HOUSTON/HARRIS COUNTY
CONTINUUM OF CARE
2014 ACTION PLAN

Tory Gunsolley, Chairman
Houston/Harris County Continuum of Care
In 2012, Houston had the 6th largest homeless population in the U.S.

- Chronically homeless individuals comprise 25% of the homeless population and use 75% of the public resources.
- $103 Million is spent annually on fewer than 1,500 chronically homeless individuals.
- Half of those living on the street use emergency rooms as their primary healthcare provider.
- The life expectancy of a homeless person living on the street is reduced by 25 years.
- 20% of homeless youth do not attend school.
The way a homeless individual could access services previously:

Funding for these services was not efficient either:
Coordinated strategic investments will drive our new system, matching resources to the need for quality affordable housing and stabilizing services:

City/County Funding  
State Funding  
Federal Funding  
Private Funding

Street Outreach  
Drop-in Centers  
Healthcare & Mental Health Providers  
211 United Way Helpline Referrals  
Walk-ins & Direct Phone Inquiries

Meal Programs  
Faith-Based Programs & Ministries  
Emergency Shelters  
Criminal Justice System

Coordinated Access*  
Real-time, web-based system

Triage  
Assess  
Assign  
Accountability

30% short-term intervention  
30% long-term intervention

28% medium-term intervention

* 12% of the homeless population will solve their homelessness on their own
With this new system, we will:

End Chronic Homelessness by 2015
End Veteran Homelessness by 2015
End Family Homelessness by 2020
Set a Path for Ending All Homelessness

System Governance & Monitoring:

The Continuum of Care Steering Committee
(Primary Decision Making Body)

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION BODIES

SYSTEM
Standing Committees
HMIS Support CoC Grant Performance Coordinated Access Provider Input Consumer Input

CHRONICS
Oversight
Mayor’s Leadership Team
Work Groups
Pipeline Integrated care PSH

VETERANS
Oversight
Housing Houston’s Heroes
Work Groups
Outreach Data SSVF Retention

FAMILIES
Oversight
Rapid Rehousing Funders
Work Groups
RRH Providers SSVF Domestic Violence

YOUTH
Oversight
Homeless Youth Network
Work Groups
One Voice Housing Policy LGBTQ

HMIS - Homeless Management Information System  CoC - Continuum of Care  PSH - Permanent Supportive Housing  SSVF - Supportive Services for Veteran Families  RRH - Rapid Rehousing  LGBTQ - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning
“Every year, chronic homelessness is costing us an estimated $103 million in public resources. However, now that we know our chronically homeless by their names, stories and needs, we can shift these vital resources to move them off the streets and into stable housing. This compassionate, community-driven plan will help our most vulnerable Houstonians while saving taxpayer money.”

-- Mayor Annise Parker
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| #1 Identify and Prioritize Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) Units for the Most Vulnerable | • Registry Week launched identification of 850 chronically homeless individuals sleeping on the streets and prioritization using the Vulnerability Index tool  
• Coordinated Access Committee developed standardized assessment and triage tools  
• HMIS updated to launch real-time system in January 2014  
• Housed 1,107 chronically homeless/vulnerable individuals and families in 16 months | • Launch Phase 1 of real-time Coordinated Access in January 2014  
• Launch Phase 2 of Coordinated Access in April 2014  
• Place trained assessors at key locations within the system in addition to a call center for providers  
• Make Housing Navigators available to assist vulnerable clients with locating housing  
• Improve housing placement rates by 50% |
| #2 Create 2500 Units of PSH | • Finalized financial model; 90% of resources are assembled to meet goal  
• 56% of units are in the pipeline; 44% are operational  
• City of Houston and Harris County released joint Request For Proposal (RFP) for capital and operating dollars | • Award $15 million in capital to new PSH projects through joint RFP  
• Issue a second joint RFP for additional capital and operating dollars  
• Add an additional 450 units to pipeline  
• Convert Transitional Housing (TH) to PSH when appropriate  
• Build new partnerships for long-term development |
| #3 Create a New Service Delivery Model Linked to PSH | • New service delivery model conceived and seed funding identified.  
• 1115 Medicaid Waiver Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment (DSRIP) project approved to fund integrated care teams for PSH  
• Service providers selected and planning phase concluded | • Service providers will begin offering services to 200 units of PSH  
• Support capacity building and recruitment of additional vendors as necessary to expand services and prevent recidivism  
• Align existing service funding to support expansion and service to each new PSH unit |
End Veteran Homelessness by 2015

**STRATEGIES**

- Identify Homeless Veterans and Use Coordinated Access System to:
  - Connect Chronically Homeless Veterans to Existing Veteran Administration Supportive Housing (VASH)
  - Rapidly Return Homeless Veteran Households to Affordable Housing

“"We know what the brave men and women who wear our uniform deserve when they return to the nation they defended. They deserve stability. They deserve a place to call home. Anything less is unacceptable. “
- Shaun Donovan, Secretary, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

**PROGRESS**

Veterans Housed per Year vs. Homeless Veterans in the System (2014 and 2015 data projections)

- 2012: 682
- 2013: 1,544
- 2014: 1,400
- 2015: 1,400

Houston projects steady state by 2015!
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| #1 Use Coordinated Access to match housing resources with client needs | • Developed a standard triage tool to properly match homeless veterans with proper housing options at first interview  
• Placed a Coordinated Access Assessor at the Veterans Affairs (VA) Drop-in Center to implement triage protocols and connect homeless veterans with both VA and CoC services as appropriate  
• Created protocols that support co-location or same day appointments for all housing referrals | • Once launched, connect Coordinated Access Assessor with the real-time Coordinated Access system, creating a single front door for all homeless  
• Train VA drop-in center assessors |
| #2 Target VASH vouchers to chronically homeless or vulnerable veterans | • Implemented protocols to restrict VASH to only those meeting the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of chronically homeless or vulnerable  
• Implemented mass briefings and targeted outreach to issue VASH vouchers to veterans living on the streets in one day  
• Housed 101 chronically homeless veterans in first 100 days  
• Housed another 347 chronically homeless veterans in another 100 days | • End chronic homelessness amongst veterans in 2014  
• Broaden scope as the number of chronically homeless veterans declines to ensure full utilization of VASH vouchers  
• Add Housing Navigators to the VA case management teams to reduce lease up times and improve retention rates  
• Reach 100% utilization of VASH vouchers |
| #3 Target Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) services for rapid rehousing of all other homeless veterans | • Completed first year of SSVF and secured an additional $5M in SSVF funding to rapidly rehouse homeless veterans and their families  
• Formed an SSVF workgroup to standardize service delivery and connect with Coordinated Access  
• Housed 2,226 veteran households in permanent housing from 2012-2013 | • Target more SSVF resources for rapid rehousing; reduce bridge to VASH assistance  
• Further standardize the program model to reduce referral challenges  
• Apply for new SSVF resources based on data and a standard funding formula |
End Family Homelessness by 2020

STRATEGIES

- Identify Homeless Families and Rapidly Return Them to Affordable Housing
- Expand Funding for Rapid Rehousing (RRH)
- Expand Access to Quality Affordable Housing
- Expand Access to Employment Programs

"Persistent unemployment, rising housing cost burden, and an increase in doubled up households suggest a heightened risk of homelessness... we need to prioritize a safety net for the most vulnerable, and to ramp up investment in proven, housing-centered solutions."

- Nan Roman, President, National Alliance to End Homelessness

UNDERSTANDING THE VALUE OF RAPID REHOUSING

Rapid Rehousing is the most cost-effective option for newly homeless households, for positive outcomes that we can invest in as a system.

- In Harris County, only 6% of families experienced another homeless episode after using Rapid Rehousing.
- Average costs for Rapid Rehousing are only $4,000 over a six month period.
- Rapid Rehousing Services reduce the number of homeless households by focusing on maintaining housing.
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| **#1** Use Coordinated Access to rapidly connect homeless households with short term housing stabilization services | • Coordinated Access Committee developed standardized assessments and triage tools  
• Began updating HMIS to launch real-time system in April 2014 | • Refine business rules related to RRH referrals  
• Identify and add any dedicated RRH units into real time system and/or establish more universal housing identification system  
• Standardize RRH model including tools and protocols using written standards |
| **#2** Expand Funding for RRH | • Completed system mapping and identified the need for an additional 8,100 units of RRH  
• CoC Steering Committee identified all available resources for RRH; Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) grantees have prioritized RRH  
• Updated ESG written standards to match housing model | • Repurpose available resources to expand RRH  
• Braid resources to create a single RRH funding stream to simplify access, improve efficiency, and regulate operations  
• Determine how to support the conversion of transitional housing into RRH  
• Create infrastructure to pool financial resources |
| **#3** Expand Access to Quality Affordable Housing | • HUD Field Office has brokered several discussions with existing HUD subsidized properties to set aside units for RRH.  
• Held a series of meetings with Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) property owners to introduce PSH, RRH, and the need for dedicated units  
• Launched a pilot Housing Choice Voucher - Transition In Place (HCV-TIP) project using housing choice vouchers and dedicated case management to support a transition in place RRH model | • Secure additional dedicated units for RRH in existing HUD subsidized properties  
• Expand number of quality affordable housing units available via integrated PSH projects  
• Evaluate success and consider the expansion of the HCV-TIP project |
| **#4** Expand Access to Employment Programs | • Conducted preliminary discussions about organizing a homeless employment initiative | • Launch a planning phase to organize a downtown employment partnership for the homeless  
• Support start up of social enterprises |
Set a Path for Ending All Homelessness

**STRATEGIES**

- Identify underserved populations (such as youth) and create a response system
- Match the homeless response system to community needs
- Monitor accountability for system performance

“

It took a lot of blood, sweat and tears to get to where we are today, but we have just begun. Today we begin in earnest the work of making sure that the world we leave our children is just a little bit better than the one we inhabit today.”

- President Barack Obama

**PROGRESS**

**Youth COUNT!**

Of 160 homeless youth interviewed in conjunction with the 2013 annual Houston Homeless Count:

- 19% were unsheltered
- 54% were sheltered
- 28% were precariously housed
- 1 in 5 identified as gay or bisexual
- 25% were Hispanic

Overall decrease in homelessness since 2011
(data from annual Houston Homeless Counts)

- **2011:** 8,538
- **2012:** 7,356
- **2013:** 6,359
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| **#1** Identify all underserved subpopulations (e.g., youth) and create specialized response systems | - Participated in Youth Count 2013  
- Formalized role of youth advocacy and affinity groups within the CoC  
- Identified opportunities to enhance utilization rates of existing youth programs | - Participate in the Federal planning initiative to prevent homelessness among LGBTQ youth  
- Implement prevention strategies as identified  
- Support additional data collection efforts sponsored by the Homeless Youth Network  
- Identify advocacy opportunities and work to educate policymakers about needed legislative and regulatory changes |
| **#2** Support and foster evolution of existing homeless response system to match needs | - Focused on the use of data to drive decision making at both the system and program level  
- Participated in discussions for the consolidation and co-location of services to support rapid housing processing  
- Secured funding to develop a downtown transition plan in partnership with the Downtown Management District and City of Houston | - Develop and implement Downtown Transition Plan  
- Support expansion of day shelter and co-location of housing processing services  
- Support the co-location of services in downtown and reduce the crisis response footprint  
- Support the continued evolution of providers and promote service efficiency and strategic investment |
| **#3** Create and maintain accountability for system performance          | - Updated the CoC Grant scoring tool to reflect emphasis on performance  
- Private funders convened and requested performance dashboards and more transparency in performance monitoring  
- CoC used performance data to determine funding allocations | - Develop and distribute performance dashboards  
- Publish performance dashboards to enhance transparency and support funding alignment  
- Use program performance to allocate CoC funding |
COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

City of Houston Housing and Community Development Department
Harris County Community Services Department
Houston Housing Authority
Harris County Housing Authority
Fort Bend County Community Development Department
City of Pasadena, Community Development Administration
Crisis Response System Representative
Permanent Supportive Housing Representative
Homeless Services Consumer Representative 1
Homeless Services Consumer Representative 2
Business Community Representative
Funders Together to End Homelessness Representative
Coalition for the Homeless Representative
Faith Community Representative
MHMRA of Harris County
Michael E. Debakey VA Medical Center
Public Agency Mainstream Services Representative

This document was created collaboratively between the City of Houston Housing and Community Development Department and the Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County. Without the time and expertise of the Housing and Community Development Department, this document would not have been possible.