduction and effective ways of serving people engaging in high-risk behaviors. The Midwest Harm Reduction Institute has taken a lead role on this action step and in September 2013 hosted the **3rd annual Harm Reduction in the House conference**. **Nearly 150 people attended the day-long conference offerings** which included panels, workshops, and presentations on harm reduction topics related to mental health, opioid safety and overdose management, harm reduction housing fidelity, harm reduction representative payeeship, cultural humility, and self-care for harm reduction workers. This year's offerings demonstrated the breadth and depth of knowledge in Chicago's harm reduction housing community and represented a growth and refinement in our practice. Many suburban newcomers to harm reduction attended the conference this year, reflecting the expansion of this approach to working with our most vulnerable neighbors.

CAPACITY BUILDING

GOAL

Ensure a strong homeless assistance system capable of implementing Plan 2.0 goals and HEARTH Act performance standards.

- ▶ With the assistance of HUD Emergency Solutions Grant funding that served as bridge money for 2013, the Chicago Alliance to End Homelessness added **two additional HMIS team members**. As a result, the HMIS team has made **significant changes to the quality of trainings, technical support, user interaction and improved communication and reporting with users**. In addition to new user trainings, HMIS now offers monthly refresher in-person user trainings, program specific workflow trainings either in a webinar or in person format and specialized trainings for Agency Technical Administrators and held a total of **69 trainings in 2013**. The HMIS team dedicates a staff liaison to service providers who manages the HMIS ticketing system, answers questions in a timely manner and ensures the system is in compliance with HMIS polices and these steps are helping to increase user satisfaction.

Throughout 2013, the HMIS team also worked with service providers to **revamp the data quality assurance process which resulted in an overall decrease in the number of missing values over a period of three quarters**. In 2014, the Data Quality Steering Committee will submit a formal Data Quality Plan to the Chicago Planning Council on Homelessness and begin implementation. The data quality plan steps will ensure that the data in the system continues to remain in compliance with HUD data standards and increases system confidence that the data generated from HMIS is reliable and can be used to measure multiple performance outcomes for the Continuum of Care. Evidence of improved data quality is reflected by the fact that HUD accepted all fourteen data shells submitted for the Chicago CoC's Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR). In order to have these shells accepted by HUD, we must meet certain thresholds related to the quality of our data, including accurate bed utilization rates and reasonably low missing data elements. Meeting these thresholds ensures our data are "usable" in national reports and having all shells accepted demonstrates overall improvement in data quality for our system.