



Safe & Sound: A Community Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in Dane County, WI

Accomplishments

Background

Communities across the country develop plans to prevent and end homelessness. Development of these plans include the voice of service providers, funders, elected officials, advocates, people with lived experience and community members. These plans must be updated regularly as goals are met and community conditions change.

In 2022, our community will embark on the process to develop a new Community Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness. This document serves as a summary of accomplishments from the current Community Plan.

Accomplishments

The [Community Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness](#) is focused on four goals:

- Prevent Homelessness in Dane County
- Support Persons and Families Experiencing Homelessness
- End Homelessness in Dane County
- Advocate and Collaborate with Local, State, and National Partners

Each of these goals contain several objectives and strategies. Our community has made significant progress in meeting our goals to prevent and end homelessness. Many of the accomplishments overlap in the four goals above. Below they are divided into four overarching categories: Voice & Education, Program Improvements/Developments, Collaborations and Advocacy.

Voice & Education

- The Lived Experience Committee and Youth Action Board were both developed and formalized into the HSC Structure. These groups bring forward the voices of people with lived experience of homelessness.
- In 2017, Make Room for Youth hosted a forum for providers regarding the needs of unaccompanied youth.
- In 2018, the HSC hosted a Youth Summit where participants identified barriers and solutions to improve access to services.
- Trainings provided on: Fair Housing, Harm Reduction, Diversion, Housing First, Motivational Interviewing, HUD's Equal Access Law, Early Childhood & Homelessness
- Affordable Housing Action Alliance (AHAA) provided information on Section 8 discrimination.
- Annually, review and present on System Performance Measures and Point in Time.

- Providers of public benefits give training to HSC Members. The Mainstream Resources Checklist was updated and a glossary was developed.
- Workforce Development Board presented on their services
- In 2020, mapped the current services and resources provided by mainstream providers, faith-based and grassroots organizations.

Program Improvements/Developments

- Dane County requires eviction reports from funded-agencies to reflect on current practices and promote best practices.
- City of Madison and United Way worked to bring developers and service providers together to build relationships in order to better serve households.
- Housing Navigation services are funded and have seen increases in funding over the years, including a focus on serving youth ages 18-24.
- Emergency shelters evaluated and revised policies regarding suspensions. They developed policies to lower barriers to shelter entry.
- Agencies represented at Core Committee have language access plans in place
- Healing House opened in 2019 to serve households with children experiencing homelessness who are discharged from the hospital and need space to recuperate.
- Diversion formally implemented at The Salvation Army single women and family shelter. Information on households served is entered into HMIS.
- In 2021, our community was selected for the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) and was awarded \$2,447,820 for two years.
- Two Rapid Rehousing programs for households with children focus on those headed by youth ages 18-24.
- Faith-based and grassroots organizations provide an increase in outreach services and connection to Coordinated Entry.
- The Road Home partnered with a congregation to start a new housing program, The Heart Room, to serve households who are doubled-up.
- Increase use of the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)
- The Beacon opened in October 2017 to serve as a Day Resource Center.
- Development and expansion of Comprehensive Community Services (CCS) has allowed opportunities for housing case managers and behavioral health providers to work together to support clients.
- Agencies are hiring peer support specialists.
- Increased use of Coordinated Entry.
- Increased Rapid Rehousing slots
- Rethke Terrace developed, providing an additional 60 Permanent Supportive Housing units for single adults.
- Tree Lane Apartments developed, providing an additional 40 units of Permanent Supportive Housing for households with children.
- New housing developments have units set aside for households experiencing homelessness.
- Established quality by-name lists for Veterans, people experiencing chronic homelessness and households with children.

- Increased use of Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) for households experiencing homelessness.
- Affordable housing funds for both the City and the County have increased.
- Shelter and street outreach providers complete VI-SPDATs
- Written Standards: Added or enhanced sections on Prevention, Diversion, and Street Outreach.

Collaborations

- Dane County Housing and Health Initiative (H2) worked to develop collaboration between the two sectors.
- CoC Coordinator attends meetings of Employment & Training Network to discuss ways to improve access and services for people experiencing homelessness.
- Relationships developed with Dane County Jail re-entry staff to assist people experiencing homelessness and incarcerated connect to resources. The Department of Corrections received introductory information on Coordinated Entry and reach out with questions about homeless services. JustDane developed a toll-free number and coordinates intake calls with jail staff.
- Developed strong relationships with Public Health and healthcare providers to connect people experiencing homelessness to Isolation & Quarantine facility during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Homeless Education Network (HEN) meets on a quarterly basis and invites members of the HSC to present and participate in discussions.
- Street outreach workers meet on a weekly basis to collaborate and problem solve.
- Dane County Emergency Management brings together stakeholders to discuss potential needs during periods of extreme weather.

Advocacy

- The HSC developed and formalized an Education & Advocacy Committee.
- The HSC consistently advocates for increased access to transportation options.
- Legislation passed to allow youth to work without obtaining a work permit and allow 17 year olds to access adult emergency shelter.
- Changes were made to FAFSA to make it easier for youth to apply for financial assistance.
- Advocated at State level for creation of Landlord Mitigation Fund.
- The HSC is a member of the Wisconsin Housing First Coalition and two HSC members serve on its Board of Directors.
- The CoC Coordinator holds a seat on the Wisconsin Interagency Council on Homelessness.

Other notable accomplishments

As the homelessness landscape changed over the years, the community responded in ways to meet the needs. These responses were not always strategies laid out in the Plan, and many, are responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Distribution of large sums of Prevention funds as response to COVID-19
- Vulnerable Population Hotels were set up to shelter older adults and those with specific medical conditions that made them vulnerable to serious illness due to COVID-19. Hotel sheltering was provided for just over two years and included meals, security and support services.

- A hotel was used for Isolation & Quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic. Providers conducted symptom screening and referred people to the facility. This facility has remained in operation for over two years and decreased the spread of disease among people experiencing homelessness.
- An additional family shelter began operation in response to COVID-19.
- The City developed and funded an urban campground as a response to unsheltered homelessness (Dairy Drive). Funding allowed for robust supportive services
- Political will and community buy-in to construct a purpose built men's shelter
- Dane County created a new position to focus on the needs of households experiencing homelessness in doubled-up situations or self-paying in hotels
- Madison/Dane CoC was selected by the Department of Housing and Urban Development for the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program. The community was awarded just under \$2.5 million to address homelessness among youth and young adults
- Creation of the Youth Action Board and the Lived Experience Committee
- The HSC Board of Directors created the Doubled-Up Work Group to focus on the needs of this population.
- Both the City and County increased staffing in homelessness and housing
- Increased community partnerships and service coordination
- JustDane opened Healing House in 2019 to provide medical respite shelter for households with children. The Road Home provides support services to connect people to housing.
- In affordable housing developments, the City & County require use of Coordinated Entry to fill some units and partnerships to provide support services to people experiencing homelessness
- Increased collaboration with Community Development Authority (CDA) and Dane County Housing Authority (DCHA) through administration of the Mainstream Voucher and Emergency Housing Voucher programs
- Completion of extensive Gaps Analysis
- Transition of Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) to Clarity resulting in an improved experience for users
- The Salvation Army Family Shelter moved to a new location creating a better experience for guests and staff
- Hotels to Housing is a Rapid Rehousing program developed to assist households who are more vulnerable to COVID move into and maintain permanent housing
- Increase in Rapid Rehousing and Street Outreach services
- Increased staffing at the Men's Shelter
- Dane County created the Housing Access & Affordability Department
- The Early Childhood Homeless Workgroup began bringing together childcare and homeless services providers to address the needs of families experiencing homelessness