

Summary of Strategies in *Blueprint to Address Homelessness in the Midlands*

Homelessness is caused by a broad array of both individual and community factors. The goal of the *Blueprint* is to significantly reduce homelessness over the next ten years and return homeless people to meaningful lives, in a manner that fully respects the dignity and quality of life for all our citizens. The *Blueprint* is based on ten key strategies, addressing immediate problems as well as those more long-term and preventive in nature; thus, the timelines and resources required vary. The essential constant is community resolve to implement them with fidelity. Over time, emergency shelter requests should decrease as affordable and supportive housing options increase and the community shifts its focus to prevention. To reduce homelessness and improve the quality of life for all members of our community will require a well-developed continuum of services and housing to meet the diverse needs of the homeless. It also will require a willingness among all stakeholders to approach an old problem with new solutions.

With the vision of supporting a high quality of life in the Midlands, the following strategies build upon a solid foundation of local support for the homeless and a commitment from the community for new attention to the problem and providing the necessary resources. Each strategy is critical to the overall effectiveness and success of the Midlands community's effort to significantly reduce homelessness.

- 1. Create an empowered lead authority, the Midlands Commission on Homelessness (MCH) to ensure the implementation of *Blueprint* strategies, to monitor progress and to function as the public mechanism for accountability.**
- 2. Establish a homeless services center and emergency shelter.** The permanent shelter will offer drop-in facilities such as showers, laundry, mail/voice-mail, on-site supportive service such as assessments and referrals to behavioral and primary health care, employment services, a "sobering center" as an alternative to jail or the emergency room, and assistance with permanent housing. Additional shelter and services for homeless families will also be offered.
- 3. Ensure appropriate services to address the needs of homeless people.** The Commission will work with local providers to assess gaps and shortages in services annually—improving access to homeless services with a single point of entry approach, developing a capacity building program that emphasizes non-profit standards and best practice homeless services and housing, increasing outreach and services to people on the street, with additional Assertive Community Treatment teams (ACT teams), and rationalizing and coordinating feeding programs in the community.
- 4. Provide sufficient, affordable, and supportive housing.** The *Blueprint* calls for the development of new affordable and supportive housing over the next 10 years and the creation of a Housing Assistance Office to provide financial assistance and services to people at risk of losing their housing and implement a Rapid Exit Program to assist homeless people to overcome housing obstacles such as poor credit and lack of security deposit funds to regain permanent housing as soon as possible.
- 5. Establish secure funding resources.** Participating jurisdictions would authorize a dedicated funding stream for the Midlands Commission on Homelessness.
- 6. Make full use of the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).** HMIS will be supported and expanded to facilitate homeless client management and tracking.
- 7. Engage community resource partners.** The MCH will seek to partner with local colleges and universities to assist the community with research, program evaluation, direct services and technical assistance. The Commission will also fully engage the faith community and other volunteers to involve them in the effort.
- 8. Develop ordinances that facilitate solutions to homelessness.** Relevant local ordinances will be reviewed and modified, where appropriate, to facilitate *Blueprint* implementation.
- 9. Expand awareness of homeless issues and develop a process to inform citizens of progress in addressing homelessness.** The Commission will keep the public informed of its activities, of the status of area homelessness and of the status of the ten-year plan. 'Good Neighbor' agreements will be established between area shelter/service providers and surrounding neighborhoods and businesses.
- 10. Prevent homelessness.** The Commission will inventory current prevention services in the Midlands, develop an inventory of best-practice prevention strategies as part of the continuum of care, and use them as guides to develop specific programs and services to prevent initial homelessness, such as rent support, legal assistance, discharge planning from jails, hospitals, etc.,) and to reduce the likelihood of repeat homelessness due to poor life skills or inadequate job training.

The logo for 'YES WE CAN' is displayed in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The letters are closely spaced and have a slightly irregular, hand-drawn appearance.

Midlands Commission on Homelessness
www.yeswecansc.org