



901 Home, Together:

Strategic Plan to End Homelessness in Memphis/Shelby County

Approved March 2021



Memphis / Shelby County
Homeless Consortium



Community Alliance
for the Homeless

Memphis/Shelby County Homeless Consortium Governing Council – 2020 – 2021

OFFICERS

Chair: Kimberly Mitchell, City of Memphis

Vice-Chair: Phillis Lewis, Love Doesn't Hurt

Immediate Past Chair: Cornelius Sanders, Promise Development Corporation

MEMBERS

At-Large Members (Elected by the Consortium)

Mary Hamlett, VP of Family Programs, MIFA

Megan Williams, Manager of Complex Care, Regional One Health

Designated Liaisons (Appointed)

City of Memphis Government Liaison: Kimberly Mitchell, Administrator, HCD

Shelby County Government Liaison: Dorcas Young Griffin, Director, Div. of Community Services

Memphis Housing Authority Liaison: Vernua Hanrahan, Special Projects Coordinator

Memphis VAMC Liaison: Jacquelyn Taylor-Mays, Section Chief, Homeless Programs

Shelby County Schools Liaison: Dr. Karen Ball, District Official

Department of Children's Services Liaison: Merlene Hyman, Regional Administrator

Committee Chairs (Appointed by Chair)

CoC Planning Chair: Porsha Goodman, Executive Director, Door of Hope

Youth Committee Chair: Kiya Black, Metamorphosis Project Case Manager, OUTMemphis

Representatives (Elected by Consortium)

Domestic Violence Representative: Sandy Bromley, Executive Director, Shelby County CVRCC

For-Profit Representative: Matt Grimes

Legal Representative: Shannon Mason, Memphis Area Legal Services

LGBTQ Representative: Phillis Lewis, CEO/Founder, Love Doesn't Hurt

Philanthropy Representative: LaQuita Rhine

Designated by Bylaws

Lead Agency Executive Director: D. Cheré Bradshaw

Lead Agency Liaison: Grant Ebbesmeyer, CoC Planning Director

Memphis/Shelby County Homeless Consortium Association Members – 2020 – 2021

As of March 10, 2021

A Home for Heroes Residential Facility	A Lee Dog Story
Agape Child & Family Services, Inc.	Lisieux Community
Alpha Omega Veterans Services, Inc.	Memphis Dream Center
American Job Centers –	Memphis Health Center
Greater Memphis Region	Merge Memphis
Baptist Operation Outreach	Meritan
Calvary Episcopal Church	Metropolitan Inter-Faith Association (MIFA)
Catholic Charities of West TN	OUTMemphis
Christ Community Health Services	Peanut's House, Inc.
CMI Healthcare Services	Promise Development Corporation
Community Alliance for the Homeless	Refuge Memphis
Door of Hope	Restoration Time Family & Youth Services
Dorothy Day House	Room in the Inn-Memphis
Grady Chapel CME Church	Seed House Inc
The Hagar Center, Inc.	SHIELD, Inc.
Homes for Hearts	St. John's Community Services (SJCS)
H.O.P.E.	St. Luke Lutheran Church
Hope House	St. Matthew's United Methodist Church
Housing the Homeless - HELPS	Thistle and Bee Enterprises Inc.
The Independent Parent Inc.	Trinity Community Coalition Outreach, Inc.
Judicare	We Are Family CDC

Table of Contents

Introduction 4

Approval and Annual Review 6

Outline: Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Benchmarks 7

Narratives

- Goal 1: Ensure Homelessness is a Rare Experience 12
- Goal 2: Ensure Homelessness is a Brief Experience 14
- Goal 3: Ensure Homelessness is a One-Time Experience 18
- Goal 4: Sustain an End to Homelessness 20

Introduction

The **Memphis/Shelby County Homeless Consortium** is the voluntary association that provides leadership, services, advocacy, and information related to Memphis and Shelby County's homeless population. The mission of the Consortium is to develop, sustain and coordinate a comprehensive continuum of care for citizens of the City of Memphis and Shelby County who experience homelessness in order to establish pathways to self-sufficiency and ultimately to eliminate homelessness.

The Consortium has active members from many different sectors across Memphis and Shelby County including housing and service providers, local government, churches and faith-based organizations, mental health organizations, affordable housing developers, educational systems, medical providers, and advocates. The Consortium meets quarterly, and has several open committees and working groups that meet more regularly and focus on specific populations or services provided by member agencies.

The Consortium serves as the **TN-501: Memphis/Shelby County Continuum of Care (CoC)**, designated by HUD as the group organized to carry out the responsibilities prescribed in the HEARTH Act for a defined geographic area. Responsibilities of the group include planning for, designating, and operating the CoC, designating and operating an HMIS (Homeless Management Information System), and designing and implementing the process associated with applying for CoC Program funds.

The Governing Council (the decision-making body of the Consortium) currently designates **Community Alliance for the Homeless (CAFTH)** to serve as the lead agency for the CoC. CAFTH provides staff support for the Consortium and its committees and is assigned other CoC duties, including serving as the HMIS Lead Agency and the Collaborative Applicant for agencies to receive CoC Program funds from HUD.

In January 2011, a 10-year Action Plan to End Homelessness was presented by the Mayors' Committee to End Homelessness, co-chaired by former City of Memphis Mayor A C Wharton and former Shelby County Mayor Mark Luttrell. Community Alliance for the Homeless (CAFTH) was identified as the agency to carry out the Action Plan.

In Memphis/Shelby County, since the introduction of the 2011 Action Plan, the total number of:

- Individuals experiencing homelessness has **fallen by 47%**, from 1,942 to 1,022¹
- Permanent supportive housing beds has **risen by 141%**, from 546 to 1,316²
- Rapid rehousing beds has **risen by 185%**, from 163 to 465
- Temporary transitional housing beds has **fallen by 61%**, from 1,399 to 543

¹ https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC_PopSub_CoC_TN-501-2011_TN_2011.pdf

² https://files.hudexchange.info/reports/published/CoC_HIC_CoC_TN-501-2011_TN_2011.pdf

In the same time, the total annual Continuum of Care (CoC) program funding awarded to agencies in Memphis/Shelby County has **risen by 23%**, from \$5.6 million to \$6.9 million.

Due to the expiration of the 2011 Action Plan in 2020, Community Alliance for the Homeless (CAFTH) was tasked with drafting a new strategic plan to continue the success seen since 2011 and ultimately end homelessness in Memphis/Shelby County. Although the COVID-19 pandemic beginning in March 2020 dramatically altered and delayed original plans for developing the strategic plan, community feedback and strategizing continued after the immediate response passed.

The following strategic plan follows the structure of the Home, Together: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness released by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) in 2018. The Home, Together Federal plan emphasizes evidence-based and proven strategies to end homelessness; the federal plan has been tailored to fit the local context and needs in Memphis/Shelby County.

A draft of the plan outline was presented at the September 2020 Memphis/Shelby County Homeless Consortium quarterly virtual meeting and feedback was requested from attendees. After the meeting, a recording of the presentation of the draft outline was also sent to all individuals on the CAFTH/Consortium mailing list. Feedback was received from 13 individuals and was integrated into the next draft. This draft was again sent to all individuals on the CAFTH/Consortium mailing list with a request for additional feedback. Substantive feedback was received from one agency.

Approval and Annual Review

After the second round of community and provider feedback, the draft plan was presented to representatives of the City of Memphis and Shelby County for review and to the Memphis/Shelby County Homeless Consortium Governing Council for final approval. The plan was approved unanimously by the Governing Council on March 10, 2021.

The Strategic Plan will be reviewed at least annually by the Homeless Consortium's Governing Council. Community Alliance for the Homeless as the designated CoC Lead Agency will provide reports on the plan's progress along with this review process. The Strategic Plan may be amended with a majority vote by the Governing Council.

Outline: Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Benchmarks

Goal 1: Ensure Homelessness is a Rare Experience	
<u>Objective 1.1</u>: Collaboratively Build Lasting Systems that End Homelessness	
<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Benchmarks</i>
1.1a: Work proactively with publicly funded institutions and systems of care to develop and implement discharge policies that help prevent homelessness.	Formalize discharge planning with at least 2 systems of care (e.g. criminal justice, foster care, hospital, and mental health) to ensure as many individuals as possible are not exited from these systems directly into homelessness, or if unavoidable are connected with supports and resources
1.1b: Improve data sharing agreements	Develop data sharing agreements and conduct regular data imports or direct data entry with at least 2 external partners not currently entering data into HMIS
<u>Objective 1.2</u>: Increase Capacity and Strengthen Practices to Prevent Housing Crises and Homelessness	
<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Benchmarks</i>
1.2a: Increase funding and resources for prevention and diversion activities	Develop and formalize an official diversion plan within the CoC including plans for ongoing prevention and diversion funding sources
1.2b: Increase resources and policies to support vulnerable populations including youth, families, domestic violence survivors, and veterans	Formalize lead partners for assisting each population and track progress towards meeting USICH benchmarks for ending homelessness for these populations

Goal 2: Ensure Homelessness is a Brief Experience

Objective 2.1: Identify and Engage All People Experiencing Homelessness as Quickly as Possible

Strategies	Benchmarks
<p>2.1a: Increase street outreach and service coordination programs that allow persons to access needed services quickly and efficiently</p>	<p>Formalize processes surrounding assessment, intake, and diversion for both internal and external CoC agencies, including policies for those who are fleeing domestic violence</p>
	<p>Formalize and expand additional entry points into system, especially outside of traditional operating hours</p>
	<p>Assess outreach needs and formalize plan for expanding outreach funding and capacity, including activating an outreach committee to develop plan and further goals</p>

Objective 2.2: Provide Immediate Access to Low-Barrier Emergency Shelter or other Temporary Accommodations to All Who Need it

Strategies	Benchmarks
<p>2.2a: Increase Emergency Shelter with an emphasis on free, low-barrier, equal access shelters</p>	<p>Better track unsheltered populations to determine needs and formalize plan for expanding shelter funding and capacity, including by reducing overall length of time homeless and increasing exits to permanent housing</p>
	<p>Educate and partner with existing shelters to lower barriers as much as possible and expand capacity</p>

Objective 2.3: Maintain Coordinated Entry System (CES) to Standardize Assessment and Prioritization Processes and Streamline Connections to Housing and Services	
Strategies	Benchmarks
2.3a: Expand CES partnerships to increase and improve entry and exit points and better connect community partners	Formalize partnerships with at least 2 emergency shelters for single adults outside of the current CES to expand intake capacity
	Formalize process for referring individuals to services while they await housing, including outreach, housing navigation, and mental health or substance abuse resources for those who want them
Objective 2.4: Assist People to Move Swiftly into Permanent Housing with Appropriate and Person-Centered Services	
Strategies	Benchmarks
2.4a: Increase and Maximize Permanent Housing Resources	Develop and formalize a plan to both increase utilization rates of current permanent housing beds and expand permanent housing capacity, including ways to visualize data on permanent housing capacity and availability
	Develop landlord engagement strategy to better partner with flexible and low-barrier private market landlords
	Formalize partnerships with at least 2 affordable housing providers outside of the current CES to expand outflow capacity
2.4b: Provide Training on Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) and Rapid Rehousing (RRH) principles to ensure case managers and housing staff are fully trained on supportive housing services	Develop and formalize new plan and requirements for training new CoC PSH and RRH case managers as well as recurring training and testing to ensure cohesive training across the CoC

Goal 3: Ensure Homelessness is a One-Time Experience

Objective 3.1: Prevent Returns to Homelessness through Connections to Adequate Services and Opportunities

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Benchmarks</i>
3.1a: Seek and design partnerships with key mainstream service providers to leverage resources and support integrated care	Improve and formalize referral processes between housing providers and mainstream benefit resources, including mental health resources for those who need them

Objective 3.2: Increase Opportunities for Meaningful Engagement with Persons with Lived Experiences

<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Benchmarks</i>
3.2a: Formalize feedback from persons with lived experience, through either focus groups or feedback more routinely collected from clients in existing programs	Develop and formalize a policy to create a Lived Experience Advisory Group within the Homeless Consortium
	Expand Consortium’s Governing Council to include additional spots for individuals with lived experience of homelessness

Goal 4: Sustain an End to Homelessness

Objective 4.1: Sustain Practices and Systems at a Scale Necessary to Respond to Future Needs

Strategies

Benchmarks

4.1a: Broaden understanding around states of housing insecurity that may factor into future homelessness

Outline goals for meeting a functional zero end to homelessness and how to measure data to ensure that goal can be met in a sustained manner

Objective 4.2: Planning for the Needs of Persons Experiencing Homelessness in Disaster Response and Recovery Efforts

Strategies

Benchmarks

4.2a: Addressing Response and Recovery From COVID-19 Pandemic

During and after COVID-19 response, develop report on lessons learned and strategies to improve future emergency response efforts

4.2b: Adaptable Emergency Response Planning for Persons Experiencing Homelessness

Develop and formalize Emergency Response Plan

Narratives

Goal 1: Ensure Homelessness is a Rare Experience

Memphis and Shelby County will work to ensure homelessness is a rare experience by implementing strategies to build lasting systems to support those experiencing homelessness and increase resources aimed at preventing persons from becoming homeless. This includes strategies for building strong local systems, expanding partnerships with mainstream programs that are not specifically targeted to people experiencing homelessness, putting a greater emphasis on diversion strategies, and strengthening our ability to prevent housing crises and homelessness. Implementation of these strategies will be grounded in data and analysis and will support our community to address the needs of populations that are disproportionately impacted by homelessness.

Objective 1.1: Collaboratively Build Lasting Systems that End Homelessness

To achieve the goal of ending homelessness and to ensure that homelessness is a rare experience, it is important to ensure that a variety of homeless providers, governmental entities, and community agencies are represented in system planning. Bringing together key stakeholders to help build a collaborative response to ending homelessness allows for multiple systems that engage with persons experiencing homelessness to be at the decision making table.

Strategy 1.1a: Work proactively with publicly funded institutions and systems of care to develop and implement discharge policies that help prevent homelessness.

Memphis and Shelby County will create formal discharge policies with institutions of care, correctional facilities, and other systems that may discharge individuals into homelessness or housing instability. These discharge policies will highlight procedures for connecting persons exiting an institution with no housing resources with the Coordinated Entry System, emergency shelter resources, and permanent housing resources to ensure that persons are not exiting to the street or unstable housing situations.

- **Benchmark:** Formalize discharge planning with at least 2 systems of care (e.g. criminal justice, foster care, hospital, and mental health) to ensure as many individuals as possible are not exited from these systems directly into homelessness, or if unavoidable are connected with supports and resources
 - **Potential funding:** CoC Planning, ESG

Strategy 1.1b: Improve data sharing agreements.

Utilizing data systems such as HMIS is also needed to ensure that accurate data is collected on persons experiencing homelessness and to help identify and track a person's progression through the homeless services system.

- **Benchmark:** Develop data sharing agreements and conduct regular data imports or direct data entry with at least 2 external partners not currently entering data into HMIS
 - **Potential funding:** CoC HMIS, ESG HMIS

Objective 1.2: Increase Capacity and Strengthen Practices to Prevent Housing Crises and Homelessness

In Memphis/Shelby County and across the country, few resources currently exist to prevent housing crises and homelessness, and the resources that do exist are not adequate to meet the demand. Expanding and supporting individuals, families, and specific populations at risk of becoming homeless will help ensure that the homeless services system is not further strained.

Strategy 1.2a: Increase funding and resources for prevention and diversion activities

To ensure that homelessness is a rare occurrence, funding for prevention activities is needed to allow for resources that can help prevent persons from being evicted into homelessness. These funds should include flexibility for one-time rental payments to prevent evictions, landlord mitigation, repairs for cars to prevent the loss of a job, and other services that can help keep someone from losing their homes or ending up experiencing homelessness. Homelessness prevention should not be the responsibility of the homelessness crisis response system alone. Rather, it requires a multi-sector approach and an active focus on housing needs, housing stability, and risks of homelessness across many different public systems. Effective prevention approaches must include enhanced cross-system collaboration, such as increased awareness and attentiveness to housing stability, and effective transition and/or discharge planning that link people to other resources, including employment and other economic mobility supports, to reduce the risk of homelessness upon discharge or following the end of service provision.

- **Benchmark:** Develop and formalize an official diversion plan within the CoC including plans for ongoing prevention and diversion funding sources
 - **Potential funding:** ESG, CDBG, private funding

Strategy 1.2b: Increase resources and policies to support vulnerable populations including youth, families, domestic violence survivors, and veterans

While experiencing homelessness places all people at an increased state of vulnerability, there are additional subpopulations that are at a higher risk of becoming homeless and continued homelessness, violence, exploitation, and more. Increasing the capacity of systems to meet the unique needs of youth ages 18-24, especially those in the LGBTQ community, persons fleeing domestic violence, families, and veterans includes collaborating with systems that serve these populations that may not be directly involved in the homelessness sector.

- **Benchmark:** Formalize lead partners for assisting each population and track progress towards meeting USICH benchmarks for ending homelessness for these populations
 - **Potential funding:** CoC Planning

Goal 2: Ensure Homelessness is a Brief Experience

This goal focuses on the understanding that even with effective systems in place, there is still the possibility that persons may find themselves in a situation where they are experiencing homelessness. Memphis and Shelby County will work to establish effective practices that are able to quickly identify those experiencing literal homelessness and connect them with the resources needed to get them into shelter, referred to permanent housing options, and linked to supportive services that will allow them to succeed in housing. Strategies focus especially on coordinated and comprehensive outreach, low-barrier emergency shelter, strong coordinated entry processes, and swift connections to different forms of permanent housing. Housing First practices will be central focuses of each objective within this goal and within all practices of the homelessness response system.

Objective 2.1: Identify and Engage All People Experiencing Homelessness as Quickly as Possible

It is important to quickly identify and engage individuals and families when they do fall into homelessness—including sheltered and unsheltered homelessness in locations such as cars, parks, abandoned buildings, encampments, or on the street—to ensure that experience is brief. Memphis and Shelby County will utilize the Continuum of Care’s Coordinated Entry System to provide coordinated, housing-focused outreach to identify and engage individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Strategy 2.1a: Increase street outreach and service coordination programs that allow persons to access needed services quickly and efficiently

Expanding outreach staff and services is needed to better identify and engage with persons who are currently experiencing homelessness in the community. Effective and coordinated outreach allows for clients to be educated on resources available to them, have someone who can help them work through what their needs and preferences are for services, and establish a communication link between clients and housing providers/supportive services. Building trust and a communication path for persons experiencing homelessness are essential for ensuring that persons can be identified quickly and have a clear understanding of how to connect to the resources they need.

- **Benchmark:** Formalize processes surrounding assessment, intake, and diversion for both internal and external CoC agencies, including policies for those who are fleeing domestic violence
 - **Potential funding:** ESG
- **Benchmark:** Formalize and expand additional entry points into system, especially outside of traditional operating hours
 - **Potential funding:** ESG, CDBG
- **Benchmark:** Assess outreach needs and formalize plan for expanding outreach funding and capacity, including activating an outreach committee to develop plans and further goals
 - **Potential funding:** ESG

Objective 2.2: Provide Immediate Access to Low-Barrier Emergency Shelter or other Temporary Accommodations to All Who Need it

An effective crisis response system helps individuals and families experiencing homelessness avoid the need to enter emergency shelter whenever possible. It is also able to immediately provide high-quality, housing-focused shelter or other temporary accommodations for those living in unsafe situations, including those fleeing domestic violence and human trafficking and those living in unsheltered locations. Memphis and Shelby County will establish effective models of emergency shelter and other temporary accommodations available that:

- *Meet the needs of all members of a household and self-defined family and kinship groups, including infants and young children;*
- *Do not turn people away or make access contingent on sobriety, minimum income requirements, or lack of a criminal history;*
- *Do not require family members and partners to separate from one another in order to access shelter;*
- *Ensure that policies and procedures promote dignity and respect for every person seeking or needing shelter and follow equal access laws; and*
- *Provide a free, safe, decent, welcoming, and appropriate temporary living environment, where daily needs can be met while pathways back to safe living arrangements or directly into housing programs are being pursued.*

Strategy 2.2a: Increase Emergency Shelter with an emphasis on free, low-barrier, equal access shelters

Currently, low-barrier access to shelters is limited in Memphis and Shelby County. To ensure that persons in need of emergency shelter are able to access shelter that can also coordinate effectively with the Coordinated Entry System to provide supportive services needed to exit to permanent housing, Memphis and Shelby County will work to expand the number of emergency shelter beds that are free, low-barrier, and follow equal access requirements.

- **Benchmark:** Better track unsheltered populations to determine needs and formalize plan for expanding shelter funding and capacity, including by reducing overall length of time homeless and increasing exits to permanent housing
 - **Potential funding:** ESG
- **Benchmark:** Educate and partner with existing shelters to lower barriers as much as possible and expand capacity
 - **Potential funding:** ESG

Objective 2.3: Maintain Coordinated Entry System (CES) to Standardize Assessment and Prioritization Processes and Streamline Connections to Housing and Services

Coordinated entry processes make it possible for people experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness to have their strengths and needs quickly assessed, and to be swiftly connected to appropriate, tailored housing and services within the community or designated region.

Memphis and Shelby County will continue to utilize standardized assessment tools, prioritization policies, and practices that take into account the unique needs of different populations, including parents, infants and young children, youth, people with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, survivors of domestic violence, and populations that are disproportionately represented among people experiencing homelessness. The Coordinated Entry System (CES) ensures the most intensive interventions are prioritized for those with the highest needs, as identified by the community.

Strategy 2.3a: Expand CES partnerships to increase and improve entry and exit points and better connect community partners

Emergency shelters should be better integrated into the Coordinated Entry System to ensure that persons accessing shelter and are seeking housing resources are quickly assessed for vulnerability and added to the queue for permanent housing opportunities. This will help to ensure that persons are quickly linked with resources and supportive services needed to help them exit homelessness.

- **Benchmark:** Formalize partnerships with at least 2 emergency shelters for single adults outside of the current CES to expand intake capacity
 - **Potential funding:** ESG
- **Benchmark:** Formalize process for referring individuals to services while they await housing, including outreach, housing navigation, and mental health or substance abuse resources for those who want them
 - **Potential funding:** ESG

Objective 2.4: Assist People to Move Swiftly into Permanent Housing with Appropriate and Person-Centered Services

To end homelessness as quickly and efficiently as possible, our community must focus on streamlining connections to permanent housing and providing people with the appropriate level of services to support their long-term housing stability. Memphis and Shelby County will work to remove as many obstacles and unnecessary requirements as possible in order to expedite people's access to stable housing. Effective Housing First approaches at the center of moving people to permanent housing quickly, developed in response to strong evidence, include:

- *expanding access to new and existing affordable housing for people experiencing homelessness;*
- *providing rapid re-housing to families and individuals;*
- *and providing supportive housing to people with the highest needs.*

Strategy 2.4a: Increase and Maximize Permanent Housing Resources

While progress has been made to increase permanent housing options in the community, there is still a need for more Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) units for chronically homeless individuals and additional funding for Rapid Rehousing (RRH) programs to help quickly get people back into housing they can sustain on their own. Increasing the capacity to assist individuals in need of these housing resources will allow the community to decrease the number of people currently experiencing homelessness and help to provide the supportive services needed to keep people in housing.

- **Benchmark:** Develop and formalize a plan to both increase utilization rates of current permanent housing beds and expand permanent housing capacity, including ways to visualize data on permanent housing capacity and availability
 - **Potential funding:** CoC
- **Benchmark:** Develop landlord engagement strategy to better partner with flexible and low-barrier private market landlords
 - **Potential funding:** CoC, private funding
- **Benchmark:** Formalize partnerships with at least 2 affordable housing providers outside of the current CES to expand outflow capacity
 - **Potential funding:** HOME, CDBG, LIHTC

Strategy 2.4b: Provide Training on Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) and Rapid Rehousing (RRH) principles to ensure case managers and housing staff are fully trained on supportive housing services

All staff that work within the Coordinated Entry System, along with community partners who serve persons experiencing homelessness, will receive training on supportive housing and Housing First principles. Proper training helps make sure that case management and supportive services are centered around how to best help a client find and maintain housing, while also educating those that interact with the homeless system about best practices for housing.

- **Benchmark:** Develop and formalize new plan and requirements for training new CoC PSH and RRH case managers as well as recurring training and testing to ensure cohesive training across the CoC
 - **Potential funding:** CoC Planning

Goal 3: Ensure Homelessness is a One-Time Experience

This goal focuses on ensuring that people exit to permanent housing stably and successfully, using housing as a platform for accessing essential services and connecting people to the opportunities they need. Strategies employed by Memphis and Shelby County will emphasize strengthening the quality of housing and services interventions and provide connections to other resources and opportunities, such as education, benefits, and employment, that can help people find lasting success.

Objective 3.1: Prevent Returns to Homelessness through Connections to Adequate Services and Opportunities

To ensure that individuals and families don't fall back into homelessness, it is necessary to strengthen partnerships with, and connections to, a larger array of federal, state, local, and private programs that serve low-income households, including programs that: advance education and employment opportunities and support upward economic mobility; provide connections to health and behavioral health care services; and link people to a range of other programs and systems that support strong and thriving communities, such as quality child care, schools, family support networks, and other resources. Memphis and Shelby County will continue to solicit new members to the Memphis/Shelby County Homeless Consortium from diverse agencies that serve persons that are experiencing homelessness or low income persons that are at a higher risk of facing housing instability.

Strategy 3.1a: Seek and design partnerships with key mainstream service providers to leverage resources and support integrated care

Memphis and Shelby County will work to ensure formal partnerships with key mainstream providers are established that can help provide access to benefits, mental health/substance abuse resources, and employment agencies. These partnerships are key to help persons experiencing homelessness access resources and supportive services needed to increase income, access resources to help with mental health and substance abuse issues, and maintain housing.

- **Benchmark:** Improve and formalize referral processes between housing providers and mainstream benefit resources, including mental health resources for those who need them
 - Potential funding: ESG

Objective 3.2: Increase Opportunities for Meaningful Engagement with Persons with Lived Experiences

Memphis and Shelby County will work to ensure that individuals and families who have experienced homelessness are active and engaged partners in the system planning process. Those with lived experience of homelessness have a strong understanding and expertise in the current gaps of the system and best solutions.

Strategy 3.2a: Formalize feedback from persons with lived experience, through either focus groups or feedback more routinely collected from clients in existing programs

Formalizing the Consortium's structure to include more opportunities for individuals with lived experience of homelessness to participate in decision-making processes will expand perspectives and strengthen the work of the Consortium.

- **Benchmark:** Develop and formalize a policy to create a Lived Experience Advisory Group within the Homeless Consortium
 - Potential funding: CoC Planning
- **Benchmark:** Expand Consortium's Governing Council to include additional spots for individuals with lived experience of homelessness

Goal 4: Sustain an End to Homelessness

Memphis and Shelby County understands the importance of tracking and measuring key data points routinely, projecting and responding to future needs, and implementing continuous quality improvement efforts in the role of sustaining an end to homelessness. HMIS will continue to be a key data tool utilized by providers within the CoC and to track and report on data collected on the population of persons experiencing homelessness. Accurate data tracking will help to understand the current and potential future needs for sustainable permanent supportive housing resources in the community, and will help in evaluation efforts to see the success the community has had at ending and maintaining an end to homelessness. Quality data will also help to leverage additional funding, understand what program types and interventions are most successful, and allow continuous improvement efforts to be implemented from evaluation results.

Objective 4.1: Sustain Practices and Systems at a Scale Necessary to Respond to Future Needs

In order to sustain the successes implemented in previous goals, Memphis and Shelby County will monitor outcomes and returns to homelessness to ensure that adequate investments into the crisis response system and into permanent housing interventions are sustained to address future needs. Efforts will also be made to continually learn from other communities that have successfully met goals for ending homelessness to ensure that the most up to date information and strategies for success are considered and implemented within the community.

Strategy 4.1a: Broaden understanding around states of housing insecurity that may factor into future homelessness

Monitoring and understanding different states of ongoing housing insecurity in Memphis/Shelby County, especially for specific populations identified as being at higher risk of becoming homeless or returning to homelessness, will be an important tool in planning for potential future system needs.

- **Benchmark:** Outline goals for meeting a functional zero end to homelessness and how to measure data to ensure that goal can be met in a sustained manner
 - **Potential funding:** CoC Planning

Objective 4.2: Planning for the Needs of Persons Experiencing Homelessness in Disaster Response and Recovery Efforts

To ensure that emergency events that may happen to do not disproportionately impact persons experiencing homelessness, planning for response and recovery must include this population. Collaboration and coordination with emergency response partners, local governmental agencies, and community partners is essential to ensure that persons experiencing homelessness can access emergency services and be connected efficiently with the CoC from emergency partners.

Strategy 4.2a: Addressing Response and Recovery From COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 Pandemic, which began in March of 2020, caused persons experiencing homelessness to have limited access to basic hygiene care and low-density shelter. These factors, along with a higher prevalence that persons experiencing homelessness, especially unsheltered homelessness, often have pre-existing conditions, placed them more at risk for contracting COVID and having severe symptoms from the virus.

- **Benchmark:** During and after COVID-19 response, develop report on lessons learned and strategies to improve future emergency response efforts
 - **Potential funding:** CoC Planning

Strategy 4.2b: Adaptable Emergency Response Planning for Persons Experiencing Homelessness

To create a sustainable plan for future potential emergencies or disasters, the CoC will work to expand partnerships in the emergency management field and ensure the needs of people experiencing homelessness are included in emergency response plans.

- **Benchmark:** Develop and formalize Emergency Response Plan
 - **Potential funding:** CoC Planning