

# A Place to Call Home: Ottawa County's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness



Authored by the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness Advisory Board  
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## *Acknowledgements*

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Special thanks to the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness Advisory Board which met from March 2006 until November 2006.

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### **Community Participation**

Four hundred surveys were collected from service providers, community collaboratives, and consumers. Feedback from these groups was instrumental in creating this plan. Participating groups include:

Department of Human Services Staff  
Interagency Services Team  
Community Action Agency Staff  
Ottawa County Human Services Coordinating Council  
Department of Human Services Consumers

Ottawa Area Housing Coalition  
Community Action Agency Advisory Board  
Community Action Agency Consumers  
Community Action House Consumers  
Community Mental Health Consumers

### **Coordination**

Coordination services and writing of the plan were provided by Andrea Mulder of ALM Consulting and the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness Advisory Board.

## Executive Summary

### *Vision Statement*

# **“EVERYONE IN OTTAWA COUNTY HAS A SAFE, AFFORDABLE AND PERMANENT PLACE TO CALL HOME.”**

Approximately 1,300 people experience homelessness in Ottawa County during the course of each year. Thousands more live doubled-up in the homes of family and friends or they are at risk of homelessness. Homelessness is a tragedy for everyone experiencing it. A safe, affordable, and permanent home is the core of a stable and fulfilling life.

There is a high cost to homelessness. Homelessness is a wasteful and unnecessary drain on our public resources. Research has clearly demonstrated that homelessness, especially long-term homelessness, increases the use of expensive crisis services such as emergency medical care, psychiatric hospitalizations, and incarceration. Additionally, there tends to be an increase in mental health and emotional problems in children and adults. Children who experience homelessness show an increase in emotional and behavioral problems that can affect them well into adulthood. The lack of stability provided by a permanent home decreases access to educational and job opportunities and decreases the success rates of treatment programs.

Fortunately, there are solutions, including supportive housing and prevention and outreach strategies that provide better outcomes for people experiencing homelessness. Utilizing these and other strategies, we will more effectively and efficiently use public and private resources and eliminate the cycle of homelessness so many people face.

Ottawa County’s Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness is the culmination of a six-month planning effort by homeless service providers, community leaders, and consumers of homeless services. The existence of homelessness in Ottawa County is unacceptable. Ottawa County is committed to ending the institution of homelessness by moving from a stance of homelessness management to one of elimination. The intent of this plan is to help homeless people in Ottawa County return to healthy and stable lives in permanent housing. The goals set forth in this plan are evidence-based and drawn from the best practices of innovative programs and initiatives throughout the country.

## The Five Plan Strategies

- 1. Closing the Front Door:** Steps will be taken to stop individuals and families from becoming homeless. These steps include better coordination of financial assistance and discharge planning for people leaving public institutions.
- 2. Opening the Back Door:** For Ottawa County, this will involve the development and implementation of an inclusive program based on Housing First methodology that will include permanent housing for all homeless persons. Necessary services will be provided to ensure that homeless individuals and families placed in permanent housing can remain in housing.
- 3. Building Infrastructure:** We must assure that there is adequate safe and affordable housing for all residents and that those working in our community earn income high enough to afford housing in Ottawa County. We must improve the system of data collection to increase our understanding of homelessness in Ottawa County.
- 4. Community Involvement:** Success means shared responsibility across the community. Engaging elected leaders, community members, service consumers, and service providers is crucial to realizing the goals set forth in this plan.
- 5. Plan Review:** Regular review and annual revision are critical to maintaining the momentum and viability of this plan. By placing this plan at the forefront of homeless service efforts, it will be an effective guide in program and funding structures.

## **Diane - Consumer of Ottawa County Community Action Agency and the Salvation Army – Grand Haven**

*“My story may be lengthy, but it will come from my heart and my true experience.*

*At age 36, I found myself in a scary and desperate situation. A situation I have never experienced before or could never even begin to realize what "the real world" was like. At the young age of 18 I was very fortunate to start a great career. With no college degree behind me I was moving up in the business world; a secure job, with a great company, earning \$40,000 a year with full benefits, a retirement fund and Profit Sharing. My husband was also a very successful businessman; earning \$100K a year.....our life was "perfect" with the picket fence. That was the life on the outside. As we both continued to climb the corporate ladder we realized someone needed to be there for our 4 young children. But as time went on our marriage began to fail. I was married to an abusive, controlling alcoholic.*

*Scared to leave I found myself in a very desperate situation. How will I survive? How do I get back into the work force? With the will to survive I received a Personal Protection Order and had my husband removed from our home. So there was no job, no money, no husband, just myself and my children. Now what? I did not want anything from him. All strings had to be cut. So I re-entered the work force at the bottom of the ladder. With today's economy I can't seem to get ahead. I also realized at age 36 I have never shopped for groceries or paid a utility bill. My husband always took care of all finances. I felt like I was 18 again. But this time I had children to provide for also.*

*The first year I survived, but then bills started to come in and I was getting behind. My utilities were being shut off and I was being evicted. I realized I couldn't do this alone. Fortunately I knew of a very wonderful woman that worked for the Salvation Army. So I swallowed my pride and called her for help. That was the best phone call I have ever made. She made me realize I was not a failure and I don't have to be ashamed. She opened her heart and shared her knowledge to guide me in the right direction. That was 2 years ago.*

*I still live every month scared to death on how I will pay my bills. But there is one thing no one can ever take away from me, and that is my will to survive. Every bit of my financial struggles is worth more than living a life in fear and abuse. It has also made me realize how we as humans should help others. It has changed me as a person. I am a more complete person. There are great people and organizations out there that people in need can turn to. Some things in the public assistance programs are wonderful, but there are still programs that need to be reevaluated and changed to better meet the needs of those in unfortunate or difficult situations.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

In March 2006, the Michigan Department of Human Services and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority challenged all counties in Michigan to create a locally supported plan to end homelessness in 10 years. Ottawa County rose to the challenge by developing a comprehensive, countywide plan to transform the system of care from managing to eliminating homelessness.

The Ottawa County 10 Year Planning Advisory Board formed to facilitate the creation of a 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness. This body of people represents the Department of Human Services of Ottawa County, Community Mental Health of Ottawa County, Ottawa County Community Action Agency, the Ottawa Area Housing Coalition, and the Ottawa County Human Services Coordinating Council. The group began by developing a Memorandum of Understanding that contains the defining principles that would guide the planning process.

Engagement of service providers, community leaders, and consumers is an important dimension of the process. The Advisory Board decided that community engagement would be most inclusive with a combination of presentations and surveys. Groups of service providers and community leaders participated in presentations and related discussions. Surveys were developed and distributed to program staff and presentation attendees. Families and individuals seeking emergency assistance, residents of shelters, transitional housing programs, and permanent supportive housing programs also completed surveys.

The following groups were given a presentation on Ending Homelessness in 10 Years and solicited for their feedback:

- Community Action Agency Advisory Board
- Human Services Coordinating Council
- Ottawa Area Housing Coalition
- Interagency Services Team

The following consumers were asked to complete a survey so that their ideas could be incorporated into the plan and planning process:

- Ottawa County Community Action Agency customers requesting homelessness prevention
- Community Action House emergency service customers
- Transitional Housing participants of the Community Housing Partnership
- Tenants of the Permanent Supportive Housing program through Community Mental Health of Ottawa County
- Department of Human Services clients requesting homelessness prevention

The following agency staffs were surveyed:

- Ottawa County Community Action Agency staff
- Department of Human Services staff

Many respondents had varying definitions of homelessness broader than the federal definition. Both organizations and consumers alike felt the lack of affordable housing and the lack of employment were primary causes of homelessness. Also frequently mentioned was lack of education and mental illness. One third of homeless prevention service consumers surveyed believed they would become homeless in the future. Consumers, agency staff and board members agreed that consumers and organization staff agreed that the most effective way to end homelessness would be the provision of affordable housing and jobs which pay a sustainable income. Organization staff also felt a GED program and additional supportive housing were important. The Advisory Board used a compilation of information and data gathered from these surveys and presentations to direct the writing of the plan.

The writing of a ten-year plan was a formidable task. Each member of the Advisory Board and many of those surveyed had reservations about the feasibility of the development and long-term viability of such a plan. Change takes time and there are substantial barriers to changing the homeless system of care in Ottawa County. While there was agreed upon concern, there was also a consensus around the need for change. Overwhelmingly, those surveyed felt that homelessness is a major problem in our community and support was expressed for the creation of a plan to end homelessness in ten years.

The Advisory Board chose to develop a “living” document. This plan will provide the guidelines for short and long-term change and will be regularly reviewed and revised. The initial plan includes strategies to build relationships, to provide for inclusion of consumers and elected leaders, and to develop long-term strategies for change. The goals presented in this plan will be accomplished by challenging service systems (federal, state, and local) and by changing perspectives and assumptions of the community, service providers, elected officials, consumers, and governmental authorities. Further development of the steps Ottawa County must take to end homelessness is the fundamental and underlying goal of the initial plan.





### A Picture of Ottawa County

Ottawa County, founded in 1837, is located on the coast of Lake Michigan. The county seat is Grand Haven, Michigan. The county is comprised of six cities and numerous townships and is home to 255,406 people<sup>a</sup>. Grand Haven and Holland are the largest of the cities making up 19% of the total population. The largest township is Georgetown Township making up 17.5% of the population<sup>b</sup>.

Ottawa County has a diverse industrial and commercial foundation that includes 29.5% manufacturing, 18.8% educational, health and social services, and 11.9% retail services<sup>c</sup>. The median household income is \$53,982<sup>d</sup>. Of the households in Ottawa County, 17.4% earn less than \$25,000 annually and 5.5% live below the poverty line<sup>e</sup>. The unemployment rate is 5.0%<sup>f</sup>.

The fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Ottawa County is \$669<sup>g</sup>. Common affordability standards suggest that a household should expect to pay no more than 30% of their income for housing. In order to afford a two-bedroom apartment in Ottawa County, a household would have to earn \$24,084 annually or \$11.58 per hour fulltime. Among renters, 29.3% pay more than 30% of their household income for housing<sup>h</sup>.

*With today's economy I  
can't seem to get ahead.*

The median value of houses in Ottawa County is \$133,000<sup>i</sup>. The average mortgage payment is \$1,017 monthly<sup>j</sup>. In order to afford homeownership, a household must earn \$36,612 - \$17.60 per hour fulltime. Among homeowners, 14.8% pay more than 30% of their household income for housing<sup>k</sup>.

### **A Picture of Homelessness**

Without question, every resident of Ottawa County is entitled to safe, affordable and permanent housing. Having a place to call home establishes the foundation for a stable family and a stable life. On any given day, more than 400 people are experiencing homelessness in our community<sup>l</sup>. About 40% of those who are homeless are under the age of 18.<sup>m</sup>



National statistics<sup>n</sup> indicate a consistent increase in the homeless population and provide a picture on the extensive costs incurred by communities and programs:

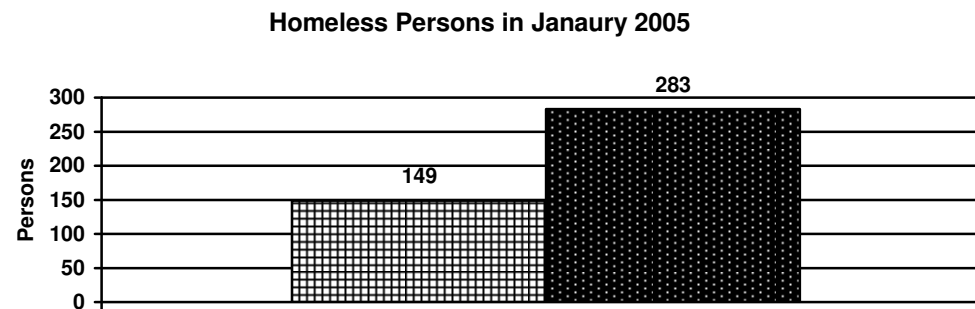
- 700,000 – 800,000 people are homeless on any given night;
- 2.5 – 3.5 million people will experience homelessness in a year;
- During a year, 50% of the homeless are single adults, while 50% are families;
- During a year, 38% of the homeless are children.
- Most families become homeless because of a housing crisis and are quickly re-housed if their financial situation is assisted;
- Families state they need assistance finding safe, decent, affordable housing and financial help to pay for housing – only 20% report they receive help with finding housing;
- Of those experiencing homelessness, 80% of single adults enter the homeless system one time and exit within 30 days and do not return;
- Nine percent of single adults enter homelessness five times and stay two months each time and use 18% of the system's resource;
- The remaining 11% enter homelessness two times per year and stay 280 days each time – virtually living in the system and using 50% of the system's resources;
- Homeless persons spend an average of four days longer in the hospital – costing \$2,414 per day;
- Homeless persons are often jailed for petty crimes and can cost taxpayers thousands of dollars for frequent overnight stays;
- Normally intended as short-term crisis beds, shelters are more often turned into long-term options that cost an average of \$8,067 per bed annually. This cost is higher than a federal housing subsidy (Housing Choice Voucher (HCV)) In Ottawa County, the average cost of a housing subsidy is \$5,016 per household annually.
- The greatest loss, and the most difficult cost to quantify, is the loss of future productivity and health due to time spent in jail, hospital, shelter, crisis unit or on the street.
- Homelessness can have serious negative effects on children. Homeless children are more likely than housed children to be in poor health, to experience developmental delays, to have mental health problems such as anxiety and depression, and to exhibit behavioral problems. Children who experience homelessness have lower academic achievement, exacerbated by frequent moves and psychological distress<sup>o</sup>.

### Point-In-Time Data

The Ottawa Area Housing Coalition (OAHC) gathers data on the needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Ottawa County. On January 25, 2005, the most recent Point-In-Time (PIT) study was conducted. Coordinating programs that observe and/or serve the homeless and the precariously housed population gather the data during a single day count. Only those who were receiving services by one of the participating programs on January 25, 2005 were counted. Individuals, families, and youth who were homeless or precariously housed, but sought no services on that day were not counted. These are the hidden homeless; they are difficult to find and serve. This data is used to extrapolate annual numbers for state and national records.

### Data Summary

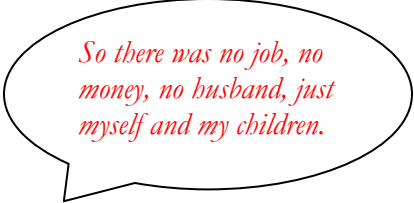
- 432 persons were determined to be homeless during the single day count
  - 88 families representing 283 people and
  - 149 individuals



- Of the 432 individuals:
  - 100 people were in emergency shelters; 28 were children
  - 170 people were in transitional housing; 87 were children
  - 59 people were in permanent supportive housing; 8 were children
  - 103 were within seven days of eviction; 55 were children

- Evidence of 9 people living in places not meant for habitation was observed.
- Approximately 11 people were determined to be chronically homeless.
- An additional 72 households, representing 206 people, were considered precariously housed:
  - 8 families were within 30 days of eviction
  - 33 families were doubled up with other families
  - 6 families were facing foreclosure
  - 24 families had received a utility shutoff notice
  - 1 family was living in a dangerous situation

### At Risk Populations



*So there was no job, no money, no husband, just myself and my children.*

Homelessness can loosely be broken down into two main categories – those experiencing repeated homelessness and those experiencing singular-situational homelessness. A job loss, change in marital status, or temporary illness are common examples of singular-situational causes of homelessness. In these types of situations, specific, time limited services need to be directed to provide assistance until the family or individual is able to stabilize. However, some members of the community are more “at-risk” of experiencing long-term or repeated incidences of homelessness than others.

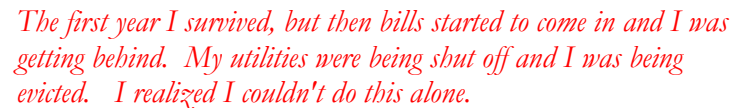
The OAHC collects data on specifically identified “at-risk” groups who are homeless. During the January 2005 PIT count, 123 individuals and families reported that they were victims of domestic violence, 86 people were managing mental illness, and 80 were grappling with substance abuse. In total, 110 children were affected. More often than not, these groups need specialized, long-term or permanent support services to address the causes of their homelessness.

### Existing Efforts

The Ottawa Area Housing Coalition (OAHC) is the county's Continuum of Care body. Planning bodies for the Continuum of Care are located in every Michigan county/region. This structure provides support to and facilitates communication between service providers for homeless persons and related assistance. The OAHC receives approximately one million dollars annually from federal and state resources, which support the following efforts:

- **Emergency Prevention**

Ottawa County has a comprehensive plan that individuals and families can access when they find themselves at risk of becoming homeless. Area service providers utilize approximately \$500,000 to serve an estimated 4,600 individuals in 1,800 households annually.



*The first year I survived, but then bills started to come in and I was getting behind. My utilities were being shut off and I was being evicted. I realized I couldn't do this alone.*

- **Emergency Shelter**

Ottawa County has three emergency shelter service providers. The largest shelter for families and individuals is located in Holland and houses about fifty percent of those seeking emergency shelter in the area. Ottawa County also has an experienced domestic violence shelter and also a small family shelter in Grand Haven. Each of these shelters are forced to turn those in need away due to over capacity at various times throughout the year.

- **Transitional Housing**

Four programs in Ottawa County provide transitional housing services. These programs provide housing and case management services for homeless individuals and families from six months up to two years. The transitional housing programs are typically at capacity and operate with long waiting lists.

- **Permanent Supportive Housing**

Presently, there is one provider of permanent supportive housing in the county. There is a need for additional permanent supportive housing in Ottawa County. Three new housing developments with a total of forty-five units are in the process of planning and construction. This development may ease this need.

### **New Definitions**

In order to be considered homeless by federal standards, a person must lack a fixed, adequate, and regular night-time residence and must be living in a privately or publicly funded shelter, a temporary residence for those needing to be institutionalized, or a place not meant for human habitation. To properly address the needs of the community, Ottawa County augmented the federal definition to include individuals and families who are precariously housed. Precariously housed is defined as individuals and families who are:

- Faced with imminent loss of residence due to eviction, utility shut-off and foreclosure due to lack of payment.
- Unwillingly “doubled-up” in housing and/or are in violation of housing codes due to occupancy.
- Being discharged from hospitals, treatment facilities, or incarceration and have no housing plan in place.
- Youth who have left home or are being discharged from the foster care system and have no housing plan in place.

By the federal definition, the chronically homeless are defined as unaccompanied homeless individuals with a disabling condition (mental illness, substance abuse, physical illness or disability or the co-occurrence of two or more of these conditions) who have either been continuously homeless for a year or more or have had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. Ottawa County chose to expand this definition to include individuals and families who have either been continuously homeless for a year or more or have had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years regardless of the presence or lack of a disabling condition.

The expanded definition will allow Ottawa County to broaden the scope of services provided to homeless persons and families and the precariously housed and to provide additional assistance to those who face repeated episodes of homelessness. Unfortunately, the use of federal and state funding will likely continue to be limited to those who meet the federal definition and the constraints of each grant.

Additionally, it was important to define what Housing First meant within our community. This methodology is the desired response to keep people housed, out of the shelter system and to return them to permanent housing as quickly as possible, if homeless. Families and individuals are generally much more responsive to interventions and support once they are in permanent housing. However, we also recognize that some families and individuals will need more intense intervention prior to returning to permanent housing. Homeless individuals or families should receive safe, temporary shelter and planning for permanent housing should begin immediately.

## GOALS

After soliciting feedback from many entities and individuals and with the experience of many years working with the homeless and near homeless from multiple perspectives, the Ottawa County 10 Year Plan Advisory Board has identified fifteen key areas. These areas were organized into five main categories: Closing the Front Door, Opening the Back Door, Building Infrastructure, Community Involvement, and Plan Review. Success of these goals is contingent upon community efforts and financial resources.

<b>Closing the Front Door</b>					
<b>Key Area</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Action Step</b>	<b>Outcome Statement</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Responsible Person/Entity</b>
Homeless Prevention	To effectively utilize existing homeless prevention funding and garner additional funding to expand homeless prevention programs.	Homelessness prevention provider agencies and the OAHC actively pursue new and additional resources for homelessness prevention purposes.	There is a 50% increase in homeless prevention funding through soliciting new funding and refocusing current grants.	April 2007	OAHC Coordinator together with homelessness prevention provider agencies
	To improve coordination and/or centralization of prevention-based screening, assessment, intake, and referral.	Establish a taskforce to review best practice models and to develop corresponding recommendations.	A report with recommendations, corresponding implementation steps, and timelines regarding homeless prevention system improvements is prepared.	May 2008	OAHC Coordinator and Interagency Services Team Chairperson



## Closing the Front Door

Key Area	Goal	Action Step	Outcome Statement	Target Date	Responsible Person/Entity
Linkages with key systems of care	To improve linkages to permanent housing and related services for persons being discharged from local jails and corrections facilities through active involvement in relevant planning initiatives.	Actively participate in relevant systems, committees, and taskforces.	The OAHC maintains representation on the Ottawa County ReEntry Initiative Taskforce.	October 2006	OAHC Coordinator
	To assess and review practices and policies affecting persons being discharged from area hospitals that do not appear to have stable housing upon discharge.	Establish a hospital discharge taskforce.	The taskforce prepares and submits a report with recommendations regarding preferred practices and policies relative to hospital discharge practices impacting potentially homeless individuals.	October 2007	OAHC Coordinator
	To assess and review practices and policies affecting youth being discharged from private and public foster care programs that do not have appropriate housing upon discharge.	A Youth Discharge taskforce is established.	The taskforce prepares and submits a report with recommendations regarding preferred practices and policies relative to discharges of youth from the child foster care system.	October 2007	OAHC Coordinator

<b>Closing the Front Door</b>					
<b>Key Area</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Action Step</b>	<b>Outcome Statement</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Responsible Person/Entity</b>
Linkages with key systems of care	To ensure that landlords and property management companies are adequately aware of homelessness prevention services available to tenants who may be at risk of eviction.	Engage in outreach efforts including hosting semi-annual landlord education events.	90% of Ottawa County landlords report having an increased knowledge and awareness of homelessness prevention and relevant services.	April 2007	Housing Resource Specialist
Access to Mainstream Resources	To ensure that all persons and households at risk of homelessness have access to all applicable mainstream resources for which they qualify (e.g. TANF, Medicaid, FAP, HCV, SSI/Disability, etc.)	Sponsor and organize a "Mainstream Resources" Overview Orientation as part of a pre-existing semi-annual human service training program.	90% of attendees report increased knowledge and awareness of mainstream resources including specific eligibility issues and referral protocols.	June 2007	Service Providers Network Planning Committee, with assistance from the OAHC Coordinator
Availability of Proactive Prevention Services	To expand and increase the availability of proactive prevention services, including economic literacy, credit repair, money management classes, and general case management services.	Develop and distribute a flow chart of services relative to the availability of proactive prevention services designed to meet the needs of those at risk of homelessness.	Distribute 1,000 flowcharts and service guides to those at risk of homelessness.	July 2007	Interagency Services Team and 2-1-1

## Opening the Back Door

Key Area	Goal	Action Step	Outcome Statement	Target Date	Responsible Person/Entity
Housing First	To educate, promote, and implement a Housing First Philosophy.	Evaluate existing housing programs and realign, if necessary, with a Housing First philosophy.	75% of homeless service providers develop a plan to incorporate Housing First principles.	November 2008	OAHC Executive Committee
		Educate the OAHC membership, landlords and the community about a Housing First philosophy.	The OAHC endorses by resolution a Housing First philosophy.	November 2007	OAHC Coordinator
Permanent Affordable Housing	To increase opportunities for permanent affordable housing.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pursue additional Homeless Assistance Recovery Program (HARP) vouchers.</li> <li>2. Pursue funding opportunities tied to providing permanent housing.</li> </ol>	An annual increase of 45 households served in permanent housing.	April 2008	OAHC
Rapid Re-Housing	To educate members, promote and implement rapid re-housing opportunities.	Seek funding for security deposits and first month's rent.	Funding is available to help those who are homeless to obtain permanent housing.	April 2008	OAHC

## Opening the Back Door

Key Area	Goal	Action Step	Outcome Statement	Target Date	Responsible Person/Entity
Rapid Re-Housing		Educate shelters and service providers about rapid re-housing opportunities.	Increase referrals to service providers with rapid re-housing assistance	May 2009	OAHC
		Strengthen relationships with landlords to increase willingness to accept difficult-to-house tenants.	Rapid re-housing service providers have working relationships with local landlords.	August 2008	Rapid Re-housing service providers
Intensive Case Management	To determine the capacity to provide intensive case management to those who may benefit.	Survey agencies to determine program capacity and existence of current case management services.	An assessment of case management capacity is created.	January 2008	OAHC Coordinator
		Discuss results of the capacity report with OAHC members and create a plan to implement intensive case management.	A plan of intensive case management implementation is developed.	February 2008	OAHC

## Building Infrastructure

Key Area	Goal	Action Step	Outcome Statement	Target Date	Responsible Person/Entity
Data Collection	To have accessible, usable data regarding the homeless and the precariously housed population in Ottawa County.	Implementation and expansion of the HMIS System.	All providers of homeless services in Ottawa County will be entering required data into the HMIS system.	June 2007	OAHC Coordinator
		Data will be analyzed and distributed to key homeless and human service providers.	Key homeless and human service providers have access to an annual report which includes homelessness data and data interpretation.	May 2007	Ottawa Area Housing Coalition and Coordinator
Affordable and Accessible Housing	To ensure there is adequate and accessible affordable housing in Ottawa County.	Review current housing market to determine affordability and accessibility.	The current housing market report is created.	May 2008	OAHC
		Develop a system for maintaining a county-wide list of housing options and availability.	Those in need of housing have access to assistance in locating options that meet their needs.	June 2007	Housing Resource Specialist

## Building Infrastructure

Key Area	Goal	Action Step	Outcome Statement	Target Date	Responsible Person/Entity
Affordable and Accessible Housing		Support the continued formation and development of the Ottawa County Public Housing Authority to become the lead entity exploring housing development needs and concerns in Ottawa County.	A direct link is created between the Ottawa County Public Housing Authority and the OAHC.	March 2007	CAA Executive Director
Employment	To utilize existing employment services to increase the employment security of the Ottawa County Workforce.	Link with the Michigan Works! Agency to identify job training opportunities and employment services for the homeless and precariously housed.	The Michigan Works Association makes at least one presentation annually at one of the OAHC quarterly meetings.	August 2007	OAHC Coordinator
		Case management providers partner with Michigan Works! Agency to ensure for job retention.	There is an increase in job retention among those receiving services.	October 2009	Interagency Services Team
Income	To increase financial sustainability in Ottawa County households.	Create an advocacy committee to research opportunities to advocate issues that impact financial sustainability.	A committee is created and reports quarterly on relevant advocacy activities.	May 2007	OAHC
		The Interagency Services team annually reviews local eligibility guidelines in relation to homelessness prevention grant dollars to best utilize funds in the community.	The Interagency Services Team develops an annual strategy for the use of homelessness prevention grant dollars.	January 2007	Interagency Services Team

## Community Involvement

Key Area	Goal	Action Step	Outcome Statement	Target Date	Responsible Person/Entity
Elected Officials	To foster and maintain communication, participation and endorsement by elected officials and the offices they represent.	Establish a team or identify a person responsible for communication with elected officials.	A person/entity is designated/identified for communication activities with elected officials.	October 2006	10 Year Plan Advisory Board
		Compile a list of elected officials to target for communication.	A list is developed and maintained annually.	November 2006	10 Year Plan Advisory Board
		Meet with elected officials to introduce plan and garner support.	A list of elected officials who are committed to the plan is created.	November 2006	10 Year Plan Advisory Board
		Establish a system of communication with elected officials.	Semi-annual communication with elected officials is in place.	January 2007	OAHC

## Community Involvement

Key Area	Goal	Action Step	Outcome Statement	Target Date	Responsible Person/Entity
Consumers	To foster and maintain participation by and input from consumers of homeless services and from individuals who are at risk of homelessness.	Solicit consumers for membership of the OAHC.	Two consumers are members and regularly attend OAHC quarterly meetings.	February 2007	OAHC Coordinator
		Solicit consumers for participation in 10 Year Plan workgroups.	Each 10-Year Plan workgroup has participation of consumers.	July 2007	Work Group Chairperson
		Communicate the completion of the 10 Year Plan to consumers.	Consumers are knowledgeable of the 10 Year Plan.	November 2006	10 Year Plan Advisory Board
Partners	To strengthen the effectiveness of the OAHC and its membership.	Seek technical assistance from MSHDA in order to strengthen the OAHC.	The OAHC participates in capacity building activities.	November 2007	OAHC Coordinator
	To strengthen the relationship of the OAHC with related community collaboratives.	Schedule semi-annual meetings between the OAHC and the Ottawa County Human Services Coordinating Council (OCHSCC).	The OAHC presents to the OCHSCC semi-annually.	December 2006	OAHC Coordinator and the OCHSCC Coordinator



## Community Involvement

Key Area	Goal	Action Step	Outcome Statement	Target Date	Responsible Person/Entity
Partners	To provide a mechanism to communicate the 10 Year Plan and foster future participation.	Develop a OAHC/10 Year Plan website	The OAHC members and public have access to OAHC/ 10 Year Plan information via the internet.	January 2007	OAHC Coordinator
		Present the 10 Year Plan to identified partners	10 Year Plan is presented to partners so that knowledge is gained, feedback is received and commitment is made to participate in future activities.	November 2006	10 Year Plan Advisory Board

## Plan Review

Key Area	Goal	Action Step	Outcome Statement	Target Date	Responsible Person/Entity
Plan Review	To set goals that are progressive and based on the current state of the community.	The 10 Year Plan will be reviewed and edited annually.	The 10 Year Plan is revised and released annually.	October 2007	OAHC Coordinator
	To maintain accountability to the goals set forth in the initial 10 Year Plan and subsequent revisions.	The goals in the 10 Year Plan will be reviewed with updates as necessary	There is an increased awareness of the 10 Year Plan status.	February 2007	OAHC Coordinator
		Each 10 Year Plan workgroup provides updates quarterly to the OAHC.	There is an increase in accountability to the goals of the 10 Year Plan.	February 2007	Workgroup Chairperson

## **Conclusion**

The 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness Advisory Board is optimistic that through concentrating on the Five Plan Strategies with the above-mentioned goals, homelessness in Ottawa County will be eliminated in 10 years. While the plan was developed in short time, it is an evolving document with attainable goals that were based on the input of over 100 persons, so it is reflective of local ideas and efforts. Through this process, Ottawa County, along with the rest of the state and many other locations throughout the country has decided that this is a critical time to re-evaluate and reform the systems that impact homelessness, both those that may contribute toward creating homelessness as well as those that work to end homelessness. As evidenced by the number and complexity of the goals listed above, there is much that needs to be done. The issue of homelessness, however, deserves this level of attention, because safe and decent housing should be afforded to all persons in our community. Human service agencies, the business community, educational systems, the faith community, along with local governments are encouraged to join together to work on this plan, so that in the not too distant future everyone has a place to call home.

**Attachment A**  
**Ottawa County 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness**  
**Consumer Survey**

Ottawa County is writing a 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness. We are trying to end homelessness. We need your help to get a clear picture of who is homeless. Your answers on this survey will help us understand why people are homeless.

The answers you provide will be kept private. This survey will not go in your file. No one other than the 10 year planning group will use these answers. You do not need to put your name on the survey.

Thank you for completing the survey. Your answers will help our community end homelessness.

# Attachment B

## 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness Consumer Survey

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this survey. Your answers will help us formulate a county-wide plan to end homelessness. Information collected will be viewed only in collective form and will not identify you or your answers.

- 1) Do you think homelessness is a problem in Ottawa County?
  - A) A major problem
  - B) A minor problem
  - C) Not a problem
  
- 2) What do you think is the main reason people become homeless? (Pick one)

A) Lack of affordable housing	E) Substance abuse
B) Lack of job opportunities/employment	F) Mental illness
C) Lack of social services	G) Domestic violence
D) Lack of education	H) Other (describe): _____
  
- 3) How did you become homeless?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- 4) Where did you get help when you were homeless?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- 5) What do you think would be the most effective at ending homelessness? (Example: more jobs, more social services, less expensive housing, etc.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6) What would you put in a ten year plan to end homelessness?

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Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Attachment C**

### **Ottawa County Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness Survey Summary –CMH Consumer**

**1) Do you think that homelessness is a problem in Ottawa County?**

- Major Problem (2)
- Minor Problem (2)

**2) What do you think is the main reason people become homeless?**

- Lack of affordable housing (2)
- Lack of job opportunities/employment
- Mental Illness

**3) How did you become homeless?**

- Affordable housing
- My mental illness and housing too high
- Domestic abuse
- It's so hard for me to say mental illness but having said that & no learned coping skills, its just obvious that all the rest would follow however big or small

**4) Where did you get help when you were homeless?**

- Holland Rescue Mission, life skills program & through extensive CMH people and sources
- The mission and CMH
- Shelter then CMH. Saved my life!
- Women in Transition shelter and then a CMH voucher to help pay my rent. Disability, Social Security, and SSI

**5) What do you think would be the most effective at ending homelessness? (Example: more jobs, more social services, less expensive housing, etc)**

- I think there are a lot of young people (not just women) that cannot make it on a minimum wage job. Rent around here is very high and they have to pay gas heat & car insurance for young drivers is extremely high. When the jobs are few in G.H. and Spring Lake, a bus system that goes from Holland to Muskegon would open up more opportunities. A roommate connection service would be helpful (with screening and matching services.)\
- I think the initial help you guys give is so wonderful but we can't expect that forever. We need individual game plans, realistic goals – support systems.
- Better paying jobs and less expensive housing.
- More jobs with better pay and safe affordable housing

**6) What would you put in a ten year plan to end homelessness?**

- Low income housing. Help people to budget and teach them a better way of life can be there for them. Lower bills for fixed income.
- OK! Um not sure how our home help business works for how long. I myself live year to year which gets to be a little anxious. But let's figure out how long we can get help @ our home & then once that anxiety is gone, CMH needs to make up keep up our end of the bargain – job school. However we're going to better ourselves, not just giving someone a free house. That might back them worse in the long run. We need to do something to be able, however small, to be able to keep our house.

- You must be able to relate with homeless and spend time in their shoes. I think in 2006, we are doing the best we can. Homelessness should not be a problem in the United States. At this time in history, we must take care of our citizens first, especially after Hurricane Katrina & 9/11.
- More access to transportation, and for people who do not fit into categories to fit the criteria. For example: If you are not mentally ill, do not have children, no job (or low paying job), or no transportation options, you cannot access any existing services. My suggestion would be to have a service for people. Otherwise Not Eligible. Maybe call it the “ONE” program for people slipping through the cracks.

**Comments:**

- Why can we not combine bus systems into one city bus system with bus stops? Or even a payment plan on low cost transportation options (like those motorized scooters or something)? Would people volunteer to take teens into their homes until they can get their feet on the ground? With a time contract of some time?
- I'm truly thankful for CMH for how they help me in so many ways. I'm becoming a better person as I heal and learn more. Thank you!



## Attachment D

### 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness Emergency Assistance Consumer Survey

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this survey. Your answers will help us formulate a county-wide plan to end homelessness. Information collected will be viewed only in collective form and will not identify you or your answers.

- 1) Do you think homelessness is a problem in Ottawa County?
  - D) A major problem
  - E) A minor problem
  - F) Not a problem
  
- 2) What do you think is the main reason people become homeless? (Pick one)

I) Lack of affordable housing	M) Substance abuse
J) Lack of job opportunities/employment	N) Mental illness
K) Lack of social services	O) Domestic violence
L) Lack of education	P) Other (describe): _____
  
- 3) Have you ever been homeless?
  - A) Yes
  - B) No
  
- 4) If yes, where did you get help when you were homeless?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- 5) Do you think you may become homeless?
  - A) Yes
  - B) No
  
- 6) What do you think would be the most effective at ending homelessness? (Example: more jobs, more social services, less expensive housing, etc.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7) What would you put in a ten year plan to end homelessness?

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Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Attachment E**  
**Ottawa County Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness**  
**Consumer Survey Summary – CAA Consumer**

**1) Do you think that homelessness is a problem in Ottawa County?**

- Major Problem (4)
- Minor Problem (9)

**2) What do you think is the main reason people become homeless?**

- Lack of Affordable Housing (5)
- Lack of Education
- Lack of Job Opportunities/Employment (4)
- Substance Abuse (3)

**3) Have you ever been homeless?**

- No (13)

**4) If yes, where did you get help when you were homeless?**

- No Answer (13)

**5) Do you think you may become homeless?**

- No (9)
- Yes (4)

**6) What do you think would be the most effective at ending homelessness (Ex: more jobs, more social services, less expensive housing, etc)**

- Affordable housing - higher paying jobs
- Cost of living needs
- Helping people overcome the negative feelings associated with asking for help
- In a perfect world, more jobs, but the answer right now is affordable housing, more rental places that aren't single homes
- Less expensive housing
- Less expensive housing & More jobs (3)
- More help for finding a job
- More jobs (2)
- More pay
- More people willing to work at improving personal situations. Educate for low-cost home ownership
- More social services, rehabilitation specifically.

**7) What would you put in a ten year plan to end homelessness?**

- No Answer (1)
- Community workers on the streets
- Educate, educate, educate
- Free or affordable longer term drug rehab services (inpatient)
- Help to find a job, job training, affordable housing, letting the community know there is help out there.
- I would help people find better jobs & then assist them in budgeting and counseling and accountability to maintain their jobs

- Make renting affordable to everyone
- Maybe quicker acceptance to housing assistance programs and if possible, on-hand workers to "stalk" recipients and encourage them to take proper steps to eventually free themselves of assistance and also to make sure the help isn't taken advantage of.
- More jobs, more free adult classes
- More pay, cheaper housing
- More social services to people who are willing to try hard not to become homeless.
- Affordable housing, Higher paying jobs
- Social outreach. More jobs. Help for mental illness

**Comments:**

- Help people to help themselves. Educate in the benefits of home ownership at the low-income level.
- I'm reaching out for assistance partially due to the lack of long term inpatient and affordable drug rehab facilities to help my spouse with his addiction.

**Attachment F**  
**Ottawa County Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness**  
**Consumer Survey Summary – CAH Emergency Assistance**

**1) Do you think that homelessness is a problem in Ottawa County?**

- Major Problem (20)
- Minor Problem (10)
- Not a Problem
- No Answer

**2) What do you think is the main reason people become homeless?**

- Lack of Affordable Housing (14)
- Lack of Job Opportunities/Employment (13)
- Mental Illness
- Substance Abuse (2)
- All of the Above (2) (Including Lack of Social Services, Lack of Education & Domestic Violence)

**3) Have you ever been homeless?**

- No (10)
- Yes (22)

**4) If yes, where did you get help when you were homeless?**

- No Answer (11)
- Community Action House
- CWIT (4)
- Family Ministries
- Friends and Family (4)
- Good Sam
- Holland City Mission (8)
- Salvation Army and Halfway House
- Shelter

**5) Do you think you may become homeless?**

- No (27)
- Yes (3)

**6) What do you think would be the most effective at ending homelessness (Ex: more jobs, more social services, less expensive housing, etc)**

- All of the above (2)
- No Answer (2)
- Build more affordable housing
- God
- Jobs (5)
- Less expensive housing (4)
- Less expensive housing and change some of rules regarding public housing
- More adequate training for jobs as well as affordable housing
- More job opportunities for people with mental illness; alcoholic counseling

- More jobs (4)
- More jobs for American's who were born and raised here, less foreign industry; compatible wages with the cost of living
- More jobs, more social services, less expensive housing
- More Jobs; Affordable Housing; Gas Vouchers for gas prices
- More jobs; less expensive housing (4)
- More programs
- More Transition Services
- Stable jobs; housing cheaper

**7) What would you put in a ten year plan to end homelessness?**

- No Answer (11)
- Affordable Housing, and giving people a chance on jobs
- Affordable rent; decent wage
- Bring back jobs to Ottawa County
- Give the state more money
- God
- Good Jobs
- Help people to get informed about current job opportunity, free counseling for people in need
- I don't really know
- Job Training programs; bring general assistance back
- Jobs to pay more so people don't have to struggle
- Keep a job
- Make job training easier to come by and help with housing situations
- More Housing
- More Jobs (3)
- More jobs in Michigan and more affordable housing
- More Jobs; less expensive housing
- More Support
- Taking care of our own children first, use foreign aid for our own people first
- Work programs, cheaper housing, credit counseling

**Comments:**

- I could go on and on about what I think should be done, but the bottom line, through Holland as a community are doing their best, we as a nation could do better to help the homeless. Send all foreign companies home and make all products here and pay competitive wages!
- Screen people better for the programs that are out there

**Attachment G**  
**Ottawa County 10 Year Plan To End Homelessness**  
**Consumer Survey Summary – DHS Emergency Assistance**

**1) Do you think that homelessness is a problem in Ottawa County?**

- Major Problem (11)
- Minor Problem (9)
- Not a Problem

**2) What do you think is the main reason people become homeless?**

- Lack of Affordable Housing (4)
- Lack of job opportunities/employment (13)
- Lack of education
- All of the above (Including Lack of Social Services, Substance abuse, Mental Illness & Domestic Violence)
- Lack of Budgeting Skills
- Economy in general, medical insurance not paying for things people need (medications, etc)

**3) Have you ever been homeless?**

- No (14)
- Yes (6)
- No Answer

**4) If yes, where did you get help when you were homeless?**

- No Answer (14)
- Came to FIA
- Friends / Family
- Holland Rescue Mission
- I am at that point. Home to be foreclosed on.
- I just stayed with different friends.
- I slept in my car, showered at different friends' apartments, until I saved enough \$ for an apartment of my own
- My choice wasn't sure where I wanted to live so stayed with friends in different states for 6 months

**5) Do you think you may become homeless?**

- No (7)
- Yes (13)
- No Answer

**6) What do you think would be the most effective at ending homelessness (Ex: more jobs, more social services, less expensive housing, etc)**

- All of the above
- No Answer
- A lot of people we deal with seem to have a lack of logic and responsibility of paying housing; how often they receive lump sum and don't use it wisely.
- Adequate jobs and housing based on pay structure. Utilities costs may also be something to look at.
- Better paying jobs & more jobs

- Better paying jobs / Less expensive housing
- Less expensive housing (3)
- Less expensive housing would help. Help budget their money.
- More income - affordable housing
- More Jobs (4)
- More jobs & Inexpensive housing
- More jobs & less expensive housing
- More jobs & more help with people whose spouses leave for a younger person & take all the money!
- More jobs and more help from state
- More jobs with decent pay and housing expenses according to minimum wages.
- More jobs, fixing house up instead of tearing them down for business and more government help.

### 7) What would you put in a ten year plan to end homelessness?

- No Answer (4)
- Better housing & more help for people that have substance abuse problems
- Bring in more jobs and social services.
- Bring jobs to Michigan. Build affordable housing.
- Can you teach people logic and responsibility? I guess some first have to get off drugs, learn they should pay their bills or maybe not have a land line and cell phones?? That they don't need cable, oh and bring back programs like the Civilian Conservation Corps...Create poor houses again? Don't make them too comfortable so they can move on and get some of their pride back
- Find a job and get budget counseling. Go back to school to better educate for a better job.
- I think jobs will be better.
- Job Opportunities / Housing Projects
- Landlords should let renters pay by week so it wouldn't seem to be so much at due date
- Lower taxes, open some state land for homesteading
- More education & help for those who need it, never turn anyone away!
- More Jobs
- More Jobs
- More jobs, Cheaper housing
- More state help, more help for single mothers, daycare, gas/elec bills.
- Sect 8 subsidized communities, equal opportunity to enter rental units (if you get a poor credit score, "you're done")
- That is a good/tough question! I would like to see more programs available for skill trades
- That people all work together.

### Comments:

- I hope this helps.
- I need help and some help with deposit & 1st month rent
- People need to consider the fact that it is very expensive for single parents, and it's hard for some people to get a job that have a criminal record.
- Thank you.



**Attachment H**  
**10 Year Plan to End Homelessness**  
**Service Providers and Collaboratives Survey**

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this survey. Your answers will help us formulate a county-wide plan to end homelessness. Information collected will be viewed only in collective form and will not identify you or your answers.

- 1) How do you define homelessness?
  - A) I use the federal definition
  - B) Anyone who does not live in their own home
  - C) Something else \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 2) Do you think homelessness is a problem in Ottawa County?
  - G) A major problem
  - H) A minor problem
  - I) Not a problem
  
- 3) What do you think is the primary reason for homelessness? (Select one)

Q) Lack of affordable housing	U) Substance abuse
R) Lack of job opportunities/employment	V) Mental illness
S) Lack of social services	W) Domestic violence
T) Level of education	X) Other (describe): _____
  
- 4) In your opinion, what causes homelessness?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- 5) What unmet needs exist in Ottawa County that would help end homelessness?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- 6) What do you think would be the most effective at ending homelessness? (Example: More jobs, more social services, less expensive housing, etc.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7) What types of things should be in a 10 year plan to end homelessness?

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Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Attachment I**  
**Ottawa County Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness**  
**Survey Summary –OAHC**

**1) How do you define homelessness?**

- I use the federal definition (5)
- Anyone who does not live in their own home

**2) Do you think that homelessness is a problem in Ottawa County?**

- Major Problem (4)
- Minor Problem (2)

**3) What do you think is the main reason people become homeless?**

- Lack of affordable housing (3)
- Lack of job opportunities/employment (2)
- Level of education

**4) In your opinion, what causes homelessness?**

- Job loss & inability to find work at or near a similar wage level; or insufficient training to find (or move up to) a job at a higher rate of pay that would allow a single-income household to obtain affordable housing.
- I believe that you can not put one factor as to the reason. It can vary based on the client. I do believe the two major factors are affordable housing and lack of job opportunities.
- In my opinion, a person becomes homeless due to all the reasons stated in #3. If someone has 3 or more of these issues there is a high likelihood that they will end up with housing difficulties.
- There are multiple causes, including all those listed in #3 above, but the root cause, in my opinion, is inequitable distribution of resources, which translates in the economy as wages and social service assistance levels that are not sufficient to pay for all basic needs. I believe that the resources are sufficient, but are not equitably distributed. Substance abuse and an inadequate service continuum for persons with mental illness play significant roles as well, but are secondary in terms of causing homelessness when compared with larger economic factors.
- There are two sets of variables that influence/cause homelessness – system variables (housing markets, unemployment rates, available housing, etc.) and individual variables (substance abuse, domestic violence, education level, mental illness, etc.). It is the combination of these two groups of variables work together to produce homelessness. System variables tend to explain why there is homelessness and individual variables explain who becomes homeless.
- Many different reasons –Not having long term secure employment, lack of affordable housing/not enough low income vouchers, substance abuse/mental illness, etc. or as simple as a divorce.

**5) What unmet needs exist in Ottawa County that would help end homelessness?**

- Long term employment opportunities that pay a decent wage and enough low income vouchers to meet the needs of transitional/emergency housing programs.
- Lower the unemployment rate, work to reduce the median fair market rent, and increase lower-cost housing supply.
- Broader public transportation and more affordable housing would help.
- Affordable housing is a huge problem. Many people would benefit greatly from reduced rent. Transportation to jobs is also a problem.
- Increased availability of eviction and foreclosure prevention funding

- An improved “triage” system for identifying service options for those in need of housing support (single point of entry system).
- New initiative/program to pay housing expenses on a time-limited basis to families when housing/homelessness is the only or primary condition placing children at risk of removal into foster care.
- For our TH programs to increase availability of “transition in place” opportunities.
- Increased availability of “Assertive Community Treatment”-type services to a broader range of persons (not just those with serious, persistent mental illness), along with flexible financial funds to assist with housing expenses as needed.
- New initiative/program providing 3-6 months of intensive case management to homeless families, with emphasis on achieving housing and economic stability, including availability of ample flexible funding.
- Increased service availability to persons who do not qualify for CMH services, access to permanent supportive housing, as deemed appropriate.
- Increased availability of permanent supportive housing options.
- Increased assistance amounts for SSI (Disability), TANF and Food Stamps.
- Increased awareness among local employers regarding livable wage thresholds.
- Economic incentives to companies offering livable wages to all employees.
- Appropriate structure transitional housing for individuals coming out of substance abuse treatment.
- Low demand, low cost, structured housing for individuals with ongoing substance abuse issues and/or mental health challenges.

**6) What do you think would be the most effective at ending homelessness?**

- Mandatory GED completion for anyone on probation or incarcerated for 3 months or more in Ottawa Co. (don’t let people off probation or out of jail until they’ve completed their GED.)
- Double the amount of planned permanent supportive housing for individuals with mental health challenges.
- More sheltered work environments for individuals with Bipolar Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder, etc.
- Programs that offer intensive case management in a “transition in place” oriented design.
- Increased availability of jobs that pay a livable wage, along with increased availability of affordable (as well as safe and decent) housing options.
- Targeting those children in school that are at risk i.e. their parents or they exhibit 3 or more of the problems listed in #3.
- Jobs, and affordable housing and possibility budget counseling for those that need it.
- One feeds off the other – a combination of more jobs & lower housing costs.
- More long term job opportunities, less expensive housing programs or more low income vouchers, social service programs that provide support services in order to assist people in working within the social service system.

**7) What types of things should be in a ten year plan to end homelessness?**

- Job programs, housing programs that meet the needs of homelessness, education programs, supportive social service programs that provide knowledge and assistance in working within social service system.
- Everything listed in the answers to questions 5 and 6.
- Accurate statement of the problems, the articulation of why ending homelessness is important and in everyone’s best interests, and tangible options for addressing the issue across the continuum.
- Education regarding job planning and budgeting in the schools, wrap around programs for families in crisis as the children will be at high risk for developing similar problems

- This is very difficult to answer. I just am unsure.
- Long-term development of affordable housing supply or housing in multiple price ranges. Consider a program to subsidize landlords, which would work to lower fair market rents to a more affordable level. Help turn the economy around by bringing in new, better-paying jobs to the market.

**Comments:**

- Set aggressive, yet realistic, expectations for the plan. We may be able to end homelessness in the more general perspective, but there will always be people that refuse to engage services (even low demand) and that choose to live in their cars or on the street.
- The continuum of care, as it exists right now, is for the most part a disconnected group of independent entities (not a criticism, but an observation). The agencies in the continuum attempt to work together, but the continuum does not have agreement on how to deal with issues of substance abuse, mental health, domestic violence, employment, etc. Various program requirements, stay times, application times, and overall program philosophies don't often line up with each other. This creates gaps in the continuum and makes it difficult for an individual to move smoothly through the process.
- There are no easy answers.

**Attachment J**  
**Ottawa County Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness**  
**Survey Summary – DHS Staff**

**1) How do you define homelessness?**

- I use the federal definition (12)
- Anyone who does not live in their own home (10)
- Anyone who doesn't live with friends, family, or in their own home
- Anyone who has no place to live, friends, relatives, etc
- If a person does not have a permanent address - does not have anyone that they can live with temporarily.
- Lack of permanent housing
- Living in a shelter or with a family member or friend on a temporary basis
- No identified home to go to
- Person with no home and no one to stay with, even temporarily
- Persons in shelters and on the street
- Something Else (2)
- Broaden federal definition to include families, those who are about to become homeless. i.e. eviction/utility disconnect
- Lack of stable housing, bouncing from place to place

**2) Do you think that homelessness is a problem in Ottawa County?**

- Major Problem (9)
- Minor Problem (25)

**3) What do you think is the main reason people become homeless?**

- Lack of affordable housing (13)
- Lack of job opportunities/employment (12)
- Level of education (3)
- Mental Illness (2)
- Substance abuse (3)
- All of the above

**4) In your opinion, what causes homelessness?**

- A person's inability to make enough money to stay in their home
- All of #3 (4)
- Circumstances that hit a person for one reason or another
- Combination of tenant irresponsibility, lack of good jobs & Landlord irresponsibility
- Disrupted relationships - lack of income & affordable housing - lack of a support system
- Divorce - kids growing into adulthood - DV - lack of affordable housing
- Economic situations, some caused by poor personal choices
- Family abuse situations; movement from city to city; low paying jobs
- Impairments like mental illness and/or substance abuse prevent an individual from making good decisions and using employment opportunities.
- inadequate job skills, lack access to resources, inadequate relational network
- Kids running away, lack of jobs, substance abuse, government spending \$ all over the place and not facing our own issues

- Lack of job opportunities, felony on background check.
- Lack of money, can't afford housing.
- Lack of money, loss of job, loss of partner
- Lack of resource knowledge
- Losing their jobs, substance abuse, domestic violence.
- Loss of employment, eventual depression, loss of self esteem, low paying job, high priced economy
- Loss of employment, wages not suitable for price of housing
- Loss of income, leading to not being able to pay rent
- Not having resources in the area
- People unable/unwilling to comply with the norms of society
- People who don't budget their money to afford housing. People have so much debt.
- Poor choices
- Poor mismanagement of money. Low education which causes less job opportunities.
- See 3 as well as all the other issues in 3
- Some people don't know how to budget money. No jobs paying enough to afford housing, mental illness
- Unable to keep job that pays enough
- All of #3, as well as lack of knowledge on where and when to go for help.
- Lack of living skills lead to inability to keep housing & employment.
- Lack of work, education, domestic violence
- No Answer

**5) What unmet needs exist in Ottawa County that would help end homelessness?**

- No Answer (7)
- Additional employment opportunities
- Additional money for Habitat - work for your homes; help with down payment if have job to pay ongoing rent
- Affordable housing & a central agency that people would go to for help with getting services to fund affordable housing
- Affordable housing and job opportunities
- Better education
- Better paying jobs
- Credit/Budget counseling - make it mandatory if in a shelter
- Financial education at all levels - in schools. Persons applying for assistance, job placement, etc
- Lack of affordable housing - Lack of jobs
- Lack of affordable housing, jobs, support systems, education.
- Mental health services for all people including people who deny/refuse the need for such services
- More affordable housing
- More employment opportunities & affordable housing
- More good paying jobs with benefits
- More help with repairs on older/more affordable homes - not just in Holland
- More jobs
- More jobs, affordable housing
- More relational networks before family gets home so greater opportunity for success in maintaining stability
- More subsidized housing, housing that is maintained. More penalties for drug pushers and criminals.

- More subsidized or affordable houses - better job opportunities - less handouts and more accountability
- Not sure (2)
- Supportive housing
- Opportunities for education. Basic for all - more job opportunities of course & more affordable housing countywide
- People need to be more responsible for themselves.
- Transitional housing. More section 8 housing, Budget Counseling

**6) What do you think would be the most effective at ending homelessness?**

- More housing choice vouchers (Section8) (3)
- Rent/Utility assistance (3)
- More affordable housing (7)
- A housing first program (3)
- More permanent supportive housing (8)
- All of the above
- Budgeting classes before section is approved
- Expanding CMH & Substance abuse services
- Jobs
- Long term relational care
- Money Management classes that follow clients when on assistance.
- Nothing
- Providing services with #5
- No Answer (2)

**7) What types of things should be in a ten year plan to end homelessness?**

- No Answer (8)
- A continuum of care from homelessness to transitional to permanent housing.
- Above
- Affordable housing
- Better economy, more jobs, higher pay
- Change of economic atmosphere so loss of jobs is not as big of a threat
- Education, skills training, budgeting, accountability
- Employment programs, prevent gas prices & other unrecognized necessities from rising at the same rate.
- Expanding CMH & Substance abuse services
- Funding to help develop affordable housing & an agency to help people locate/fund housing.
- Help families fix up or repair homes that are affordable but not livable.
- Jobs - Affordable housing
- Less social services and more people being accountable
- Money management classes at FIA office and education opportunities through the system.
- More affordable housing, more vouchers, more Habitat for Humanity opportunities.
- More good paying jobs with benefits, housing/rent/utility assistance for low income. Good, affordable housing for low income.
- Plan for people to get out of debt & budget for housing & bills.
- Rent subsidy, housing assistance (location), tenant/landlord dispute resolution



- Residential facilities for the mentally ill should be re-opened. Mentally ill people often are prey to others and need safe environments to provide food, medicine, and shelter.
- Resource Awareness
- Support systems, affordable housing, job & educational opportunities.
- Supportive housing & onsite combines to address issues of mental illness, substance abuse. Access to GED like a families first program for homeless, only longer form
- Plan to generate countywide. Support on an extended basis which will continue beyond the 10 yrs. Outreach to those in need - ability to provide immediate services, housing & case management
- Support & maintain services to keep people in their own home.
- More Shelters
- Plan to generate countywide. Support on an extended basis which will continue beyond the 10 yrs. Outreach to those in need - ability to provide immediate services, housing & case management Teach budgeting classes. Limit help to able body persons if they are not trying to better themselves.
- Training, GED, college, etc

**Comments:**

- Also, more shelters for families in need.
- I think most people are one step from being homeless. Jobs are leaving, lack of transportation issue, getting issues noticed by people that can make a difference. Some people don't know where to get help. More about 211 needs advertising what state & county agencies do.
- Jobs are the main problem right now, but having good, affordable housing for low-income individuals with a backup of help with rent/utility/maintenance would be a great benefit. Also, teaching people how to manage a home, a budget and how to maintain and take care of a home.
- Population control; put a time limit on welfare benefits. Enforce existing immigration laws.
- This is a complicated social problem - the best program that I have dealt with was with Salvation Army & their rental units that they provide & then the assistance that they give clients in finding a job, paying utilities, and saving to purchase a home.
- What good does it do to raise the minimum wage when the price of gas, groceries, utilities, and rent rises at a higher rate?

**Attachment K**  
**Ottawa County Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness**  
**Survey Summary – IST**

**1) How do you define homelessness?**

- I use the federal definition (3)

**2) Do you think that homelessness is a problem in Ottawa County?**

- Major Problem
- Minor Problem (2)

**3) What do you think is the main reason people become homeless?**

- Level of education (2)
- Substance abuse

**4) In your opinion, what causes homelessness?**

- Lack of education
- People do not know their options
- Substance abuse leads to alienation from family, job loss, no money, hopelessness -> homelessness

**5) What unmet needs exist in Ottawa County that would help end homelessness?**

- More education (K-12) econ. Money & social responsibility.
- Educate them about their resources
- More programs for substance abuse - Low cost or free - Intense intervention in schools

**6) What do you think would be the most effective at ending homelessness?**

- More education on money & social responsibility because it is not being taught in the house
- More social services
- More programs for substance abuse - Low cost or free - Intense intervention in schools

**7) What types of things should be in a ten year plan to end homelessness?**

- Hold parents more responsible to educate children
- More affordable housing for working poor. Better resources for those in need
- More advertising of services offered. Strong programs in schools to try to break the cycle generational poverty, sub. abuse, etc

**Comments:**

- There is not just one reason, there are many different angles to come at

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- <sup>a</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, “Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000,” Census 2000 Summary File 1 , [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTTable?\\_bm=y&-geo\\_id=05000US26139&-qr\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF1\\_U\\_DP1&-ds\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF1\\_U&-\\_lang=en&-redoLog=false&-\\_sse=on](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=05000US26139&-qr_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U_DP1&-ds_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U&-_lang=en&-redoLog=false&-_sse=on) (June 2006)
- <sup>b</sup> US Census Bureau, “Calculation based on population for Ottawa County, Holland and Grand Haven in 2000” <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/26/2638640.html> and <http://censtats.census.gov/data/MI/1602633340.pdf> (June 2006)
- <sup>c</sup> US Census Bureau, “Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics: 2000” Census 2000 Summary File 3 [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTTable?\\_bm=y&-geo\\_id=05000US26139&-qr\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF3\\_U\\_DP3&-ds\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF3\\_U&-\\_lang=en&-redoLog=false&-\\_sse=on](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=05000US26139&-qr_name=DEC_2000_SF3_U_DP3&-ds_name=DEC_2000_SF3_U&-_lang=en&-redoLog=false&-_sse=on) (June 2006)
- <sup>d</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, “Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000,” Census 2000 Summary File 1 , [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTTable?\\_bm=y&-geo\\_id=05000US26139&-qr\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF1\\_U\\_DP1&-ds\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF1\\_U&-\\_lang=en&-redoLog=false&-\\_sse=on](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=05000US26139&-qr_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U_DP1&-ds_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U&-_lang=en&-redoLog=false&-_sse=on) (June 2006)
- <sup>e</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, “Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000,” Census 2000 Summary File 1 , [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTTable?\\_bm=y&-geo\\_id=05000US26139&-qr\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF1\\_U\\_DP1&-ds\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF1\\_U&-\\_lang=en&-redoLog=false&-\\_sse=on](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=05000US26139&-qr_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U_DP1&-ds_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U&-_lang=en&-redoLog=false&-_sse=on) (June 2006); Poverty line based on a family with two adults with two children earning less than \$17,463.
- <sup>f</sup> Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth “June Jobless Rates Increase in Most of Michigan's Regional Labor Markets; Summer Workforce Growth Pushed Rates Slightly Upward” Brian Waters, DLEG Regional Economic Analyst; <http://www.michigan.gov/som/0,1607,7-192-29940-148140--,00.html> (June 2006)
- <sup>g</sup> US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) “Proposed FY 2007 Fair Market Rent Documentation System; Proposed FY 2007 FMR Summary for Ottawa County, Michigan” [http://www.huduser.org/datasets/fmr/fmrs/2007summary.odt?INPUTNAME=METRO26100M26100\\*Ottawa+County&county\\_select=yes&statename=Michigan&statefp=26.0](http://www.huduser.org/datasets/fmr/fmrs/2007summary.odt?INPUTNAME=METRO26100M26100*Ottawa+County&county_select=yes&statename=Michigan&statefp=26.0) (June 2006)
- <sup>h</sup> US Census Bureau, “Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics: 2000” Census 2000 Summary File 3 [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTTable?\\_bm=y&-geo\\_id=05000US26139&-qr\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF3\\_U\\_DP3&-ds\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF3\\_U&-\\_lang=en&-redoLog=false&-\\_sse=on](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=05000US26139&-qr_name=DEC_2000_SF3_U_DP3&-ds_name=DEC_2000_SF3_U&-_lang=en&-redoLog=false&-_sse=on) (June 2006)
- <sup>i</sup> US Census Bureau, “Profile of Selected Housing Characteristics: 2000” Census 2000 Summary File 3 [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTTable?\\_bm=y&-geo\\_id=05000US26139&-qr\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF3\\_U\\_DP4&-ds\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF3\\_U&-\\_lang=en&-redoLog=false&-\\_sse=on](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=05000US26139&-qr_name=DEC_2000_SF3_U_DP4&-ds_name=DEC_2000_SF3_U&-_lang=en&-redoLog=false&-_sse=on) (June 2006)
- <sup>j</sup> US Census Bureau, “Profile of Selected Housing Characteristics: 2000” Census 2000 Summary File 3 [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTTable?\\_bm=y&-geo\\_id=05000US26139&-qr\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF3\\_U\\_DP4&-ds\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF3\\_U&-\\_lang=en&-redoLog=false&-\\_sse=on](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=05000US26139&-qr_name=DEC_2000_SF3_U_DP4&-ds_name=DEC_2000_SF3_U&-_lang=en&-redoLog=false&-_sse=on) (June 2006)
- <sup>k</sup> US Census Bureau, “Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics: 2000” Census 2000 Summary File 3 [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTTable?\\_bm=y&-geo\\_id=05000US26139&-qr\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF3\\_U\\_DP3&-ds\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF3\\_U&-\\_lang=en&-redoLog=false&-\\_sse=on](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=05000US26139&-qr_name=DEC_2000_SF3_U_DP3&-ds_name=DEC_2000_SF3_U&-_lang=en&-redoLog=false&-_sse=on) (June 2006)
- <sup>l</sup> Ottawa Area Housing Coalition (OAHC), “January 2005 Point In Time Count” January 25, 2005 (June 2006)
- <sup>m</sup> Ottawa Area Housing Coalition (OAHC), “January 2005 Point In Time Count” January 25, 2005 (June 2006)
- <sup>n</sup> The National Alliance to End Homelessness “A Plan: Not a Dream – How To End Homelessness in Ten Years” <http://www.endhomelessness.org/pub/tenyear/10yearplan.pdf> (paraphrased and localized) (June 2006)
- <sup>o</sup> Buckner, J.C., Bassuk, E.L., Weinreb, L.F., and Brooks, M.G. (1999). Homelessness and its relationship to the mental health and behavior of low income school age children. *Developmental Psychology* 35(1): 246-257; as cited on The National Alliance to End Homelessness “What You Should Know About Family Homelessness” <http://www.endhomelessness.org/families/srcbk/familyinfo.pdf> (August 2006)