Volusia Flagler County Coalition for the Homeless
Lead Agency and Collaborative Applicant for the Commission on Homelessness
(FL 504-CoC)

Annual Report 2016-17

Overview

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has designated over 400 identified areas throughout the United States to serve as continuums of care. A Continuum of Care (CoC) is a regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals. The Volusia/Flagler County Coalition for the Homeless (VFCCH) is the lead agency for the Commission on Homelessness which represents the HUD designated FL-504 Continuum of Care for Volusia and Flagler counties. The Commission via the lead agency (VFCCH) is responsible for conducting the annual count of the homeless and for identifying the gaps in available housing and services to the subpopulations of homeless, and strategically planning and organizing the expansion of housing and supportive services to meet the needs. These “gaps” are missing services that are needed to ensure that clients can successfully exit homelessness. VFCCH goals and objectives, in alignment with The Commission on Homelessness’ 5 Year Strategic Plan (2017-2022) are in accordance with the Federal Strategy to Prevent and End Homelessness, and as set forth in HUD’s National Performance Objectives for Continuums of Care, as follows:

1. **Prevent Veteran homelessness – Currently at functional “0” in Volusia and Flagler Counties as of 2015**
2. **End chronic homelessness by 2017**
3. **End Unaccompanied Youth Homelessness by 2019**
4. **Prevent and end homelessness for families and children by 2020**
5. **Set a path to ending all types of homelessness by 2020**
By implementing strategies addressed by “Opening Doors”, HUD’s federal Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, and the Florida Office on Homelessness, the vision and intent of Commission on Homelessness’s 5-year strategic plan efforts is ultimately to:

- Re-house or shelter people the moment they ask for help, where no one has to sleep outside who doesn’t want to;
- Permanently house people as quickly and efficiently as possible; and
- Effectively connects homeless households to mainstream self-sufficiency services in order to minimize returns to the homeless system.

To meet its goals, Commission on Homelessness has adopted the following objectives which include:

Objective 1: Enhance the Coordinated Entry System
Objective 2: Assure the Provision of Homeless Prevention, Early Intervention Services and Human Services.
Objective 3: Increase Services, Retool Existing Services and Enhance the Provision of Housing Services
Objective 4: Assure Access to Health Services
Objective 5: Assist Clients to Achieve Economic Stability

Over the last year, VFCCH has successfully applied for and been awarded five HUD CoC grants: Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Grant ($71,645), HMIS II Grant ($51,489), Coordinated Entry Grant ($58,250), Planning Grant ($51,899) and My Place Apartment Permanent Supportive Housing Grant ($189,625) along with three State of Florida DCF grants: Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) ($227,500), Temporary Assistance for Families (TANF) Grant ($51,000) and the Challenge Grant ($205,500). This reflects an overall increase of 71% in VFCCH’s grant capacity which has allowed VFCCH to take a proactive role in providing grant funding to sub-recipient agencies who provide the direct services as well as the full implementation of the Coordinated Entry System. Coordinated Entry is not only required by HUD but more importantly it is essential to the prioritization and placement of individuals and families into permanent housing or referral to prevention services for those at risk of homelessness and homeless individuals and families in our two county area.

Major Accomplishments

- Commission on Homelessness for Volusia Flagler (FL 504 CoC) 2017 Point in Time Count realized another significant drop in Homelessness: From 1005 to 753 individuals (see chart under PIT). This year’s organization of PIT was far superior to our efforts in prior years.
• HUD 2016 CoC competition Score: 169.75 exceeded the 2015 competition score of 168.25 and was well above weighted Median score of 154.5. This allowed the FL 504 CoC to increase HUD funded grants from $1,169,059 to $1,255,558. This included full funding of our Annual Renewal Demand (ARD) along with HUD awarding the 2016 Bonus Grant to Halifax Urban Ministries for RRH in the amount of $86,499.

• VFCCH was awarded 2016 CoC Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) II Grant for the amount of $50,489 which was executed and implemented on April 1, 2017.

• VFCCH implemented its full HUD CoC Coordinated Entry System August 1, 2016 utilizing the HUD Coordinated Entry Grant in conjunction with the 2015 HMIS grant.
  - Implementation of Coordinated Entry Committee to guide and assist in this process.
  - Implementation of Break Out groups
  - Development of a By Name Report through HMIS to track and report on homeless individuals and families

• VFCCH successfully applied for and was awarded the DCF (three year) grants for the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Prevention Grant and Challenge Grant. DCF is currently working with all Lead Agencies to consolidate these grants under the staffing grant or one Unified Grant which will extend through contract year 2018-19.
  - DCF 2017-18 Staffing Grant: $96,428
  - ESG: $227,500
  - TANF: $51,000
  - VFCCH Challenge Grant: $205,500

• VFCCH implemented the Homeless Disadvantaged Grant by the City of NSB; $5,000 to assist with HMIS/Coordinated Entry.

• The funding that flows through VFCCH increased from $686,123 in F/Y 2015-16 to $1,170,190 for F/Y 2016-17 and is projected to increase to $1,209,564 for F/Y 2017-18 (see attached grant schedule)

• VFCCH was instrumental in the development of the Commission on Homelessness 2017 to 2022 Strategic Plan for the FL 504-CoC.

• VFCCH was able to increase staffing by 3.5 individuals/positions
  - Assist with finance, Coordinated Entry and HMIS
Funding and Local Consolidation

Stakeholders from different avenues of the community who represent categories outlined by HUD make up the VFCCH Board of Directors. As required by HUD, there is at least one homeless individual or formerly homeless individual(s) who participate on the Board of Directors. In addition, the President of the Board also serves on the Commission on Homelessness’s Board of directors as the HMIS representative for VFCCH as well as Co-Chair of the HMIS committee. Several other Board members participate on various committees which support the Commission on Homelessness to include the Strategic Planning committee, Coordinated Entry committee and HMIS committee.

Allowable components for ESG funding are Prevention, Rapid Rehousing, Emergency Shelter and Street Outreach. ESG funding flows directly though entitlement districts such as the County of Volusia and non-entitlement areas (Deltona, Port Orange, Daytona Beach and Flagler county) identified by the state of Florida based on population and need. Moving forward, VFCCH will facilitate the non-entitlement ESG funding under a Unified Funding contract for all DCF/State of Florida Contracts. The local funding supports Emergency Shelter, Rapid Rehousing, Prevention and Street Outreach for these non-entitlement areas. Total grant awarded is $227,500. The sub recipients awarded local funding include Halifax Urban Ministries, Salvation Army, New Hope Ministries and Family Life Center of Flagler County.

The County of Volusia which is an entitlement district for ESG, consults with the CoC in formulating its agenda for ESG funding. The County holds community development meetings which are open to the public and requests stakeholders to attend in order to provide the needed input necessary to determine the means by which the funding will be used. Over the last funding cycle, the County of Volusia has used ESG funding for RRH but is shifting its focus to Rapid Rehousing and Prevention for in the coming year (2017-18) in alignment with HUDs goal of ending family homelessness.

VFCCH also administers DCF Challenge Grant and TANF Prevention funding to sub-recipients who provide the direct services to the community. DCF is currently in the process of unifying all three contracts into one consolidated contract under the DCF staffing grant. This consolidation with provide for continuity of services from year to year over the next three years of this consolidated grant term.

VFCCH is tasked with the oversight of all HUD CoC programs whereby HUD contract directly with the direct service agencies. This oversight includes responsibility of consolidating all HUD CoC applications into one master application for the submission of one “Collaborative Application” under HUDs annual CoC competition. VVFCCH is also a recipient of 5 HUD grants: MY Place Apartments Permanent Supportive Housing Grant ($189,625), HMIS Grant ($71,645), Coordinated Entry Grant ($58,250), HMIS II Grant ($50,489) and the CoC Planning Grant ($51,899). Total VFCCH CoC awards for F/Y 2017-18: $421,908.
VFCCH is also the lead agency and facilitates the Children and family Advisory Board (CFAB) Basic Needs, Emergency Assistance and Homeless Prevention Grant administered through the County of Volusia. This grant adds support where prevention efforts are essential. According to the 2017 United Way ALICE (Asset Limited Income Restrained & Employed) report released earlier this year, 42% of Volusia County and 45% of Flagler County residents are employed below a wage that can sustain them in their housing without assistance. While finding solutions for individuals and families are of primary focus, prevention efforts must also continue to be addressed. Over the last year there were 4730 unduplicated households assisted with this funding.

Point In Time Count (PIT) and Clients Served

PIT 2017: Sheltered: 305 Unsheltered: 448 Total: 753

The Point in Time Count is a reflection of what has been implemented over the last year and captures progress or regression in our efforts to prevent and end homelessness. Keep in mind it is a snapshot or an indicator of homelessness to be used as a tool that can be compared over time. It does not reflect an absolute accurate count of the number of homeless individuals (this is an impossible task) but gives us a good idea of the direction we are moving.

- The Volusia Flagler CoC has reallocated all of its transitional housing to Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) and Rapid Rehousing (RRH). This reallocation has decreased the amount of transitional housing beds as identified in the PIT count while increasing funding for RRH and PSH and placements. From 2014 to present, $749,782 in CoC transitional Housing funding has been reallocated to either RRH or PSH in our continuum of care, increasing our ability to permanently house individuals and families.

- The Volusia Flagler CoC has seen a dramatic increase in state Emergency Services Grant (ESG) RRH funding (for non-entitlement areas) and through the County (entitlement) ESG programs over the last year. The resulting effect was the increase in availability of RRH for singles and families both chronically homeless and homeless for placement into housing through Coordinated Entry. RRH funding increased from approximately $425,000 in FY 2015-16 to $759,000 in FY 2016-17.

- The Salvation Army Supportive Services for Veterans families (SSVF) program was the first in our state to effectively end veteran homelessness as vetted by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) and has maintained that status to date. From October 1, 2015 through September 2016, the Salvation Army SSVF program assisted 377 veterans (single individuals and family members) with RRH or Prevention services as reported in HMIS in order to assist them with gaining access to permanent housing or maintaining their housing. This had a significant impact on the overall homeless count.

- The Bridge bed program implemented by the Salvation Army facilitated 138 individuals being linked to permanent housing solutions from January 26 2016 through August 1, 2016 by making use of Challenge Grant (DCF/ State) funding.
- The number of individuals and families served through CoC and ESG RRH in Volusia/Flagler from January 26, 2016 to January 24, 2017 totaled 236 clients. This was a significant increase from 135 clients in the previous year.

- The number of clients served through Permanent Supportive Housing in Volusia/Flagler over the past year was 189 clients made up of families and individuals. There were 59 turnover beds, meaning that there were 59 beds available for new homeless/chronically homeless during the year. The Housing stability rate was 84.62%, meaning that more than 8 out of 10 of the individuals/families placed were successful with maintaining housing.

- Travelers Aid, a complimentary component of the bridge bed program, was implemented as a diversion technique to assist those who came to our area and became homeless with means to return to their place of origin (provided someone could verify that they had a permanent place to stay upon their return). There were 201 individuals to include singles, families and families with children that were assisted with Travers Aid from Jan 26, 2016 through August 1, 2016 as reported in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

- As we move forward with Coordinated Entry, we are slowly but surely increasing our effectiveness with identifying the chronically homeless and homeless, tracking them for prioritization and placement on the By Name registry to be matched with available housing solutions. From August 1, 2016 through January 24, 2017, there were 56 individuals (individuals and families) placed into permanent housing through the Coordinated Entry process as tracked in HMIS.

**Conclusion:** The direction we are going in clearly indicates that, as a Continuum of Care, we have made substantial progress in reducing homelessness. We can attribute many factors to the decrease in homelessness. Our local economy continued to improve. Unemployment rates continue to drop resulting in fewer people experiencing homelessness (albeit 42-45% of households in Flagler and Volusia remain asset limited and income restrained). Veteran homelessness has been eliminated over the last 3 years. In addition, we cannot discount and must acknowledge the dramatic impact resulting from the shift toward RRH, PSH and Prevention efforts in reducing our homeless population. The numbers speak for themselves. RRH and PSH have proven effective nationwide and their validity as tools to effectively end homelessness are being demonstrated locally as well.
Coordinated Entry and Housing First

VFCCH has implemented the Coordinated Entry system for Volusia and Flagler counties. The coordinated entry system is the key component that is now linking homeless/at risk of homeless families and individuals to appropriate resources covers the entire geographic area for the FL- 504 CoC. Part of the overall coordinated entry effort is the prudent use of existing programs, and strategic collaborations within the two counties and throughout the several municipalities/communities that exist. The overarching goal is to provide coordinated entry by leveraging existing resources and aligning mainstream resources and existing systems.

Under the current system, specific agencies that are linked to the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) act as the single points of entry or coordinated access points of entry in geographically relevant areas of the continuum (most of which have already been established; coordinated access points are located in areas which have a high need for homeless services as indicated by the Homeless Count). VFCCH continues to reach out to and expand the scope of agencies who are participating into HMIS in order to extend coverage to the fullest extent possible.
Each coordinated entry site also serves as a housing resource within its respective area. Outreach programs, Emergency Shelters and Transitional Housing programs and agencies providing housing services as well as Housing providers in each area access housing assistance through direct referrals within the HMIS system and as monitored by the Systems Navigator. The System Navigator manages a central prioritization “By Name” list based the Vulnerability Index - Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT) & Family SPDAT assessment tools conducted by the various agencies in order to identify the most vulnerable population with the longest duration of homelessness and provide assistance for direct and immediate entry into different housing options. In addition the system Navigator may directly assist with utility deposits to facilitate entry into housing where no other subsidy is available. The system provides for the following:

- Standardized assessment
- Prioritization utilizing the VI-SPDAT & Family SPDAT
- Housing plan development
- Referral/placement in or diversion from emergency shelters
- Referrals/placement in Rapid re-housing
- Referrals/direct placement in interim housing
- Referrals/direct placement in permanent housing
- Coordination and referral to direct financial assistance
- Ongoing follow-up services commensurate with the household’s need

VFCCH facilitates monthly coordinated Entry meetings to identify issues with implementation, coordination, housing opportunities and formulate policies and procedures related to the coordinated Entry system.

The system navigator also conducts bi-weekly providers meetings and break out groups to identify hard to place clients, barriers to entry into permanent housing or resolve issues related to barriers to entry with landlords in order to identify solutions for entry into permanent housing.

In cases involving Domestic Violence and the need for confidentiality, the CoC educates all providers on the DV programs available for referral and the need for confidentiality. DV clients who present to agencies can be referred to a DV provider by initiating contact on their own or through confidential outreach. No identifying information is exchanged other than the need for services. Based on client preference, referring agencies also have the option to assess the DV client for direct services for available housing in the area.

**Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)**

VFCCH is the HMIS Lead Agency for the Commission on Homelessness. Current and prospective grantees have agreed to enter data into this database. The HMIS database is the basis of and provides for coordination of services. Participating agencies can view available resources offered through other CoC agencies and make the appropriate referrals in “real time” when services are actually needed. System users can view client information, reducing duplication of efforts by clients and agencies which in turn will improve outcomes for clients and agencies alike.
VFCCH is currently pursuing an HMIS expansion in Volusia and Flagler counties to increase participation in the database and increase communication between agencies and therefore coordination of services across providers, a requirement of the Hearth Act and Interim Rule (CFR 24 Part 78). With the implementation of the coordinated entry (assessment and intake) system which uses the HMIS system as its central point of reference, the importance of HMIS cannot be understated. Agencies who have access to the HMIS database will be able to identify families in need and match them with available openings in the various housing components as indicated in the HMIS by the participating agencies. VFCCH provides ongoing training, updates and software to providers who utilize HMIS. Specifically, training and support for coordination of services to improve outcomes for clients and to better utilize limited resources would be prioritized.

Over the last two years, VFCCH has been awarded two HUD HMIS grants which has dramatically changes the ability of VFCCH, as the HMIS lead Agency to assist direct service agencies in the way of additional training, assistance with cost of new licenses, and allowed for VFCCH to employ a monitoring team which can assist direct services agencies with identification of areas where they are excelling as well as areas where there may be deficiencies.

Currently there are 16 provider agencies who participate in HMIS and over 93 licensed users that enter into 107 projects facilitated through HMIS.

**My Place apartments**

VFCCH has traditionally not been a direct service provider, however assumed the facilitation of the Windward “My Place HUD CoC Grant” in July 2015. VFCCH was monitored by HUD in June of 2016 and given a clean bill of health for all components that were audited by the HUD representative.

My Place targets chronically homeless individuals with severe and persistent mental illness. VFCCH, as the HUD CoC Lead Agency, is tasked with being the model for all other permanent supportive housing projects targeting chronically homeless individuals and therefore ascribed to the Housing First model. VFCCH partners with SMA Behavioral who provides case management services for the tenants in this housing. In accordance with the Housing first model, VFCCH accepts all referrals through Coordinated Entry and therefore does not screen out based on substance use, instability of mental health, current or past legal issues, credit history, income status, sexual identity, or domestic abuse issues. My Place apartment Annual progress report for the grant year 2016 to 2016 demonstrated an 89% housing stability Measure which in essence meant that 34 out of the 38 individuals who were tenants in My Place either remained stably housed at “My Place” or transitioned into permanent housing of their own.