

Essex-Newark Task Force to End Homelessness

Convened by County Executive Joseph DiVincenzo, Jr. and Mayor Cory A. Booker

At its meeting on May 8, 2009, by a unanimous vote, thirty two member agencies of the Essex-Newark Task Force to End Homelessness endorsed the following Core Principles of the Essex-Newark Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness:

Voting Yes

Apostles' House
City of Newark – Department of Child and Family Well-Being
City of Newark – Department of Housing and Economic Development
City of Newark – Division of Planning and Community Development
City of Newark – Division of Housing and Real Estate
City of Newark – NewarkWORKS
City of Newark – Office of the Mayor
City of Newark – Police Department
Consumer Advocates (2)
Corporation for Supportive Housing - New Jersey
East Orange General Hospital
East Orange Housing Authority
Essex County - Department of Citizen Services
Essex County – Department of Economic Development
Essex County – Division of Community Action
Essex County – Division of Housing and Community Development
Essex County – Division of Welfare
Essex County – Office of the County Executive
Essex County – Sheriff's Office
Essex County College
Essex-Newark Legal Services
Isaiah House
Mental Health Association of Essex County
Newark Emergency Services for Families
Newark Housing Authority
The Nicholson Foundation
Project Live
St. Matthew AME Church
United Way of Essex and West Hudson
United Way of North Essex
University of Medicine and Dentistry New Jersey – University Behavioral HealthCare

Voting No

None

Member Agencies Not Present for Vote:

AIDS Resource Foundation for Children
Bethel World Outreach Ministries Inc.
City of Newark – Municipal Court
City of Newark – Office of Grants Management
City of Newark – Office of Innovation and Performance Management
Integrity House, Inc.
Irvington Housing Authority
Essex County Superior Court
Verizon

Essex-Newark Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness

Vision

In ten years, all individuals and families at risk of homelessness in Newark and across Essex County will have access to safe, quality housing that they can afford, with the resources needed to sustain it.

Core Principles

(These principles define the basic policy parameters of the Essex-Newark Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness.)

Building on the strengths of the current system, as well as the dedication and expertise of current providers, we will work together to develop a coordinated housing and services system designed to end homelessness, not manage it. Housing ends homelessness. Therefore, our ultimate goal is for all individuals and families in Newark and across Essex County to have access to permanent (non time-limited) housing that they can afford, with the supportive services necessary to sustain it, if needed.

Preventing homelessness is the best and most efficient way to end it. We will increase prevention efforts and resources, to develop a County-wide “early warning” system designed to help individuals and families remain in housing whenever possible. We will actively promote these services to all who may be at risk of homelessness.

We will end long term homelessness, and shorten all episodes of homelessness, by moving individuals and families as quickly as possible into appropriate permanent housing, using a Housing First approach.

We will work with existing emergency shelter and transitional housing programs to create vital Interim Housing capacity, designed to stabilize and assess individuals and families in order to connect them to appropriate permanent housing. Interim Housing models already exist in Newark and Essex County. Interim Housing is defined as: short term housing provided for the minimum time needed to access permanent housing, with services focused on immediate and comprehensive needs assessment, resource acquisition (e.g., public benefits), and housing placement. The length of time spent in Interim Housing is determined by the specific needs of the population served and the amount of time needed to access appropriate permanent housing.

We will ensure that our system has an adequate supply of emergency shelter beds, to respond to unforeseen crises and/or potential interim or permanent housing shortfalls.

We will create a coordinated entry system for prevention, housing, and support services, to ensure efficient, effective, and accurate provision of resources. Our goal is to eliminate any resource or service barriers that inadvertently extend, exacerbate, and/or contribute to a person’s homelessness.

Whenever possible, we will pursue housing and service strategies that end homelessness and are also cost-effective.

Collectively, we will hold ourselves accountable for reaching our Ten Year Plan goals and our success will be determined by regular assessment of measurable outcomes and benchmarks. Performance will be measured on an ongoing basis and we will shift our strategies, as needed, in order to reach our goals.

Glossary

Appropriate Permanent Housing means housing that is matched to the needs of a household (individual or family). For some, such as a person with mental illness, this may mean low income housing with long-term wraparound services (permanent supportive housing). For others, it may simply mean low income housing that they can afford, with no need for any services attached.

At Risk of Homelessness means persons or families at imminent risk of becoming homeless because they are paying too much of their incomes to maintain housing and/or are experiencing other stressors that threaten housing stability (e.g., family violence), and for whom homelessness could, more likely than not, be prevented through rent subsidies and/or services. Some of these individuals have been homeless one or more times previously, which increases their risk of future homelessness.

- **“At Risk” also includes persons leaving institutional settings**, such as correctional facilities, psychiatric hospitals, or returning from military service. A sizeable number of these individuals are very likely to become homeless soon after leaving their former setting if suitable housing is not readily available and accessible.

Homeless means individuals or families who lack a fixed, regular, adequate nighttime residence, including persons whose primary nighttime residence is: a supervised public or private shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations; a time limited/non-permanent transitional housing and/or behavioral health treatment facility (with no permanent residence to return to after treatment); or a public or private facility not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation; or any other place not meant for human habitation (e.g., street, park, car, abandoned building).

- **Homeless also includes “doubled-up”** – a residential status that places individuals and families at risk for becoming homeless; defined as: sharing another person’s dwelling on a temporary basis where continued tenancy is contingent upon the hospitality of the primary leaseholder or owner and can be rescinded at any time without notice. (Note: this situation can often also put the leaseholder at risk of losing housing.)

Housing First means providing homeless people with housing as quickly as possible and then providing services as needed. What differentiates a Housing First approach from traditional emergency shelter or transitional housing approaches is that it is “housing-based,” with an immediate and primary focus on helping individuals and families quickly access and sustain permanent housing (e.g., Rapid Re-housing is a Housing First strategy). This approach has the benefit of being consistent with what most people experiencing homelessness want and seek help to achieve. Housing First programs share critical elements:

- There is a focus on helping individuals and families access and sustain permanent rental housing as quickly as possible and the housing is not time-limited;
- A variety of services are delivered primarily following a housing placement to promote housing stability and individual well-being;
- Such services are time-limited or long-term depending upon individual need; and
- Housing is not contingent on compliance with services – instead, participants must comply with a standard lease agreement and are provided with the services and supports that are necessary to help them do so successfully.

While all Housing First programs share these critical elements, program models vary significantly depending upon the population served. For people who have experienced chronic, or long-term, homelessness, there is an expectation that intensive (and often specialized) services will be needed indefinitely. The vast majority of homeless individuals and families do not experience chronic homelessness. Most often they have experienced a housing or personal crisis that led them to seek help from the homeless shelter system.¹

Interim Housing means short term housing provided for the minimum time needed to access appropriate permanent housing, with services focused on immediate and comprehensive needs assessment, resource acquisition (e.g., public benefits), and housing placement. Ideally, Interim Housing rapidly re-houses persons who are homeless into appropriate and affordable permanent housing within a 120 day time goal. The focus of this Interim Housing is to stabilize and assess the household and connect them to housing and community-based social services.²

Long Term Homeless means individuals and families who:

- Have chronic health conditions that are at least episodically disabling such as mental illness, substance use issues, and HIV/AIDS, or other substantial barriers to housing stability (e.g., domestic violence, trauma, history of out-of-home placements, and ongoing economic hardship), *and*
- Have been homeless for long periods of time (one year or more), or repeated stays in the streets, emergency shelters, or other temporary settings, sometimes cycling between homelessness and hospitals, jails, or prisons, or have a history of residential instability (i.e., five or more moves over the past two years).

¹ See *National Alliance to End Homelessness*: www.endhomelessness.org

² See *Getting Housing, Staying Housed*, Chicago's Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness.