

Rebuilding Lives: Community Shelter Board

Columbus Ohio

Rebuilding Lives is a comprehensive approach to reducing homelessness through coordination of services, innovative outreach, housing development and supportive housing, based in Columbus, Ohio. The Community Shelter Board, a non-profit in Columbus, launches new efforts, advocates and provides funding to respond to homelessness.

These programs have been cited as national models for best practices.

In your packet is a report card summary of Columbus and Franklin County's community plan to end homelessness. You will see they are performing well in a number of areas which we are considering here in our discussions.

Examples of their program elements are collaborative outreach, unified supportive housing, increasing the number of housing units, providing rent subsidies and advocacy for re-entry housing for incarcerated populations, mental health populations and domestic violence populations.

One program of interest to me is called Good Neighbor Committee, through which shelters and nearby neighbors form agreements about the housing to be located in neighborhoods. This agreement measure reduces the NIMBY inclinations some neighbors have when a new facility is proposed. Neighbors of existing housing sites are sometimes used as advocates to re-assure new site neighbors that things will work out and impacts can be mitigated.

Another interesting partnership is their social enterprise catering business and they are operating a commercial kitchen to prepare meals for shelter sites. This element of their program provides additional opportunities for stable income and workplace readiness for housing residents.

A new service model called a Navigator program is underway - a system to provide intensive services to quickly move people into stable housing and stop repeat homelessness. The navigators link people to services to assure housing stability, like employment and job training, mental health, substance abuse and housing resources. They also continue to work with people after they enter housing to help maintain stable housing. Assessments conducted by the navigators are diversion-focused, streamlined, non-repetitive and participant-centric. Going forward, they plan to partner with mental health and the VA to train more navigators to use this system.

The Rebuilding Lives array of services and best practices seem further exploration. The Community Shelter Board's primary focus is to coordinate funding support for housing development and service delivery. Partnerships are key to their success.

Summary prepared by Wendy McClure
Office of Neighborhoods, City of Everett