



HEARTLAND
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HOUSED



Heartland HOUSED: Springfield and Sangamon County's Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness 2023 Annual Report with 2024 Strategic Emphasis

STRATEGY 1: Create safe, effective housing opportunities

1. Create a Housing Task Force to support creation of homeless housing, advocate for funding for housing, and create a needs assessment/plan for government funding sources.

- The Housing Task Force has been established and is meeting bi-monthly. The focus for 2024 is adding additional members to the task force, supporting capacity building initiatives that will lead to more developers working to create affordable housing in Sangamon County, and driving community efforts to better understand local housing stock (with an emphasis on rental units) and quality of available housing.
- HCoC Housing Navigation services recruited 11 new landlords to work with Supportive Housing programs, developed partnership with State of IL's SRN Program (State Referral Network), fostered strong connection between the HCoC and the Springfield Housing Authority, and administered the Landlord Risk Mitigation Fund.
- Springfield Housing Authority created plan to support the HCoC and create new housing pathways through a Moving On Program and new vouchers through Move to Work Program.
- In 2023, Heartland HOUSED and the Heartland Continuum of Care (HCoC) have been supporting developers and organizations working to pursue Illinois Department of Housing Authority (IDHA) Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) funding. One developer applied in the 2024 IHDA PSH grant cycle for a new PSH development in Springfield.
- In November of 2023, Park Ave Apartments were opened and will provide housing for 33 people through the Heartland Continuum of Care Coordinated Entry System. This development was funded through the IHDA PSH grant and City of Springfield Housing and Urban Development (HUD) HOME Investment Partnership Program.

2. Create 765 Permanent Housing Opportunities.

The goal in 2023 was to create 100 new Rapid Rehousing (RRH) opportunities and 100 new Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) opportunities. Our community made notable progress in this area, funding was allocated through the Heartland Continuum of Care to create:

98 New Units of RRH

42 New Units of PSH

- **State Illinois Department of Human Services Continuum of Care funding:** will create 27 new units of PSH, 53 new units of long-term RRH
- **Emergency Solutions Grant:** 15 long-term RRH opportunities
- **Emergency Food and Shelter Program:** piloted short-term RRH and created 20 housing opportunities
- **Sangamon County Community Resources:** supported 10 RRH opportunities
- **HUD Funding** - renewal units/already existing (54 PSH, 5 long-term RRH, already existing), 2 new PSH units. New HUD CoC Funding application included 6 new units of PSH, 6 new units of RRH. We will learn if we receive this funding in 2024.
- **EHV** - 37 households were helped to leave PSH and other programs in the past 18 months, continuing a priority for vouchers in this neighborhood would greatly expand PSH capacity.

Anticipated housing opportunities in 2024:

- **SIU and Helping Hands are partnering on a program with funding from the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority allocated through the Springfield Police Department to create a FUSE (Frequent Users of Systems Engagement) program.** This partnership will create 15 PSH opportunities.
- **City of Springfield HOME-ARP Funding** - could create 50 new units of PSH beginning in Spring of 2024.
- **Springfield Housing Authority Move to Work Initiative** could create 40 new housing voucher opportunities for people exiting homelessness and a new Moving On initiative will create a new pathway for households in Permanent Supportive Housing programs to exit the program to housing stability through a housing voucher.

3. Build capacity in the community to build, rehabilitate, and provide housing to homeless and at-risk populations.

Relationships with Windsor Development led to the completion of one PSH project with another application being submitted in the next IHDA PSH round. The Housing Task Force hopes to support further development capacity and Heartland HOUSED staff will work to support other developers interested in developing housing units for people exiting homelessness.

4. Ensure permanent housing projects are fully and sustainably funded, including funding for operations and supportive services that support people experiencing homelessness to maintain housing.

- The HCoC has prioritized PSH and RRH in all funding opportunities while working with other funders like United Way to encourage preferences for these programs to increase stability of funding.
- In 2024, Heartland HOUSED will receive 501(c)3 status and begin planning additional fundraising to address needs for flexible funds and funding gaps to reach housing goals.

STRATEGY 1 - 2024 STRATEGIC FOCUS ACTION STEPS

- **Develop deeper understanding in the community around quality and availability of rental housing stock and conduct a needs assessment.**
- **Recruit 10 new landlords to work with HCoC partner agencies' supportive housing programs.**
- **Recruit and support capacity development initiatives for those interested in developing units of housing including training and pursuing Technical Assistance.**
- **Develop fundraising initiative to provide funding to create additional PSH and RRH opportunities including rental subsidy and case management costs.**

STRATEGY 2: Improve the effectiveness of the homeless system.

1. Develop practices to identify and link unsheltered Sangamon County residents to crisis and permanent housing and other needed resources.

- The Street Outreach Task Force Group meets bi-weekly to update the by-names list and the group has been having consistent monthly outreach outings.
- Heartland HOUSED staff have worked to partner and integrate community outreach efforts into system outreach efforts by outreaching with the St. Al's Homeless Ministry every other weekend.
- Springfield Police Department is piloting an outreach initiative called SEED (Springfield, Empower, Equip, and Deflect) that only takes referrals from officers at this point, there are hopes to expand eventually to be able to take referrals directly from the community members. Through the SEED initiative, outreach specialists will continuously engage individuals to try to get them connected to services and to get services delivered to them. Heartland HOUSED staff serve on the SEED leadership team to ensure efforts are integrated into the homelessness system.

- Coordinated Entry training has been expanded and made more accessible so more people conducting outreach are able to create access to our Coordinated Entry list.
- A Street Outreach Community Standards draft has been completed.
- The HCoC allocated funding to Helping Hands for outreach staff. Job descriptions for outreach staff have been posted and Helping Hands is working on hiring staff.
- Heartland HOUSED and the HCoC began work with Community Solutions (the same organization that helped Rockford reach functional zero homelessness for chronically homeless and veteran populations) on an 18-month technical assistance process that will assist us in the development of a quality By-Names-List of all persons experiencing homelessness in Springfield/Sangamon County.
- Heartland HOUSED and the HCoC began work with RE!NSTITUTE to plan a 100-Day Challenge in the first Quarter of 2024 aimed at improving how the system responds to unsheltered homelessness.

2. Build diversion strategies and resources and link them to existing programs to support returning households to housing immediately.

- A Housing Problem-solving policy on the HCOC level has been created, which includes diversion and homelessness prevention and the housing problem-solving flexible fund. We received a \$50,000 grant from Aetna and the goal is to use that fund to support diversion and rapid exit with an emphasis on persons who can not access shelter.
- Shelter Diversion funding was included in the IDHS CoC funding and allocated to Helping Hands, Contact Ministry, and Phoenix Center.

3. Create stable, effective, community-wide crisis housing that serves all homeless subpopulations and supports movement into housing.

Helping Hands Shelter is planning to open on January 2nd in their new facility that will include 140 beds (30 designated for women), 24-hour care, two health clinic spaces, and close integration with housing-focused services. Additionally, grant funding has been received to pilot a Medical Respite Care program within the shelter.

4. Ensure housing-focused day services are available to ensure safety, protection from inclement weather, and access to referrals, services, and support.

Availability of day services has increased within the last year with Helping Hands North providing day services and being open 24/7 and Washington Street Mission expanded their hours. The new Helping Hands facility will further address this need moving forward.

5. Develop community-wide standards for community programs addressing homelessness. Street Outreach, Emergency Shelter, and Permanent Supportive Housing Community Standards have been drafted and will be voted on by the HCoC Board in 2024.

6. Community-wide, strategically focus and prioritize support for recently housed individuals to ensure housing stability.

- Supportive Housing Learning Labs have been planned in 2024 to increase training opportunities for service providers. Four different Learning Labs will be held. The first one is in January it is based on the Standards of Quality Supportive Housing, which strives to build the capacity of the supportive housing industry to create and operate high-quality, effective, and sustainable housing units. The training will provide definitions, outcomes, and components that comprise a quality project. Woven through the session content we will help participants to understand the implications of racial disparities and institutional barriers that impact housing for persons facing challenges of homelessness, disabilities, and poverty.
- Supportive Housing task group will be relaunched in 2024 through the Supportive Housing Learning Labs. This group will be a space to hear from direct service providers about what challenges they are experiencing. This group will identify additional supportive services needed in the community such as mental health, recovery, and behavioral health services, and report needs for training and additional services to the HCoC Board.

STRATEGY 2 - 2024 STRATEGIC FOCUS ACTION STEPS

- **Reaching the Quality Data standard through Community Solutions and Built for Zero and developing a By-Names-List of all persons experiencing homelessness in Springfield and Sangamon County**
- **Increase the number of Street Outreach staff in the community and the integration of Street Outreach efforts in the HCoC Homeless Management Information System**
- **Identify additional improvements necessary to improve the system through**
- **RE!NSTITUTE 100-Day Challenge**
- **Utilize HOME-ARP Funding to Conduct a Housing Surge for Chronically homeless households**
- **Increase the level of training and support for case managers and organizations providing Supportive Housing**
- **Train Organizations, Funders, and the Community on HCoC Community Standards**
- **Expand the availability of Mental Health and behavioral health services that support both the Emergency Shelter System and those placed in housing opportunities**
- **Explore the possibility of establishing a 708 board (Community Mental Health Board) for the purposes of planning and funding mental health, developmental disability and substance abuse services.**

STRATEGY 3: Coordinate with other systems of care to reduce homelessness.

Cross System

1. Create systems to support cross-system data sharing including expanding HMIS usage, data exchange, and easily accessible dashboard to reduce duplication of services across full community, while protecting individual privacy.

Heartland HOUSED staff worked with the Cambridge Coalition to develop a plan for a Technical Assistance program that could help bring the Cambridge model to Springfield/Sangamon County in the future if funded.

2. Improve and expand cross-system service coordination and referrals to be more transparent and effective and to reduce duplication.

The development of the Sangamon County Re-Entry Council and the Discharge Planning/Complex Care Task Group has created avenues to network partners, provide education, and work toward improving referrals.

3. Improve access to treatment and services system-wide by restructuring access and program requirements to reduce barriers (including transportation), implement best practices, and ensure welcoming, culturally specific, trauma-informed services.

Inadequate community services for treatment, psychiatric, and mental health services are frequently elevated as highest priority challenges for service providers. Heartland HOUSED is leading an effort to explore the process and feasibility of bringing a 708/Community Mental Health board to the community.

Healthcare

4. Build on coordinated entry system to improve navigation and coordination of the homeless and health care systems of care by individuals experiencing homelessness.

Expanded Coordinated Entry training and education will improve the ability of healthcare and other partners to help people access Coordinated Entry.

5. Improve access to dental health care services for people experiencing homelessness.

Central Counties Health Centers Dental clinic helps to provide dental services for people experiencing homelessness.

6. Improve discharge planning practices, ensuring access to medicine and appropriate supports for people experiencing homelessness, and specifically, create 10 units bridge housing with integrated case management for those discharged from hospitals and treatment facilities to ensure stability during transition to housing.

- The newly formed Discharge Planning/Complex Care Task Group has worked to help partners from the Healthcare Community and those that provide Homeless Services identify needs, challenges, and opportunities for better coordination of discharge planning.
- Heartland HOUSED received grants through the Illinois Public Health Institute to help develop a Medical Respite Care pilot program with plans to launch in Quarter One of 2024 in partnership with Helping Hands.

Public Safety System

7. Engaging all facets of the criminal legal system and community supports, improve discharge planning to ensure people exiting public safety system have housing access and support.

Heartland HOUSED supports the Sangamon County Re-Entry Council that has created a resource guide for returning citizens. The Sangamon County Re-Entry Council works to recruit and engage partners and stakeholders from all facets of the criminal legal system.

8. Continue to provide clinical services for persons experiencing homelessness that coordinate with law enforcement and court services to increase engagement and collaboration with new and existing partners.

Helping Hands facilitates a Case Conferencing effort in collaboration with Sangamon County Problem Solving Courts, probation, and community partners to collaborate to help individuals access services and stable housing.

9. Improve access to criminal legal system diversion court programs for people experiencing homelessness, including by expanding programs, destigmatizing programs, and focusing engagement on underserved populations.

10. Improve access to detox beds and other community resources to avoid criminal legal system involvement.

Community efforts like the Sangamon County Re-Entry Council continue to work to make progress on this action step.

Workforce Development

- 11. Identify and engage employers to hire and train people experiencing homelessness.**
- 12. Create resources to address system gaps for populations that experience economic disparities in this community, including people who have disabilities, who are Black, or who are seniors.**
- 13. Provide case management support to employers and employees who are currently or formerly homeless to improve relationships and placement success.**
- 14. Leverage supported employment programs and resources designed for the specific challenges people experiencing homelessness may experience, which may include, for example, shelter or housing, identification document access, transportation, childcare, tools/ uniform stipends, literacy education, and GED programs.**
- 15. Create Individualized Placement Support (IPS) for employment for individuals with high needs or barriers.**

A Workforce Development Task Group will be created in 2024 to make progress on these initiatives.

STRATEGY 3 - 2024 STRATEGIC FOCUS ACTION STEPS

- Pilot Medical Respite Care beds and develop sustainable streams of funding to continue the program.**
- Increase the number of organizations and sectors participating in Discharge planning efforts to include the healthcare system, mental health services, and the justice system.**
- Develop Workforce Development Task Group to create new initiatives to connect individuals exiting homelessness to employment opportunities.**
- Help build capacity for behavioral health services. Inadequate community services for treatment, psychiatric, and mental health services are frequently elevated as highest priority challenges for service providers.**
- Pursue funding for staff, initiatives to improve Youth Homelessness system and response.**
- Secure funding for Cambridge Coalition Technical Assistance on data-sharing and cross-system collaboration.**
- Work with the Sangamon County Re-Entry Council to establish new partnerships and set goals toward meeting Strategy 3 Action Steps.**

STRATEGY 4: Community works collaboratively to address homelessness.

1. Develop Strategy Board

The Heartland HOUSED Strategy Board was developed in October of 2022.

2. Staff

The Strategic Plan calls for 6 staff supporting system efforts and strategic plan implementation (3 staff at Heartland HOUSED in place with 4th staff expected to be hired in Quarter 1 of 2024, 2 contracts in place for HMIS and Housing Navigation Staff)

3. Expand Funding

Reaching the goals of the strategic plan will require additional funding and broadening funding sources. The State of IL significantly increased funding to our community in 2023. Additionally, the HCoC secured new project funding from HUD in 2023 for the first time in over a decade.

2022 State and Federal Funding Levels for the HCoC = \$647,667

(HUD = \$421,713, ESG = \$130,954, and HP = \$95,000)

2023 State and Federal Funding Levels for the HCoC = \$2,118,739

(HUD = \$457,659, ESG = \$176,445, HP = \$219,000, IDHS CoC= \$1,265,635)

Additional Funding Opportunities in Motion:

- **HOME-ARP - \$2.4 Million** - City of Springfield and HCoC have worked with HUD for Technical Assistance. The HOME-ARP plan will go through an amendment process to better align these funds with this strategic plan. Funding is likely to start impacting the community in the first half 2024.
- **\$50,000** Grant Received from AETNA to create a Flexible Housing Problem Solving Pool. The HCoC developed a Housing Problem Solving Policy for utilization of these funds to help people exit homelessness quickly.
- **Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln Funders Collaborative** - Heartland HOUSED and the CFLL are developing a concept of a Funders Collaborative to help funds to spur innovation and to mitigate homelessness.

4. Improve the collection and use of data related to homelessness, including community dashboards.

HCoC joined the Illinois Quality Data Collaborative and started accessing Technical Assistance in Fall 2023 to support the development of quality data, a real time by-names list of all people experiencing homelessness, and community dashboards powered by Community Solutions and the Built for Zero movement. The collaborative will be an 18-month process.

5. Coordinate a two-way community communications strategy

- Quarterly reports have been recorded to demonstrate progress on implementation
- Launching Housing Helpline will be a key element in connecting people in need to resources, additionally staff are developing intake guides for all housing programs and developing the resources page on the Heartland HOUSED website
- Lived Experience Focus Groups and Heartland Continuum of Care General Membership meetings provide avenues for feedback from people utilizing system sources and stakeholders

6. Respond to citizen concerns about homelessness and siting Housing. Addressing NIMBY, increase engagement with neighborhood associations, develop a Good neighbor policy

Heartland HOUSED and HCoC Staff participated in a Strategic Communications Training and Technical Assistance process hosted by Spitfire and JP Morgan Chase in Fall 2023 to begin the process of planning conversations around NIMBY and other challenges.

7. Create a strong, sustainable Lived Experience Advisory Board

- In 2023, the HCoC developed a Lived Experience Collaboration Policy. Funding has been included in the Heartland HOUSED budget to compensate people with lived experience for their work and efforts to improve our system to address homelessness.
- Heartland HOUSED System Coordinator began monthly Focus Groups in Fall of 2023 as the initial step to developing the advisory board in early 2024
- A Youth Action Board was developed in partnership with the Youth Service Bureau in June of 2023 to help the HCoC better understand needs and solutions to youth homelessness.

STRATEGY 4 - 2024 STRATEGIC FOCUS ACTION STEPS

- **Develop community facing data dashboards through Community Solutions Built for Zero partnership.**
- **Launch of Heartland Lived Experience Advisory Board.**
- **Fundraising campaign designed to support additional housing opportunities.**
- **Assist in rolling out of the HOME-ARP program.**
- **Heartland HOUSED will pursue new funding avenues for Youth Homelessness, Rapid Rehousing for people fleeing Domestic Violence, and Street Outreach.**
- **Heartland HOUSED will secure new grants, funding partners, and partnerships to diversify funding for solutions to homelessness in Springfield/Sangamon County.**