

Reducing Homelessness in Dane County

As we continue down the path of reducing homelessness, we continue to learn much nationally and locally about best practices. We have made substantive progress on our goal to reduce homelessness among children by 50% by 2010. As we work with and in the community on this issue, we'd like to share our progress and new knowledge, and recognize community economic and social changes.

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Why it Matters:

United Way of Dane County identified reducing homelessness as a part of its Agenda for Change in 2003 and established a goal of reducing homelessness for families with children 50% by 2010.

- Our community spends over \$11.5 million dollars of government and private funding on shelter-related costs.
- There are 308 shelter beds and 9 shelter programs in Dane County, annual cost: \$9,700,000 (CDBG Annual report)
- It costs 66% less (\$12,500 compared to \$36,000) to provide a supportive housing apartment including case management for a year compared to cost of sheltering a homeless family for a year
- Of children who are homeless:
 - 25% have witnessed acts of violence within their family
 - Twice as likely to go hungry
 - Nine times more likely to repeat a grade
 - In New York, homeless children school attendance rate was at 51% compared with 84% for the general population
- In 2006, there were 125 homeless children served through the Temporary Education Program in Madison Schools (MMSD Annual Homeless Report)
- In 2005 there were 447 families with 1,355 individuals among shelter users
 - 834 were children (compared to 865 in 2004)
- Affordable housing gap for Dane County is 21,000 units or 12% of the housing in Dane County, up from 12,800 units in 2004
- 83% of food pantry users spend 35% or more of their income on rent; 90% are food insecure
- 89% of denied rental applications are due to unfavorable credit/rent history, less than 6% for criminal record

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United Way
of Dane County

What are the strategies

As we reported in 2005, the three major strategies to reduce homelessness are:

Removing barriers to obtaining available housing for homeless and at-risk populations

- Putting homeless families in housing quickly, then adding support and assistance to increase stability. This is called 'Housing First.'
- Financial education and counseling to improve credit histories and create housing resumes
- Avoiding displacement of at-risk families already in housing

Increasing ways to subsidize housing costs

- Provide greater access to surplus food and other resources such as earned income tax credits that increase income available for housing
- Seeking ways to reduce rent so that families pay no more than 30% of their incomes on housing

Increasing supply of affordable housing

- Sustaining existing affordable housing stock
- Creating newly affordable housing by improving older housing stock
- Creating affordable home ownership opportunities

Our work on this strategy has re-focused, with the increase in supply of affordable housing. The primary thrust now moves to the other two strategies.

Implementing the Mobilization Plan

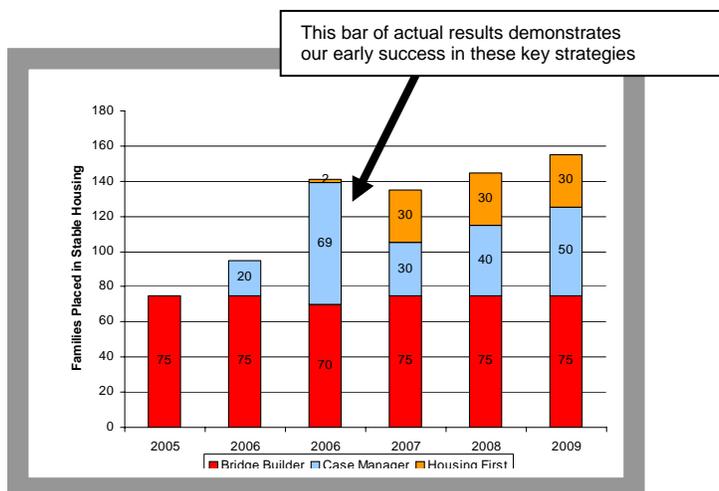
The **Housing In Action Leadership Team** (HALT) continues to help the larger community deliver on a community vision to improve permanent housing for our residents. After significant community engagement and research on best practices, this group established a Mobilization Plan to engage our community resources to address this vision. The plan was approved June, 2005 by the United Way Board of Directors. Our objective: By instituting strategies focused on landlord and tenant connections, financial counseling, food access and direct access to permanent housing we will reduce the number of homeless families with minor children in Dane County by 50% in five years.

From Initial Plan approved in June, 2005:

Strategy	Resources Needed:	Impact on Targeted Families:	Status as of November, 2006
Bridge Builder	\$30,000 annually—begins late 2005, inc. funds for eviction prevention	25% of families = 75 annually based on application rejections	Building Bridges Implemented. By year end, 75 families successfully averted from eviction or obtained housing after denied applications based on credit issues
Case Management	\$200,000 annually for 5 additional case managers and work on skills development and support—begins mid-2006	Building to 50 families annually by 5th year	69 additional families provided case mgt thru new United Way funding UWDC's Case Management Symposium with 250 participants in 4/06 Sessions II and III -Nov. '06 and Feb. '07
Housing First	At \$7,800 per family = \$234,000/yr at full impl. + training funds at start-up—begins late 2006	30 annually beginning in year three = 90 fam. in 5 yrs	\$17,000 in new case mgt for this group, 2 families in '06 \$29,299 in breakthrough UWDC funding Habitat for Humanity and IHN also in pre-development of housing units.
Food access	Collaboration among partners, Capital purchases Staff to transport, Some Add'l food funding	100% of homeless families assisted in mtg housing cost	21% increase in food distributed \$32,065 in new dollars for food resource improvements in '06

Results

Following is a graph that summarizes the planned cumulative impact of the three mobilization plan strategies over the five years of implementation against the actual implementation in 2006.



Measuring and Reporting Results

Data management and monitoring

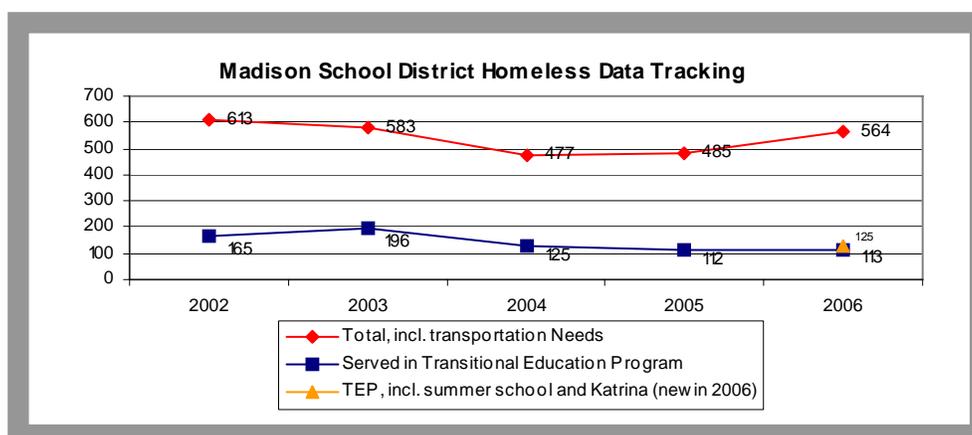
The Basic Needs Community Solution Team receives regular reports on community indicators and individual outcome reports from programs funded through United Way. Regular reports are also reviewed by the Housing In Action Leadership Team. Our key indicators are the numbers of homeless children served in the homeless network, the numbers of individuals who avoid eviction and the increased distribution of surplus food, as follows:

Decrease in homeless children in MMSD

There are a huge number of variables involved in the identification of students who are homeless. MMSD primarily identifies homeless students based on a request for transportation. There are distinct groups with changing realities included in this number:

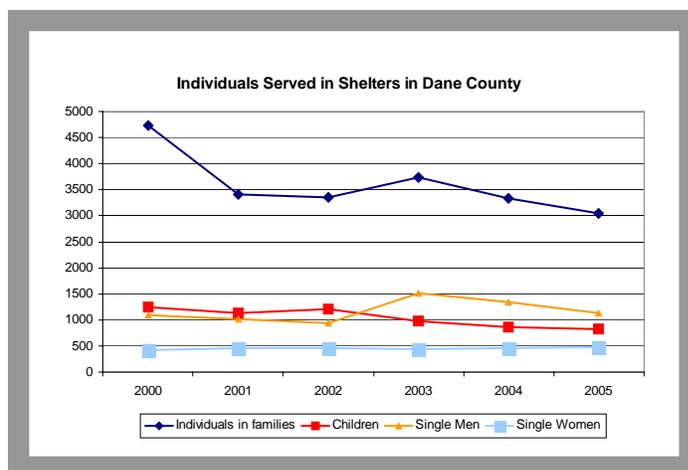
- Children whose homelessness led to being served at the TEP sites. This number increased by 13 between 2005 and 2006, including 3 Katrina evacuees (d below) and 9 summer school children (c below). Net of these two new factors there was an increase of 1 TEP enrollee. (The district had predicted through Sept, 2006 that the number was decreasing, but data reports proved otherwise.)
- Children who access transportation only so they can get to their 'school of origin.' This program expanded greatly in 2005-6, resulting in an 25% increase from 272 to 338 students and a budget increase of \$45,467 between 2005 and 2006.
- Teenagers: District outreach during 2006 to identify high school age homeless youth, often who are independent of their families increased by 20 the number of homeless high schoolers.
- Homeless children who participated in the summer school, for the first time in 2005-2006 accounted for 9 of those served in the TEP sites.
- Katrina Evacuees. There were 7 children (3 in the TEP sites) served who were Katrina evacuees in 2005-06.

Category:	2004-'05	2005-'06	Change:
TEP students	112	113 +3 Katrina Evacuees + 9 summer school enrollees 125 total	.8% increase 10.6% increase
Transportation related district wide housing instability	373	415 + 4 Katrina Evacuees + 20 new high school outreach 439 total	11.2% increase 17.7% increase

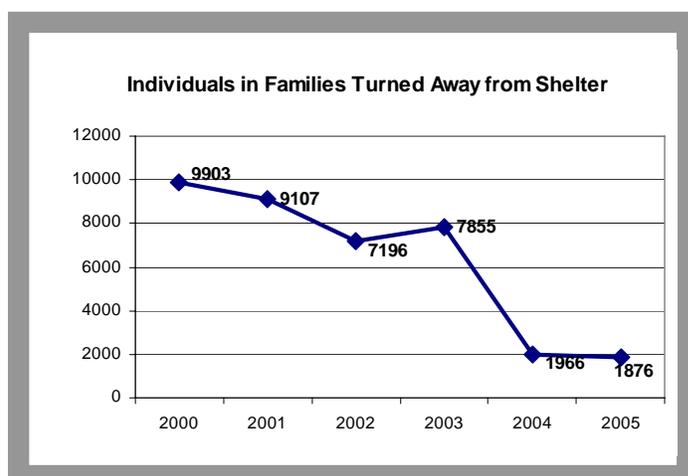


Decrease in Children Served in Shelters

As the length of time in shelter increases and attention is given to creating permanent solutions for families, there has been a decrease in the numbers of families and children in the shelter system, as shown by this chart.

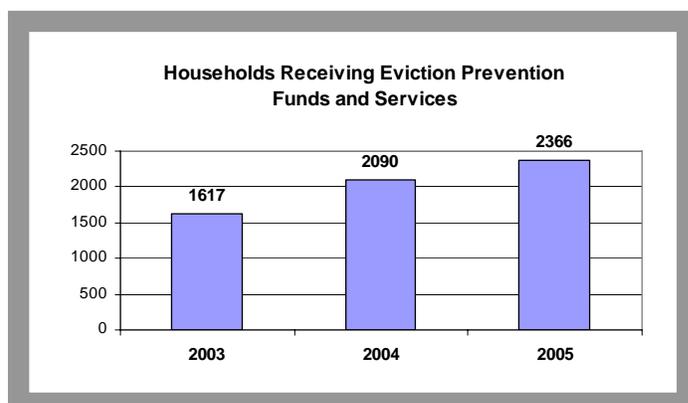


At the same time, the numbers of individuals turned away from shelter has decreased. The increased attention to finding and preserving permanent solutions, combined with the increase in the availability of affordable housing have resulted in fewer turn-aways from shelter, as indicated in this chart.



Pre-eviction interventions and funding

There has been an increase in funding and attention to the importance of avoiding evictions. The numbers of families receiving financial education, eviction prevention funding and work with landlords has increased, as shown by this data compiled from the City of Madison CDBG annual report on homelessness.



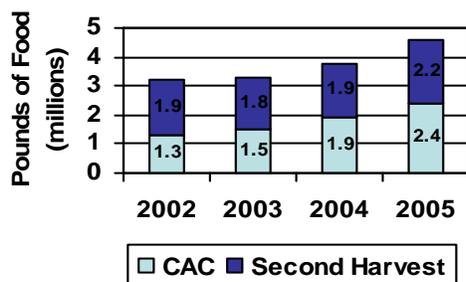
Food as a Housing Strategy

One United Way of Dane County strategy for reducing and preventing homelessness in our community is to subsidize housing costs by providing greater access to surplus foods. By decreasing the strain of food costs in household budgets and maximizing available financial resources for housing, a family will not have to choose between feeding the family or paying the rent.

Dane County's existing network of strong food pantries and service providers committed to assisting those in need puts us in an excellent position to eliminate hunger as a method to maximize resources and prevent homelessness in our community. Our goal is to increase the availability of surplus food in Dane County by 50% in 3 years.

We are already seeing significant progress towards our goal. Between 2004 and 2005, Second Harvest and Community Action Coalition reported a total increase of 21%, going from 3.8 million pounds in 2004 to 4.6 million pounds in 2005. A number of food pantries have converted to client choice models including some of the major food pantries in our area. First United Methodist Church, a very strong partner in our efforts, has also paved the way by increasing the frequency with which pantry users can access their resources with great results. In 2005 and 2006, United Way focused significant additional funds into surplus food efforts including expansion of mobile food pantry options in rural Dane County, capital expenditures approved through our loaned executive group such as a fork lift and refrigeration units, and pre-packaged meals for emergencies.

Surplus food distributed to food pantries and meal sites in the Dane County area

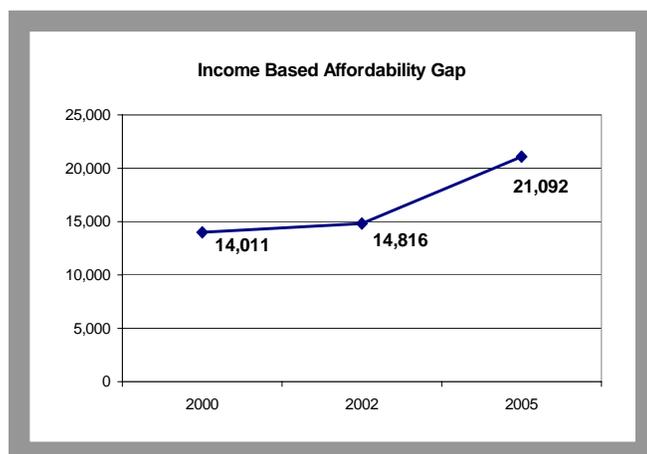


Quantifying the Needs Gap

There are three ways to assess the housing affordability needs gap: the actual cost of rent, the income families have available to pay for rent, and the personal vulnerability issues of the families seeking affordable apartments.

1. Actual Cost of Rent, What is 'affordable housing'?

In 2000, an estimated 43,000 Dane County families had annual incomes at or below \$29,420. Using housing industry standards recommending that no more than 30% of household income should be spent on housing expenses, the maximum affordable monthly housing expense for a family of four at this income is \$735. Fair Market Rent for a 3-bedroom apartment in Dane County in 2000 was \$938. 42% of renters earning less than 80% of median family income paid 30% or more of their income to rent and 50% of them were families.



Households spending 30% or more of their income on rent face a heavier housing burden. The gap of persons unable to find affordable housing has grown in our community in the last three years. There are 27,971 households in our community with incomes less than \$20,000 a year. There are only 6,879 units available at an affordable rent of \$500/month or less for this group, leaving a gap of 21,092 units, up from 14,816 units in 2002. These families can not afford even the most reasonable 'market rate' apartments, leading to development and work on strategies to help support their actual housing costs by other means.

2. Inability to Rent Available Affordable Units

111 applications for rent were denied in a three-month sample analysis of one major affordable housing provider. Unfavorable credit and a history of non-rent payment account for 56.7% and 45% of the major reasons for denial.

3. Personal Vulnerability Factors

35% of the families seeking shelter do so because of the threat or fear of violence, another 22% for family or roommate conflicts. 25% of homeless households self report the presence of mental health issues, while 6% have a household member on probation or parole, according to the 2005 Annual Report on Homeless, City of Madison, CDBG Office. A related number is the households turned away from shelters due to capacity. This number is difficult to quantify and sort for duplication, yet trends indicate less volatility than in previous years.

What Works

Local and National Research

1. Case Management and Financial Assistance

In our April, 2005 Impact Report, we summarized the local research on the DIGS program of Porchlight, Inc., a housing stability evaluation conducted by Real World Research in Madison, Wisconsin. Updates on this research demonstrate over 80% of households receiving this help maintain housing for 6 months, over 70% retain housing for a year, and, amazingly, 65% are still in housing 18 months later.

Findings

It is critical for families to receive long-term case management for locating and retaining affordable housing, managing personal assets, emergency financial assistance and training on how to be a better tenant: Increased availability of affordable housing units through making existing units more affordable and increasing housing stock.

3. Housing First Model to Avoid Shelter

Affordable, usually supported, housing effectively prevents and reduces

homelessness more effectively than other strategies, and more cost effectively. This is true for all groups of poor people, including those with persistent and severe mental illness and/or substance abuse.

Findings

There has been a strong movement toward the development of Housing First Programs in several communities across the Country, including here in Dane County. In June, 2005, the Institute for Research, Training and Technical Assistance produced a Policy brief: "Empirical Evidence of Long-term Efficacy to End and Prevent Family Homelessness" by Susan D. Einbinder and Tanya Tull. The circumstances of the 200 previously homeless families two to seven years after they were helped to move into permanent housing by a Housing First Program for Homeless Families generate consistent and strong support of the long-term efficacy and success of this approach for ending homelessness. 87% of them were in permanent stable housing when this study was completed. For families served in 'more traditional service models,' housing rates of 70% upon leaving shelter are considered successful, and follow up services are not the norm.

2. Rapid Exit to reduce time in shelter

Hennepin County is a state and national leader in developing new tools to rapidly re-house families and individuals experiencing homelessness. The Rapid Exit Program is an innovative program that facilitates rapid re-housing by relying on early identification and resolution of a family's or individual's housing barriers and providing the assistance necessary to facilitate their return to permanent housing. This approach puts "housing" at the front and center of efforts to help people experiencing homelessness, prioritizing the rapid return to housing and providing the assistance necessary to achieve housing stability.

Findings

Wilder Research Center analysis of this program reports that the outcome data demonstrates great success. Even though 34% of families served by the Rapid Exit Program had been homeless before, only 9% returned to a shelter after receiving services in the following year and 85% did not return within two years. For those families that did return, their average stay in homelessness declined by more than half, from 29.5 days to 10 days.

Housing Case Management

There is strong support for the effectiveness of case management to help homeless people into needed services, including stable housing.

Frequent service contacts and more assertive outreach are critical to treatment retention and housing outcomes.

United Way funding in 2006 provided 69 additional families with case management, five more full time equivalent staff positions. 1722 Dane County families found or maintained housing through \$497,662 in United Way-funded housing case management. As we provide tools and training to case managers, we can have a dramatic impact on the quality of life in our community. Case managers provide services in every area of our Agenda for Change.

United Way held a Case Management Symposium on April 6, 2006, attended by 250 people. This full day event brought national expertise on housing case management and a successful model to Dane County to stimulate program excellence in preventing homelessness among families.

A survey was conducted among case managers attending the symposium. Highlights from the results of that survey include:

- Current case managers are educated, older and experienced
- The most common case manager tasks include
 - 87% include information and referral
 - 82% find resources and advocate for their clients
 - 56% provide transportation and coordination
 - 46% provide financial counseling
- 87% of case managers were interested in exploring the concept of tiers of case management where volume of service need is quantified for different client needs.
- Case Managers felt the best way to improve case management would be to
 - 83% more ongoing, quality training
 - 78% visits from other communities to learn best practices
 - 77% salary incentives
 - 74% additional peer group opportunities to share best practices
 - 73% establishing a maximum caseload size

95 case managers attended another United Way symposium in November focused on working with landlords, building on clients' strengths and using existing community resources. Another session is planned for February.

Funding Breakthroughs

During 2006, United Way has supported three new breakthrough opportunities to drive results in our housing agenda.

1. Creating More Affordable Purchased Housing

In April, 2006, United Way invested \$45,000 in Habitat for Humanity to begin pre-development on multiple unit condominiums for low-income families that will be rehabilitated by Habitat for Humanity. They are currently collaborating with the Allied Drive planning, and potential development in three other areas, including one in Sun Prairie. This should result in up to 32 additional units for purchase by families earning 30 to 50% of median income.

2. Pre-development of Supported Rental Housing

In September, 2006, United Way invested \$30,000 in Interfaith Hospitality Network to begin predevelopment work on a four year plan to provide 30 units of permanent rental housing for homeless families by 2008.

3. Housing First Implementation: Helping families avoid the shelter network altogether

In October, 2006, Porchlight, Inc. was awarded \$29,090 to implement the "Housing First" model in a new joint effort with Madison Metropolitan School District to place in permanent housing, at-risk families with minor children who would otherwise end up in the shelter system. The first two families have already been placed in this program with case management provided by Porchlight through their on-going funding and the rent initially provided by this grant. Tenants will be required to pay 30% of their income toward the cost of rent, and they will be assisted in efforts to increase their family income and stability.

These three opportunities will afford this community the opportunity to learn develop and practice new methodologies to permanently address family homelessness.

Shelter or Permanent Housing?

There is much community debate about the need for and benefit of emergency housing vs. long term permanence. A full continuum of care demands a system that has flexibility and the ability to meet the needs of families at various stages of crisis and housing instability.

In an environment of limited resources, the issue is not which part of the continuum should be eliminated, but rather where permanent improvement can best be obtained.

We will always need to have a response system to attend to the immediate needs of families in crisis. The evidence of research implores us to make every effort to immediately re-house families as quickly as possible (Rapid Re-entry research) or avoid the homeless episode by effective eviction prevention strategies.

One way to characterize the costs of choices is to examine the cost of providing a winter warming house compared to spending the same money on providing permanent housing, based on experience in this community.

Family Warming House
\$25,000 will buy
121 nights of shelter
Based on actual '05-06 usage

Permanent Housing
\$25,000 will buy
38.5 months of shelter
at \$650/month
1173 residence nights =
57.8% more nights

If the additional 1173 residence nights could be used to fund eviction prevention efforts, it would keep families out of the homeless system all together.. Social service intervention is not provided/included in the cost of either option but there is security and supervision at the Salvation Army. Clearly there are issues precluding these families from being able to secure and manage independent living. This analysis is not intended to presume that the users of a warming house would be potential residents in permanent housing, but given our existing shelter resources and the inability to pay shelter costs for existing affordable housing, it presents an alternative application of limited resources toward more prevention and permanent solutions.

Certainly there are many people in the shelter system whose major barrier is access to affordable housing. It is also true that the cost of providing case management adds to the cost of permanent housing for those who need it.

Addressing the Housing Needs of Returning Prisoners

Over 500 prisoners return home to Dane County every year after completing their sentences. Over 66% of released prisoners re-offend within two years of their release. It is difficult for prisoners to find employment, due to their lack of education, skills, incarceration history and employers fear of hiring ex-offenders. Helping re-integrate these individuals so they have a stake in our community may reduce the overall crime rate.

Even with the best of intentions, many returning prisoners will fail if they do not have at least three of the following four resources: a place to live, a job, positive support from friends and family, and treatment for alcohol or drug abuse. Transportation is a barrier that prevents ex-offenders from being able to access these needed resources.

The Safe Community Strong Neighborhoods Community Solution Team is tackling re-integration issues in order to create lasting solutions. United Way supports community programs that address the root causes, by directing resources toward reducing recidivism; i.e., education, job training and mentoring. Madison-area Urban Ministry is a major leader in this effort. It is clear that the housing needs of returning prisoners and their families is particularly problematic. Many housing providers are reluctant to accommodate offenders and some providers expressly prohibit individuals with a criminal record. Due to current laws on section 8 housing, many families risk losing their section 8 housing when a ex-offender member wants to return home. Often times the housing options that are available to ex-offenders when they return are filled with illegal activities thus throwing them back into an environment that they were not able to thrive in before incarceration.

This community is at a starting point for planning and improving post-release housing and related services to support the transition of individuals out of prison. It includes examples of housing and service programs that are serving this population and offers references to numerous resources for help. There is increasing collaboration between service providers and Department of Corrections.

Leading the Change

Basic Needs Community Solution Team and Housing Leadership Team

The Community Solution Team (CST) is a team of volunteers that includes community and business leaders, labor representatives, professionals in finance and service, two not-for-profit agency executives, and board leaders. It is led by United Way Board member Dan Matson, with Doug Strub as Vice-Chair.

This team was created in 2001 as part of the United Way of Dane County transformation to an Impact United Way. Community Solution Team responsibilities include oversight and accomplishment of the vision to decrease homelessness and the programs and efforts that will provide measurable results to that end. The Chair and Vice Chair also are members of the Community Building Vision Council that oversees the work of all Six Community Solution Teams and the Agenda for Change. This group will oversee \$1.1 Million in direct funding and the work of the Housing In Action Leadership Team's Mobilization Plan.

The Housing In Action Leadership Team is chaired by Lau Christensen, representing United Way of Dane County and Judy Wilcox, representing the Dane County Executive. Membership includes strategic local business and community leaders with a broad range of expertise and interest in developing community solutions.

Multiple Interested Parties

United Way continues to partner with the community in pursuit of this vision. Stakeholders include local and state government, developers and finance organizations, and individual not-for-profit organizations.

Specific active partners include these agencies:

- Community Action Coalition
- Habitat for Humanity
- Independent Living
- Interfaith Hospitality Network
- Joining Forces For Families Housing Team
- Madison area Urban Ministry
- Middleton Outreach Ministry
- Porchlight, Inc.
- Salvation Army
- Stoughton Area Resource Team
- Urban League of Greater Madison
- YWCA

And these entities:

- Dane County Homeless Services Consortium
- City of Madison and Dane County Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Office
- City of Stoughton
- Dane County Human Services
- Forward Community Investments
- Madison Metropolitan School District
- Apartment Association of South Central Wisconsin
- Wisconsin Partnership for Housing Development

References:

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2. Susan D. Einbinder, Ph.D., Research Director, Beyond Shelter, Institute for Research, Training & Technical Assistance
3. Hennepin County Rapid Exit Program, Shirley Hendrickson, Grants Administrator Adult Housing Program, 1501 Government Center, Minneapolis, MN 55487-0151
4. Madison CDBG Housing Report