

TEN-YEAR PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS

Vision

Monroe County is committed to the elimination of homelessness so that every person in our community has a home that is safe, affordable, and accessible and a continuum of supportive services is available to build self-sufficiency and ensure that the housing is sustained.

Monroe County, Michigan

October 16, 2006

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Goal 2: Develop the capacity to implement the Housing First philosophy and affordable housing initiatives to help individuals and families move toward as much self-sufficiency as possible in maintaining their home.	
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Goal 4: Ensure that the individuals and families have the educational and employment support needed to secure a job that provides a high enough wage to sustain their family.	
Goal 5: Ensure that law enforcement, the criminal justice system, and other institutions are active partners in addressing the needs of homeless individuals within our community.	
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Community Overview and Process

The County of Monroe is located in the southeastern-most corner of Michigan and is the gateway to the Great Lakes State – bordering on Lake Erie and Toledo, Ohio. Monroe County’s 562 square miles offer a pleasant mix of urban and rural surroundings and include over 1,058 active farms. According to the 2005 American Community Survey, the latest census figures for the County reflect the following:

	1990 Census	2000 Census	2005 Survey
Total population	133,600	145,945	152,392
Percentage of population who are White	96.5%	95.8%	95%
Median age	32.2	33.2	37.9 years
Total number of household	46,508	53,772	58,564
Average household size	2.84 persons	2.69 persons	2.6 persons
Percent of people at poverty level	8.6%	7.0%	8.3%

Monroe County is home to the La-Z-Boy Chair Company, Tenneco Automotive, Cabela’s, Monroe County Community College, and several automobile factories. There are nine school districts within the County, as well as the Intermediate School District. And there is a vast array of human service providers whose missions support individuals and families.

The Monroe County Network on Homelessness was established in 1985 in response to a community need and has continued to actively engage the community in addressing the housing and homelessness issues within our community. In 1996, the Monroe County Network became an official workgroup of the Monroe County Human Services Collaborative Network (Community Collaborative) for the purposes of ensuring broad-based support and awareness regarding the needs of the homeless in our community.

When the State put out the call to communities to develop ten year plans to end homelessness, the Monroe County Network on Homelessness invited the other partners to the table to create the Memorandum of Understanding that was submitted to the State at the end of April, 2006 – including the Monroe County Human Services Collaborative Network (Community Collaborative), the Department of Human Services, Monroe Community Mental Health Authority, United Way of Monroe County, and the Monroe County Opportunity Program (Community Action Agency). Since that time, Habitat for Humanity and the Monroe County Health Department have joined the partners in moving this initiative forward.

A Community Stakeholder to Address Homelessness meeting was held on July 27, 2006 to:

- inform the community about this endeavor
- elicit feedback, and
- invite their participation.

Representative Kathy Angerer provided the keynote address, and the Chairperson of the Monroe County Commissioners, Jerry Oley, stressed the importance of this work. (A list of the attendees at the Stakeholder meeting is attached.)

From that larger group, a Ten-Year Plan Advisory Committee was established to develop the Community Plan and to serve as the on-going oversight body for ensuring that that plan is implemented and evaluated.

Within the Advisory Committee, five sub-committees were formed to address each of the specific goal areas outlined in the plan:

- Awareness and Community Outreach / Advocacy
- Housing
- Social Services and Health
- Employment and Education
- Engagement of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice

Monroe County's Ten Year Plan was endorsed by the County Board of Commissioners on October 10, 2006. Consumer input on the Plan was received through focus groups held at three area emergency and transitional shelters.

Ten Year Plan Advisory Committee

Terrence Beurer – Co-Chair
Department of Human Services
Jane Terwilliger – Co-Chair
Monroe Community Mental Health Authority
Joe Grifka
Fairview / Network on Homeless / HSCN
Stephanie Kasprzak
Monroe County Opportunity Program (MCOP)
Michael Hoydic
United Way of Monroe County
Rusty Davis
United Way – First Call for Help
Rebecca Head
Monroe County Health Department
Debbie Wykes
Habitat for Humanity
Connie Carroll
United Way of Monroe County
Randy Richardville
City of Monroe – Port Authority
Matt Wallace
City of Monroe Planning Department
Mark K. Witte
Grace Lutheran Church
Bonnie Finzel-Doster
Thrift Shop / Monroe Housing Commission
Michael Keck
United Auto Workers
Linda Emerson
Monroe County Opportunity Program (MCOP)
Sharon Roggelin
Mercy Memorial Hospital System
Tom Moore
Monroe Police Department / Monroe County
Community Corrections Advisory Board
Doug Kuras
Michigan Works!
Ryan Simmons
County of Monroe – Planning Department
Michael T. Thomas
The Salvation Army
Doug Redding
Community Collaborative / Monroe ISD
Jan Weingart
Monroe Community Mental Health Authority
Sandie Pierce
Continuum of Care / Community Collaborative
Sally Pritchett
Habitat for Humanity
Sue Lewis
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Joanna Uhl
Dundee Township Supervisor
Connie Harvell
Monroe County Health Department
Dick Peplinski
St. Michael's St. Vincent DePaul
Lucy DeSilvis
County of Monroe / Community Corrections
Charlie Mahoney
United Way of Monroe / Four-M Associates

Monroe County's History with Housing and Homelessness

Monroe County has a long history of providing for individuals and families who need shelter and support services. The Monroe County Infirmary – Fairview – dates back to 1855 when the “county poor farm” provided individuals with shelter and an opportunity to work the land to provide for those who lived at Fairview. Since then, Fairview has evolved into a 36-bed transitional housing facility for adults who have low incomes, have a disability, and who are in need of assistance.

Since 1939, the Department of Human Services (formerly Department of Social Services and Family Independence Agency) has provided financial assistance to individuals and families who are very low income – including family support, food stamps, childcare assistance, rental and utility assistance, medical insurance, transportation, home help, and assistance with other emergencies.

The Monroe County Opportunity Program – the local community action agency – was created in 1965 in response to President Johnson’s “war on poverty.” The agency has provided the emergency food program since that time and has added programs throughout the years that support individuals and families in becoming self-sufficient – including rental and utility assistance to prevent evictions, homeownership training, and shelter plus care support for individuals or families who have a disability.

The Monroe County Network on Homelessness was created in 1985 following a community forum to discuss the issue of high unemployment and resulting need for housing and other supports. The Network has continued since that time and became an official workgroup of the Monroe County Human Services Collaborative Network (Community Collaborative) in 1996 and developed the initial Continuum of Care Plan to address homelessness in 1997.

In 1987, Family Counseling and Shelter Services opened the SafeHouse for victims of domestic violence. In 1997, the SafeHouse began receiving essential services funding through MSHDA to provide life skills training, counseling, and assistance with transitioning into the community.

In 1991 and 1992, multi-denominational churches stepped forward to provide rotating shelters that provided temporary relief during the cold winter months. While the rotating shelters kept people out of the cold, it was difficult to provide the oversight, and the Philadelphia Homeless Shelter was subsequently established to provide a consistent location and needed services and supports.

Michigan Works! Monroe County Employment and Training Department has provided assistance with job development and employment through the evolution of the CETA, JTPA, and Work Force Investment training programs, as well as the current Work First / Welfare Report Program. Public education has provided assistance with GED preparation and offers assistance to homeless children through funding from the McKinney-Vento Act (reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, (Pub. L. 07-110).

Assistance with low-cost or no-cost health care needs has been provided by the Monroe County Health Department, Mercy Memorial Hospital, and Family Medical Centers. The Monroe County Health Plan, a non-profit Michigan Corporation formed in December of 2005 through the efforts of the United Way of Monroe County, Mercy Memorial Hospital System, Family Medical Center of Michigan, Monroe County Board of Commissioners, the Monroe County Health Department, Department of Human Services, and Monroe County Chamber of Commerce, provides access to healthcare for those eligible for the State's Adult Benefit Waiver program.

For individual adults who have a serious mental illness, Monroe Community Mental Health Authority has provided rental assistance, household goods, and food vouchers through the Program to Assist The Homeless (PATH) funding. From 1993 to 2003, the Monroe Community Mental Health Authority received a permanent housing grant to provide subsidized housing for 12 adults with a serious mental illness.

Local public Housing Commissions throughout the County have developed and operated subsidized housing for individuals and families to rent apartments at 30% of their income. Additionally, Housing Choice (Section 8) vouchers have been made available to qualifying individuals and families.

Homeownership opportunities became available for eligible low-income families when Habitat for Humanity was established in Monroe County in 1995. Habitat for Humanity has worked with over 30 families and thousands of volunteers in building new 3 or 4 bedroom homes that are purchased at no cost with zero percent interest mortgages that are serviced by Habitat.

The Salvation Army Family Manor opened in 2003 to provide emergency housing for families and single women (typically for up to 90-day stays). The shelter also provides assistance with applying for available services, life skill development, and transitioning into the community. In 2005, The Salvation Army conducted a needs assessment that identified an increased need for transitional shelter, subsidized housing for families and senior citizens, and a health clinic on the east side of the City of Monroe. Subsequently, a site plan for the "Campus of Hope" has been developed and a feasibility study is underway to determine the capital and operational needs in order to implement the plan.

Women Empowering Women opened Paula's House in 2004 to provide a transitional facility for women who are homeless and who had previously spent time incarcerated. To date, Paula's House has provided assistance to 27 women, six of whom successfully completed the program and found housing and jobs in the community. Paula's House was awarded a transitional housing grant through HUD in 2005 that will assist with the overall operation of the facility.

Current Reality

Homelessness in Monroe County is often invisible – one doesn’t typically see “street people.” Many are sheltered at The Salvation Army Family Manor, Fairview, the Philadelphia House, Paula’s House, or the SafeHouse. Others are bunking temporarily with family and friends – often moving several times before finding permanent housing. Some live in cars, back yards, or tents at the State Park. This latter segment – the true street people – are ones who present challenges to local law enforcement and who add cost to the public service budget through repeated trespassing and other disturbance-type calls. The creation and maintenance of services throughout the years have helped to alleviate the immediate issue of not having a roof over one’s head for individuals and families, but has not addressed the long-term solution of preventing homelessness.

<u>Shelter Name</u>	<u>Number of Family Units</u>	<u>Number of Family Members</u>	<u>Number of Beds for Individuals</u>	<u>Total</u>
Salvation Army – Family Manor	12	35	5	40
Family Counseling – SafeHouse	6	10	5	15
Philadelphia House I and II	0	0	30	30
MCOP – Hometown Inn	9	18	2	20
Fairview Transitional	0	0	36	36
Women Empowering Women – Paula’s	0	0	5	5
Totals	27	63	83	146

The 2005 point in time study identified 87 individuals and 30 families (75 people) who were homeless in Monroe County – a total of 162 people who were either living in a place that is not considered a place meant for human habitation or who were living in a shelter. Additionally, during the 2005-2006 school year, 170 children were identified within the public school system who were considered homeless. Of these children, two were in pre-school, 87 were in elementary school, 33 were in middle school, and 48 were in high school.

The leading reason for homelessness within the county – and the nation – is a lack of affordable housing. According to the 2000 Census, there are 8,658 households in Monroe County (16%) spending more than 30% of their income on housing.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) considers housing to be affordable as long as the cost of housing, including rent or mortgage and tax payments, plus basic utilities, minus telephone, does not exceed 30% of the household income.

Lack of affordable housing was the top issue identified in the United Way of Monroe County's needs assessments in both 1991 and 2001. Additionally, affordable housing was the top need identified in The Salvation Army's need study conducted in 2005. According to the housing study conducted by the County of Monroe in 2001, there is a housing shortage for very low income (under \$10,000) of 1,536 units, for \$35,000 to \$49,999 income of 5,998 units, and for households with incomes of \$50,000 to \$74,999 there's a housing shortage of 8,772 units. The City of Monroe's housing needs survey conducted in 2004 identified a need for additional affordable housing units – especially rental units and home ownership units in the \$130,000 to \$150,000 price range. The survey also identified 2,145 (25.1%) of the 8,544 rental and owner units in the City of Monroe with reported housing problems. Nationally, a shortage of affordable and available housing stock of 5.2 million units was identified in a 2005 American Housing Survey conducted by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Homelessness and poverty are inextricably linked. People who have low incomes are frequently unable to pay for housing, in addition to the cost of food, child care, health care, transportation, and education. According to the 2000 Census, 11.3% of the U.S. population (31.1 million people) live in poverty. In Michigan, the number of persons below poverty was 10.5% (or 1,058,398 people), and the number of people living at poverty in Monroe County is 10,547 – or 7.0%. While the County's median household income is \$51,743 – compared with the State's median income of \$44,667, the per capita personal income is \$29,914 versus \$31,178 statewide (U.S. Department of Commerce).

*The 2006 Federal
Poverty Guidelines*

*\$9,800 for an
individual*

*\$13,200 for
a family of two*

*\$16,600 for
a family of three,*

*\$20,000 for
a family of four*

Economically, Monroe County has often suffered from many of the same economic problems facing the State of Michigan and entire Midwest region of the United States. A main factor in the economy of Monroe County is the direct proximity to, and reliance upon, the automobile industry and automotive related industries. Also, Monroe County is located thirty minutes away from Detroit Metro Airport which has seen significant lay-offs and closures related to the airline industry. When these industries suffer, the entire region suffers. According to the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth, the unemployment rate for the State of Michigan for the month of August 2006 stood at 6.7%, almost two full percentage points above the nation's rate. For Monroe County, the August unemployment rate was 6.8% – or 5,300 Monroe County residents –and ranked 45th out of the 83 Michigan counties. The increased unemployment rate in Monroe County is reflected by increased numbers of job seekers registering at Michigan Works! MCETD, as follows:

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Job Seekers</u>
July 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003	19,122
July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004	22,080
July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2005	19,869
July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006	17,441

The big question is always how many additional people that are not working and not receiving unemployment insurance are not reflected in these numbers. Some people eventually just give up after being unsuccessful in finding employment over a lengthy period of time. The other question that is difficult to answer is how many people may be working but at a relatively low wage. Thus the term “working poor”. These are the members of our community that we need to be concerned about who have a difficult time in being able to afford housing. An interesting fact about homelessness is that over one in four people in homeless situations are employed. (National Coalition for the Homeless, 1997)

A relationship also exists between educational achievement and economic development in a community. An area with a higher percentage of high school graduates and especially college graduates will be more likely to attract businesses offering higher salaries. The higher salary would thus make it easier for residents to afford quality housing. 83.1% of Monroe County residents 25 years of age or older are at least a high school graduate – versus 83.4% statewide. 45.8% of county residents have some college – versus 52.1% statewide, and 14.3% have a bachelor’s degree or more – versus 21.8% statewide. (Figures provided by the U.S. Bureau of Census). Additionally, while some assistance is made available for GED preparation, there currently is no resource to provide assistance with the cost of taking the GED tests – \$200 for five different test areas.

<u>Highest Level of Education Attained by Adults 25 and Over</u>	<u>1990 Census</u>	<u>2000 Census</u>
Less than high school	26%	17%
High School	37%	37%
Some college – no degree	20%	24%
Associate Degree	7%	7%
Bachelor Degree	7%	10%
Graduate or Professional Degree	4%	5%

Current fair market rent in Monroe County is \$723 for a two-bedroom apartment (\$8,676 per year) and \$944 for a three bedroom (\$11,328 per year). A person who works 40 hours per week earning the current minimum wage (\$6.95 per hour) earns \$14,456 per year. At these rates, a family of four (earning \$28,912 with two people working full time at minimum wage) would spend 39% of their income to rent a three-bedroom apartment. When a family gets just two months behind in rental or mortgage payments, they are often unable to get out of the situation and end up homeless.

Substance abuse and mental illness are two additional factors that impact on housing stability and homelessness. Currently in Monroe County, an individual needs to remain sober and free of illegal substances in order to be sheltered at the Philadelphia House, Paula's House, The Salvation Army, or Fairview. Research, however, has shown that moving to a Housing First model facilitates recovery because the stress of homelessness has been addressed and the individual is in a stable environment. The Housing First philosophy will be embraced as we implement the plan. Individuals' and families' needs will be assessed, and a plan with the individual and family will be developed that provides for the immediate housing need, whether emergency shelter or permanent housing, and ensures that the individual or family only remains in a shelter setting for the shortest time possible.

Local data regarding the number of people who enter the Monroe County jail who are homeless has not been historically collected. Nationally, the figure is estimated that 12% of those who are incarcerated are also homeless. The cost to society also does not have a firm dollar figure; however, local law enforcement report that they regularly get called to calm some sort of disturbance being caused by one of the "regular" street people – or they get calls to transport someone who is homeless to a shelter or local motel. At a time when budgets are reducing and officers are being cut, eliminating homelessness would free up law enforcement for other duties.

Since the 1980s, a variety of research studies have documented the relationship between homelessness and physical health problems, mental illness, and substance use disorders. Following is a summary of findings contained in "Special Populations of Homeless Americans" by Robert Rosenheck, M.D., Ellen Bassuk, M.D., and Amy Salomon, Ph.D.:

- 20-25 percent of single adults who are homeless had lifetime histories of serious mental illness; about half had histories of alcohol abuse or dependence; and about one-third had histories of drug abuse or dependence (Susser, Struening, & Conover, 1989; Breakey et al., 1989; Koegel, Burnam & Farr, 1989).
- Data clearly showed that people who are severely mentally ill were at much higher risk for homelessness than others and that they endured homelessness for greater periods of time. The mentally ill among people who are homeless are often the most demoralized and hopeless, and least convinced that they can improve their situation. Supportive case management within a sustained healing relationship is an especially important component of services for this segment of the population.
- Among the homeless, alcohol addiction was often found in younger members of minority groups (Koegel & Burnam, 1987) and among people who also have a mental illness. About half of those with serious mental illness also had substance abuse disorders—the so-called dually diagnosed (Drake, Osher & Wallach, 1991).
- In addition to the high rates of alcohol, drug, and mental disorders, people who are homeless also suffer from serious medical infirmities and experience mortality rates as much as twice as great as those of poor, domiciled people with mental illness (Kasprow and Rosenheck, 1998).

- The rate of HIV infection is especially high among homeless people.
- A large study of New York City shelter users found that use of drugs, alcohol, and the presence of psychiatric disorders are all associated with poorer physical health, even distinct from specific illnesses such as HIV, and that the physical health status of homeless men is well below that of community samples (Streuning & Padgett, 1990).
- Survey data strongly suggests that people with physical and mental infirmities are far more likely to become homeless than others. On the other hand, the exposure to the elements, poor nutrition, and lack of basic comforts experienced by people who are homeless worsens their already compromised health status.

A five-year study conducted by the Center for Mental Health Policy and Services Research, University of Pennsylvania, measures the full extent of mentally ill individuals' dependency on an array of emergency and safety net services. This study compares service utilization and associated costs before and after individuals were placed in service enriched housing. Findings are summarized below:

- The price of homelessness is very high—\$40,449 per homeless person per year, primarily in expenditures for psychiatric hospital care, inpatient hospital care, and emergency shelter care.
- Once placed in service enriched housing, the cost for services decrease by an average of \$12,145 per individual to an average of \$28,304.
- The average annual cost to Health and Hospital corporations per homeless individual was reduced from \$6,229 to \$4,458 – an average savings of \$1,771 per year.
- The average annual cost for mental health/substance abuse services per homeless individual was reduced from \$12,520 to \$4,260 – an average savings of \$8,260 per year,

In Monroe County, costs for psychiatric hospitalization for individuals who have Medicaid or who are uninsured have risen steadily over the last three years by \$1.2 million to a predicted 2005-2006 cost of \$2.1 million. In its 2004-2005 annual report, Mercy Memorial Hospital System reported \$5.6 million in bad debt and charity costs. Although the percentage of these costs that can be directly contributed to homelessness is unknown, it can be assumed that the individuals who received these services are certainly the most vulnerable to becoming homeless.

Additionally, as the State of Michigan moves people with mental illness or developmental disabilities out of prisons and state facilities, individuals with very high needs and few resources are returning to the community. Currently, Monroe CMHA is having great difficulty in finding living arrangements for seven individuals that the State hospital system has indicated are ready for discharge.

Through the development of the annual Continuum of Care, goals and objectives have been established by the Monroe County Network on Homelessness to enhance community collaboration and avoid duplication of services, to increase awareness about the needs of homeless individuals and families in our community, to work toward the creation of additional permanent supportive housing, to ensure that people being

discharged from institutions (correctional facilities, foster care, hospitals, etc) re-enter the community with a support plan, and to increase community awareness regarding homelessness within our community. Additional efforts are needed so that a comprehensive strategy can be implemented to address all of the housing and employment needs for our community.

Resources

Monroe County has an array of services available to assist individuals and families who are in need. The assistance, however, is limited in scope and duration, and often is not preventive in nature, but rather provides temporary relief. Additionally, many families who are low-income, but above the poverty line, are not eligible for assistance, and service often does not include the on-going case management that individuals and families typically need after they have found housing. These gaps will be identified and addressed as we move forward with plan implementation to ensure that a continuum of services is available as we develop a Housing First service delivery system.

Emergency shelter is provided to individuals and families on a short-term basis through The Salvation Army Family Manor, the Philadelphia House, and the SafeHouse operated by Family Counseling and Shelter Services. Additionally, beginning in December of 2006, The Salvation Army will open a warming center during day-time hours for individuals and families who are seeking refuge from the cold. Transitional housing for adults is provided by Fairview and Paula's House. However, there currently is no transitional housing available in Monroe County for families. Additional support services / long-term case management are also needed in order for the majority of people who are homeless to attain stability.

Through the Department of Human Services, \$912,685 of State Emergency Relief funds were expended in Monroe County for qualifying families in Fiscal Year 2005. From October 1, 2005 through July 31, 2006, the State Emergency Relief expenditure totaled \$554,639. Additionally, financial assistance totaling nearly \$200,000 for rent and utilities is provided through MSDHA, FEMA/Homeland Security Department, and THAW. The funds that are received, however, are expended within months of receipt and do not begin to meet the needs of low-income individuals and families who are at risk of eviction or mortgage foreclosure nor do the funds provide for long-term case management for the individuals and families that helps to ensure housing stability.

Throughout Monroe County, there are four housing commissions – City of Monroe, Bedford Township, City of Luna Pier, and Village of Dundee – that oversee subsidized housing for families, seniors, and persons with disabilities. Additionally, there are 16 housing complexes, which consider themselves to be affordable. In total, there are 2,216 units available, and all of the complexes currently have waiting lists.

Housing Commission Facilities	Address	Number of Units
Bedford Housing Commission Ivor Lindsey – Senior Preference	8745 Lewis Avenue Temperance 48182	97
Dundee Housing Commission Senior Preference	501 Rawson Street Dundee, MI 48131	75
Luna Pier Housing – Lotus Manor Seniors / Disabled	10885 Ellen Street Luna Pier, MI 49158	102
Monroe Housing Commission Greenwood Family	90 Greenwood Ave. Monroe, MI 48162	115
Monroe Housing – River Park Plaza Senior / Handicap	20 Roessler Street Monroe, MI 48162	148
Monroe Housing Commission Individual Houses	Scattered Sites within the City of Monroe	30

Housing Complexes	Address	Number of Units
Canfield Crossing Family	409 Canfield Milan, MI 48160	32
Carleton Apartments Family	331 Kent Street Carleton, MI 48117	24
Carleton Co-Op Elderly Only	188 Center Street Carleton, MI 48117	47
Charring Square Family	6123 Greenwyke Monroe, MI 48161	200
Creekside Village Senior Preference	1310 South Monroe St. Monroe, MI 48161	77
Frenchtown Place Elderly Only	1201 N. Macomb Street Monroe, MI 48162	151
Greenwyke Commons 1 Family	6112 Greenwyke Monroe, MI 48161	116
Highland Terrace Apts. Family	625 Rawson Street Dundee, MI 48131	24
Mable Kehres Towers Senior Preference	15275 South Dixie Hwy. Monroe, MI 48161	200
Marian Place	408 East Front Street Monroe, MI 48161	52
Milan Village Apt. Elderly Only	27 Hurd Street Milan, MI 48160	36
Norman Towers Senior Preference	810 West Elm Ave. Monroe, MI 48162	108
Park West Club Apt. Family	1621 Park West Drive Monroe, MI 48162	160
Petersburg Apartments Family	101 West Madison St. Petersburg, 49270	24
Village Green Monroe Family	1600-A Park Court Monroe, MI 48162	190
Woodcraft Square Senior / Family	800 West Seventh St. Monroe, MI 48161	208

As of January 2006, there were 464 active Housing Choice (Section 8) vouchers in Monroe County, and an additional 65 new vouchers were expected at that time. During the open enrollment period that was held in February 2006, over 600 applications were received for these new vouchers. While the number of available vouchers has increased from 300 in 1998, the number still does not meet the need.

A Housing Choice voucher provides eligible individuals and families with the ability to secure rental housing at 30% of their household income in a variety of settings, as long as the housing unit meets the Housing Quality Standards established by HUD and MSDHA.

The Monroe County Opportunity Program provides assistance to 13 individuals or families who have a qualifying disability through the HUD Supportive Housing initiative. Assistance includes rental subsidies and support with home care.

The PATH grant administered by the Monroe Community Mental Health Authority provides assistance with rental payments and other household costs. During Fiscal-Year 2004, 24 individual adults were provided assistance to prevent evictions and another 19 were provided assistance in securing housing. The figures for Fiscal-Year 2005 included assistance for 34 individuals in preventing eviction and 24 in securing housing, and to date in Fiscal-Year 2006, 32 individuals were provided assistance to prevent evictions and 36 were assisted with securing housing.

Habitat for Humanity works with up to six families per year with the goal of home ownership. Selected applicants complete home ownership classes, provide sweat equity in the building of their home, and must be able to qualify for and afford a mortgage.

Assistance for Monroe County residents in finding employment is available through the Monroe County Employment & Training / Michigan Works! Job seekers can receive help, at no cost, in such areas as:

- Resume development
- Interviewing skills
- Labor market information and job leads
- Personal skills assistance
- Classroom or vocational training
- Ex-offender assistance in finding employment.
- Michigan Talent Bank, the State's Internet based labor exchange system
- Individuals who have a disability can receive job search assistance through the Michigan Rehabilitation Services in Monroe.

Current Adult Education services available through the public school system include High School Completion, English as a Second Language, and GED Preparation. Classes are offered free to adult Michigan residents who are under 20 years of age on September 1st of each school year. GED preparation for adults is an unmet need.

- High School Completion is provided by the Airport, Bedford, Mason and Monroe Public School systems and provides the adult student with the opportunity to earn his/her high school diploma.
- English as a Second Language (ESL) is offered to the foreign-born adult who needs to learn to speak and read in English. This program is useful to the adult who wishes to become a U.S. citizen. ESL classes are offered locally at the First Baptist Church Adult Education Center and out-of-county at Owens Community College, Toledo, Ohio.
- GED Preparation allows students to prepare for the five GED examinations: writing skills, science, social studies, literature, and mathematics. While GED Preparation is provided at no cost to the student, assistance is needed in paying the actual cost of the examinations.

Under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Children and Youths Program, State Educational Agencies must ensure that homeless children and youth have equal access to the same free public education, including a public preschool education, as is provided to other children and youth, and schools may not separate homeless students from the mainstream school environment on the basis of their homelessness.

The definition of "homeless" under the McKinney-Vento Act is broad, and includes the provision of supports to children who live in a home that has a lack of heat or running water, to students whose families live with relatives, to students who have run away and are living with friends, and to students who are living in shelters.

In Monroe County, the McKinney-Vento grant, of approximately \$17,000 annually, provides the following services to all nine public school districts located in the County.

- Transportation to school of origin
- Tutoring at two shelters located in the City of Monroe
- Tutoring at non-Title I schools
- Durable good supports, such as clothing and school supplies
- Free lunches regardless of income eligibility

Transportation services are provided through Lake Erie Transit Authority six days per week until 6:00 p.m. – in the City of Monroe, and Bedford, Frenchtown, and Monroe Townships. Essential transportation assistance is provided county wide for people who are disabled or who are 60 years of age or older. Access to transportation has been identified as a barrier for individual and families who live outside of the core areas and who need transportation in the evenings and on Sundays.

Other resources available to support individuals and families who are low income include food assistance through MCOP and the local Food Closets, health services through the Monroe County Health Department, Mercy Memorial Hospital, the Family Medical Centers, and Monroe County Health Plan, and food stamps, childcare, and other services through the Department of Human Services.

Vision for Monroe County

Monroe County is committed to the elimination of homelessness so that every person in our community has a home that is safe, affordable, and accessible and a continuum of supportive services is available to build self-sufficiency and ensure that the housing is sustained.

Values

- *Self-sufficiency among all individuals and families is encouraged.*
- *A continuum of support services is available to help individuals and families maintain and sustain their housing.*
 - *Services are seamless.*
 - *The Housing First model is embraced.*
 - *Ending homelessness is the right thing to do.*

Strategies – Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Increase community awareness regarding the number of individuals and families who are homeless in Monroe County and regarding the circumstances that have caused their homeless situation.

Objectives:

1. Ensure that local stakeholders are knowledgeable about the Community Plan and seek formal endorsement from key officials.
2. Ensure that the Ten Year Plan is highlighted during homeless awareness week activities.
3. Work collectively with media outlets to ensure ongoing awareness related to the issue of homelessness.
4. Inform the community about the economic realities of homelessness and the financial impact on the community.

Goal 2: Develop the capacity to implement the Housing First philosophy and affordable housing initiatives to help individuals and families move toward as much self-sufficiency as possible in maintaining their home.

Objectives:

1. Understand and foster communication among providers through the creation of a county-wide Housing Coalition.
2. Develop a “stepping stone” type service delivery system (flow chart) so that a seamless system is developed and homeless situations are prevented.

3. Identify and remove policy barriers that impede housing.
4. Implement the Housing First continuum of services.
5. Identify needs regarding the available housing stock in Monroe County and increase the number of affordable housing units.

Goal 3: Ensure that the social service and public health, medical health, and behavioral health care needs are addressed.

Objectives:

1. Develop a seamless service delivery system with “no wrong door” that is welcoming to all in need of assistance.
2. Ensure that the necessary supportive services are available to address social, medical, and behavioral health care needs (including substance use disorders).
3. Develop capacities for active outreach and early engagement so that individuals and families at risk of or experiencing homelessness are aware of available supports and services and how to access them.
4. Involve consumers and advocates in decision-making concerning the implementation of the plan and in evaluating its effectiveness.

Goal 4: Ensure that the individuals and families have the educational and employment support needed to secure a job that provides a high enough wage to sustain their family.

Objectives:

1. Identify and secure resources to assist individuals with paying for the cost of GED examinations, tutoring, and training.
2. Enhance community-wide efforts in identifying homeless youth to ensure they have access to public education.
3. Ensure that job placement and training assistance is enhanced to support individuals who need assistance in securing employment.

Goal 5: Ensure that law enforcement, the criminal justice system, and other institutions are active partners in addressing the needs of homeless individuals within our community.

Objectives:

1. Ensure that individuals moving back into the community from the criminal justice system and other institutions are provided with the supports needed to ensure a smooth transition and identify barriers that individuals face in re-entering the community.

2. Develop and implement a community protocol for discharge planning for persons being released from the criminal justice system, mental health facilities, and for youth aging out of foster care.
3. Coordinate with the Monroe County Community Corrections Advisory Board in identifying and addressing needs that law enforcement may have in order to better serve individuals and families who are in need of housing and supports.
4. Enhance the data collection system within the criminal justice system so that data regarding the number of persons who are homeless is captured and made available.

Goal 6: Ensure that barriers to serving individuals and families, when identified, are addressed at the local, State, and Federal levels, as appropriate.

Objectives:

1. Develop a communication system for keeping up-to-date regarding policies and regulations.
2. Identify and address policy barriers that hinder our ability to impact homelessness
3. Advocate for needed policy changes in a collaborative, systematic manner.

Action Plan Development

For each of the goal areas outlined above, action plans that outline the implementation steps, responsible parties, and timeline for completion will be developed annually. (A copy of the initial action plan is attached.) Additionally, the Ten Year Advisory Body will address the need for on-going staff support and identify and secure funding for an on-going staff position.

Performance Measurement and Evaluation

In order to determine if we are accomplishing the goals and objectives set out in the Community Plan, performance measurements will be established for each of the objectives and data will be collected and analyzed at least annually.

Progress Reports

Reports on the progress will be provided by each of the Sub-Committees to the Advisory Board on a quarterly basis and at least annually to local elected officials and to the Monroe County Human Services Collaborative Network. Reports to the State will be provided as required, but at least annually.

