

El Dorado County Continuum of Care Strategy to End Homelessness

**Stakeholders:**

El Dorado County Housing Coalition

United Outreach

South Lake Tahoe Women's Center

El Dorado County Women's Center

El Dorado County Mental Health Department

El Dorado County Office of Education

Housing Now

Food Bank

H.E.L.P.

Homeless Advocacy Group

El Dorado County Human Services Department

## **Executive Summary**

Reaching the goal to end chronic homelessness has become a concern to our nation. President Bush made ending chronic homelessness in the next decade a top objective in his 2003 budget. The President continues to make ending chronic homelessness a priority in his budget projections. The Department of Housing and Urban Development made this their goal as well. El Dorado County General Plan Housing Element addresses the need to research, develop, and implement a plan to end chronic homelessness in our County. In order to develop a strategic plan an environmental analysis of both the internal and external environment should be developed. The environmental analysis will strive to demonstrate the challenges before the agency in developing a continuum of care strategic plan. El Dorado County General Plan Housing Element addresses the need to research, develop, and implement a plan to end chronic homelessness in our County. The Department of Human Services Housing Programs along with community stakeholders have been given the responsibility of addressing Measure HO-FF of the General Plan Housing Element which states:

Departments will “work with community and local organizations in providing community education on homelessness, gaining better understanding of the unmet need, and developing and maintaining emergency shelter programs, including funding for programs developed through interjurisdictional cooperation and working with local organizations to annually apply for the End Chronic Homelessness through Employment and Housing grant” [Policy HO-4d] (Reference: Housing Element p.21).

The expected outcome of this measure is a Continuum of Care strategy that provides the County the opportunity to apply for funding to meet the needs of the chronically homeless population in our jurisdiction.

“The Department of Human Services provides a range of programs to assist persons in attaining or maintaining their self-sufficiency, independence and/or well-being. Our mission is to respectfully serve all persons in a manner that improves the overall quality of life in El Dorado County” (Reference: Human Services Mission Statement). This plan will strive to show the vision, mission and values of a continuum of care strategy that demonstrates the mission of the department and our community. This plan will also provide an internal and external analysis demonstrating the need of such a plan. In addition we will provide the long-term goals and objectives of the continuum of care plan demonstrating the community involvement to the process. The County’s Housing Element states that funding sources will stem from the general fund; the State Emergency Shelter program; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and other specialized funding that will be stated from research of this project.

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## **Continuum of Care Plan**

### **To End Homelessness**

#### **In El Dorado County**

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### **Introduction**

El Dorado County adopted a housing element to develop a plan for addressing the housing needs of residents of unincorporated areas of the county through year 2008 on July 18, 2004. Under housing element law, local governments are mandated to adequately plan to meet the existing and projected housing needs of all economic segments of the community. “Specifically, the law states that counties and cities must prepare and implement housing elements that, along with federal and state programs, will help the state attain the goal of decent housing and a suitable living environment for every Californian, including farm workers, as a priority of highest order” (Government Code Section 65581[a]) (Housing Element, 2004, p.1)” The Continuum of Care strategic plan prepares the county to address a critical area of need demonstrated by the United Outreach Homeless Shelter, South Lake Tahoe Women’s Center and El Dorado Women’s Center’s Emergency Domestic Violence Shelter Programs, the local Housing Coalition, local stakeholders, the Housing Authority, and the Housing Element. One of the measures within the housing element specifically addresses the need to

“develop and maintain emergency shelter programs, including funding for programs developed through interjurisdictional cooperation and working with local organizations to annually apply for the End Chronic Homelessness through Employment and Housing grants” (Housing Element, 2004, p.182). In order for the county to be eligible to apply for funding sources to meet and address the funding constraints of non-profit developers, the county must have a continuum of care strategy in place. The area of need described in this strategic plan is the homeless population, including those at threat of becoming homeless in the near or distant future.

This document comprises a strategic plan for El Dorado County. It reviews its strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities and sets out a list of proposed strategies, goals and action programs in the fight against homelessness in our community.

### **Vision Statement**

The promoters' vision of El Dorado County homeless services in 3-5 year's time is:

El Dorado County has developed this plan to reach out to the homeless in our communities so they know where they can obtain a hot meal, a warm and safe place to sleep, and services that will enable them to step-up from homelessness by seeking resources that will help in their personal goals toward self-sufficiency. It is our vision that the homeless will have a designated staging house and homeless service program within 4 years that will help them in their personal goals toward ending homelessness.

### **Mission Statement**

The central purpose and role to end homelessness is defined as:

El Dorado County's mission is to respectfully serve all persons in a manner that improves the overall quality of life in El Dorado County. Our mission in respect to this plan is to reduce and mitigate homelessness in the County of El Dorado through a continuum of care strategy that includes community awareness, development of site location, and support.

## Values Statement

“Effective organizations identify and develop a clear, concise and shared meaning of values/beliefs, priorities, and direction so that everyone understands and can contribute.” (About, Business & Finance) The Continuum of Care stakeholders believe that individuals/families living in our community deserve to be treated with dignity and respect for the situation they find themselves in at the present, and provide the opportunity to improve upon the situation through resources and services we may provide. It is our hope that we treat others as we would hope to be treated ourselves if we were faced with the same or similar circumstances.

## Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats & Opportunities

This strategic plan addresses the following key strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities which apply to El Dorado County now and in the foreseeable future:

### **Strengths:**

- More than 15 years in Housing Industry
- Core planning group developed
- Commitment from Community to seek opportunities to meet needs of homeless populations
- Ability to facilitate access to housing and supportive services

### **Weaknesses:**

- Key stakeholders
- Funding sources
- Shortage of affordable rental housing
- Limited public transportation
- Maintain motivation amongst working groups



- Teamwork
- Strong commitment from Addiction Services Program
- Strong commitment from Mental Health services
- Opportunities for outreach to the homeless through local nonprofits already serving subpopulations the county's homeless
- Upper Room dining access to homeless populations
- Bread and Broth dining access once per week in Tahoe
- Over 40 years experience through EDWC and SLTWC in meeting shelter needs of homeless survivors of domestic violence

**Threats:**

- Lack of affordable rental housing
- Lack of funding opportunities
- Rural community
- Lack of training on outreach

**Opportunities:**

- With strategic plan in place opportunity to develop program\_\_\_\_
- Apply for funding sources that are

- |                                    |                                     |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| services to the homeless           | currently prohibitive               |
| population                         | • Small core groups to reach out to |
| • Support from local for-profit    | homeless populations                |
| developers                         | • Utilize cold weather homeless     |
| • Lack of available transportation | shelter and staging home            |
| services between South Lake        | •                                   |
| Tahoe and Placerville              |                                     |

### **Environmental Analysis**

This environmental analysis will identify community-wide approaches that can be initiated to reduce homelessness and achieve stable housing for those with the greatest barriers, or those who present the greatest challenge to the county to serve... First we need to define the terms that will be used in evaluating the homeless population; “street homeless” according to the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition are those individuals who routinely live on the streets. “Chronically” homeless are those individuals that are disabled and either being continuously homeless for a year or more or having had at least four homeless episodes during the last three years. (PD&R, January 2004, p.xiv) The U.S. Government Code (Title 42, Chapter 119, Subchapter 1, Section 11302) defines a homeless person as:

“an individual who has a primary residence that is in: 1) a publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations; 2) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or 3) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.”

There are a number of factors that determine how, where, and in what manner a homeless population is determined in a community. The most effective process has been determined to be through a ‘snap-shot’ of a specific given time in every year. Agencies that have an interest in serving the homeless populations develop a strategy to “reach-out” to our homeless individuals by going to where they are rather than expecting the homeless to come to our door to ‘announce’ themselves and their situation.

The Political and Economic Trends, Customers, Culture, Leadership and Competition along with Program Requirements and Resources are part of the evaluation of the environmental analysis for our jurisdictions strategic planning process. The summaries described in the following chart are what I see as current and emerging issues that will affect our agency and the services we anticipate providing on behalf of the homeless in our communities over the next 3-5 years.

El Dorado County's Homeless Strategic Plan Environmental Analysis	
Area	Summary of Issues
<u>Political and Economic Trends</u>	Shift in population
	New residents
	Number of well-educated in County
	-Competition for entry-level jobs
	Affordable housing units
	-Identification of units available to persons on limited income
	Living as homeless creates mistrust
	Non-English speaking population rising
	-impacts employability
	-tend to work in jobs/industries without benefits
	County Government
	-desire for livable community
	-Human services getting more attention: funding and scrutiny
	-Need for Transitional Housing
	Federal Government
	-increase in state decision-making process
	-HUD funding decreasing yearly
	-strategic plan will allow for new funding opportunities
<u>Customers</u>	
Internal	Morale of employees working with population
	Management recognition of morale
	Job satisfaction
	Desire to improve customer service
	Process to introduce homeless to Job Club activities
External	Length of time it takes to see case manager for services
	Representatives knowledgeable about services in community
	Availability of services in community
	-limitations due to lack of shelters
	-limitations due to rural community
	-inclement weather needs
<u>Culture</u>	Policies may be clear but not well explained

(Definition: norms, values, perception of what is going on)	Treat all with courtesy - regardless of circumstance at time
	Relationship of those serving population with their peers; supervisor,
	management, etc.
<u>Leadership and Competition</u>	Community support of strategic plan process
	Stakeholders commitment to process
	Clear communication
	Department commitment level questioned
	Faith-based and other non-government organizations asking to be part of the process
<u>Program Requirements</u>	McKinney Vento-Homeless Program application and funding
	Challenges include:
	-staff retention
	-staff knowledge
	Changes in funding and contracting requirements from HUD
<u>Resources</u>	Mental Health
	Local Grass Roots Housing Coalition
	South Lake Tahoe Women's Center Shelter
	El Dorado Women's Center Shelter
	United Outreach Cold Weather Shelter (community churches)
	Resource Guide for Homeless – needs updating ( <i>in process</i> )
	Very limited public transportation (as a resource?)
	Partnership with agencies that provide services
	-United Outreach Grace Place
	-Women, Infant and Children services (W.I.C.)
	-General assistance (GA)
	-Community Services' Homeless Assistance Program--One time only rent assistance
	-Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program
	-Upper Room Dining 7 nights a week
	--Bread and Broth—Tahoe dining one day per week
	--Tahoe Opportunity Project through Mental Health (shelter, MH services for dual diagnosis

	people) --Tahoe Christian Fellowship Love Your Neighbor Program (groceries and food pantry) United Way of Reno and the Sierras (emergency shelter vouchers) Salvation Army (don't they give vouchers in Placerville?) Christmas Cheer—food and clothing Family Resource Center—monthly and weekly commodities Sierra Recovery Center—substance abuse issues South Tahoe Rec Center (free showers avail daily)

Based on the analysis of the remote, industry, and operating environment of our organization, the long-term objectives for the implementation of the continuum of care strategic plan are:

- Develop ongoing working relationship with community partner's including faith-based and community-based organizations
- Offer efficient prevention strategies that will target those that are not yet homeless but will be if intervention does not take place
- Develop a system (HMIS) to track the homeless coming into and going out of our community for future strategy development
- Comprehensive survey developed that will aid in the understanding of the barriers homeless individuals/families encounter
- Develop curriculum geared toward homeless and soon-to-be homeless in obtaining gainful employment to prevent chronic homelessness
- Identify funding sources necessary to implement homelessness strategies

- Develop a continuum of care plan that will enable the County to apply for funding sources on behalf of faith-based, community-based organizations, and affordable housing developers
- Apply for funding sources on behalf of community-based, faith-based and affordable housing developers
- Develop and implement along with community members a staging house for homeless
- Develop and implement up to 50 transitional housing units over the next 3-5 years
- Establish a homeless prevention program
- Address the mental and physical well-being of the homeless population through treatment and education in mental health and addiction services (EDC Housing Element 2004)
- Support the work South Lake Tahoe Women's Center and El Dorado Women's Center are performing to break the cycle of violence and to reduce chronic homelessness among victims of domestic violence and their children across the county
- Explore new homeless service delivery options and partnerships
- Support job training and vocational programs that hire and train homeless

### **Long Term Objectives**

Long term business objectives of El Dorado County Continuum of Care Strategy are summarized as:

- Develop a Continuum of Care plan that will meet the basic needs of homeless individuals through: Establishment of a homeless prevention program, Applying for acquisition of permanent supportive housing units, Establishing a staging home for the homeless that will address and recognize the unmet needs of individuals
- Address the mental and physical well-being of the homeless population with a cooperative relationship with mental health and drug addiction services
- Develop a Homeless Management Information Service (HMIS) to collect unduplicated data, track trends and demographics, provide HUD required reports and analyze the effectiveness of our services on a long term basis



### **Key Strategies**

The following critical strategies will be pursued by El Dorado County:

1. To recognize and meet the housing needs of the homeless through a variety of programs
2. Develop a continuum of care plan that will enable the County to apply for funding sources on behalf of faith-based, community-based organizations, and affordable housing developers
3. Develop a new guest-centered service delivery system for the homeless
4. Identify and apply for funding sources on behalf of community-based, faith-based and affordable housing developers
5. Develop and implement along with community members a staging house for homeless
6. Develop and implement up to 50 transitional housing units over the next 3-5 years
7. Establish a homeless prevention program, including rental and utility assistance, payee programs, and work experience programs.
8. Address the mental and physical well-being of the homeless population through treatment and education in mental health and addiction services
9. Develop a Homeless Management Information Service (HMIS) to collect data, track trends, and demographics, provide HUD the required reports and analyze the effectiveness of services through this program

The following important strategies will also be followed:

1. Develop a process with Planning Department to ensure special use permits can be approved to support staging houses for homeless
2. Work with Planning Department to update zoning ordinance so Transitional Housing projects can be approved in locations throughout the County
3. Assist various nonprofit organizations that provide emergency shelter and other aid to the homeless and other displaced persons
4. Work with emergency shelter programs that provide services in centralized locations that are accessible to the majority of homeless persons in need of shelter in the county
5. Continue to strive to establish and maintain a psychiatric emergency response team because of those who are currently or potentially in danger of becoming homeless due to mental health issues (sort of like TOPs in Tahoe—may want to identify that we already have a program like this in Tahoe. MH currently responds if someone presents to the ER due to MH issues and usually decides whether the person will be “puffed.”)
6. Continue to expand addiction services for those who currently are or are in danger of becoming homeless due to addiction issues
7. Identify whether a master leasing approach to secure and make affordable additional housing for chronically homeless individuals and homeless families will be effective in our jurisdiction (South Lake Tahoe Women’s Center did this with our transitional housing program for the first few years of the program before we

received funding to purchase a duplex specifically to be used as transitional housing)

8. In partnership with developers, nonprofit organizations, and housing authority, establish a committee to focus on the identification of creative housing concepts, the creation of collaborative projects, and the development of new housing on behalf of those in jeopardy of becoming homeless or those that experience chronic homelessness.

### **Major Goals**

The following key targets that the Continuum of Care Strategy will strive for over the next 3-5 years:

- Partner with existing nonprofit and for-profit corporations that are interested and able to construct and manage housing affordable to very-low and lower income households in order to expand their ability to serve the county
- Amend the Zoning Ordinance to provide more flexibility in development standards as incentives for affordable housing developments and clearly define temporary shelters, transitional housing, along with identification of suitable sites for establishment of emergency shelters
- Apply for state and federal monies for direct support of affordable housing construction and rehabilitation on behalf of low to very low income households
- Review the County's residential development processing procedures to identify additional opportunities to further streamline the procedures for affordable housing projects

- Work with community and local organizations in providing community education on homelessness
- Build a strong collaboration in the prevention of homelessness for this is the key to ending homelessness
- Gain better understanding of the unmet need of the homeless through interaction of supportive services
- Increased supportive services such as:
  - Outreach through addiction recovery programs
  - 
  - Upper Room dining hall
  - 
  - Food bank
  - 
  - Pollock Pines Homeless Service Center

### **Strategic Action Programs**

The following strategic action programs will be implemented:

1. Establish and implement Continuum of Care Plan for use by county, nonprofit organizations, and faith-based organizations
2. Identification and application of funding sources that can promote affordable housing for the homeless including emergency shelters, transitional housing, and staging houses
3. Establish and implement a homeless prevention program enabling families to remain housed through support expansion of financial assistance that stabilizes households at risk of homelessness through help with back rent, move-in costs, security deposits and utility payments
4. Establishment of the Homeless Management Information Service (HMIS) system providing critical information necessary in the development of future applications
5. Address the mental and physical well-being of individuals so that housing is an option on a long term basis

## Financial Projections and Analysis

The primary enabler for the Department to obtain a strong financial status is to ensure that the continuum of care strategy vision/mission/goals is aligned with the various funding sources available. The Department should not be pursuing grants that detract the organization from fulfilling the vision. The Department needs a resource that is focused on matching the organizations' vision to the available funds in the marketplace and aggressively pursuing the funding needed to implement the vision.

The following **Sample** of financial resources may be available to the County and partners for the support of transitional housing, staging homes, and shelter programs administered by the public housing authority once the Continuum of Care Strategy is in place. This **sample** financial resource budget is based on the projection of 50 transitional housing units over the next 3-5 years.

<b>Sample Financial Resources: Planned Sources and Uses</b>		
<b>Sources</b>	<b>Planned \$</b>	<b>Planned Uses</b>
<b>1. Federal Grants (FY 2007 grants)</b>		
a) Housing Operating Fund	30,000	Operations
b) Housing Capital Fund	150,000	Housing Trust Fund
c) CDBG Housing Acquisition	500,000	Land purchase
d) HOME Investment Partnership Program Projects	3,100,000	Construction
e) Annual Contributions for Section 8 Project-Based Vouchers	328,200	PHA project allocation
f) Resident Opportunity and Self-Sufficiency Grants	0	
g) Cal-HFA Loan	1,800,000	Construction
h) HCD/MHP Loan	5,500,000	Construction
i) H.E.L.P. Grant	200,000	Project set-up
j) Supportive Housing Grants	150,000	Supportive services and operations

<b>Sample Financial Resources: Planned Sources and Uses</b>		
<b>Sources</b>	<b>Planned \$</b>	<b>Planned Uses</b>
<b>2. Housing Dwelling Rental Income</b>		
<b>(50 units x \$300 x 12)</b>	180,000	Operations
<b>3. Other income</b> (list below)	0	
<b>4. Non-federal sources</b> (list below)		
Cal-HFA Rental Assistance	125,000	Rental operations
Administrative Fees	85,000	Operations
Interest Income		Unknown at this time
<b>Total resources</b>	\$12,148,200	

The 50 transitional units proposed will be units already built in need of acquisition and rehabilitation. Therefore the costs are considerably less than for new construction. Initially staff would apply for and propose to obtain financing for project set-up under the H.E.L.P. grant program administered by the State of California. Once initial funding is obtained, additional funding sources can be applied for in order to acquire and rehabilitate the units.

Once all units have been rehabilitated there will be an ongoing operations funding allocation provided through the rents received on the units themselves. In order to oversee the process of developing and implementing transitional housing units, the Department will provide a full-time staff person paid for under Administrative Fees to administer the operations of the plan.

**Financial Resources Next Steps:**

1. Board and community partner approval of concepts.
2. Work with community and local organizations in providing community education on homelessness, gaining better understanding of the unmet need, and developing and maintaining emergency shelter programs that include transitional housing units.
3. Research Development and Administrative Support Committee implements/directs activity
  - a. Articulate the value in the community
  - b. Develop listings of the special interest groups within the critical sectors in order to hone the grant searches.
4. The Department will actively seek out Critical Sectors to become financially supportive members of the process.
5. Engage the services of a grant writer as soon as possible to begin searching out grants that support continuing the vision and mission of the continuum of care strategy including funding for programs developed through interjurisdictional cooperation and working with local organizations to annually apply for the End Chronic Homelessness through the Employment and Housing grants.



### **Critical Success Factors**

In order for any plan to take shape and unfold the contents into something more than a document to read, the department responsible for developing and implementing the plan must have buy-in from all parties. By definition, a critical sector is an integral part of the overall system that operates in El Dorado County. Human Services recognizes that for the system to be effective, all parts of the critical sectors are needed. The critical success factors necessary for this continuum of care plan to be successful are the community member's support; commitment from the Board of Supervisors; and successful funding applications. The process of developing the continuum of care strategy is the first step in fulfilling the critical success factors necessary to begin to see the project on the ground rather than in the minds of our stakeholders. Developing a strategy to meet the needs of the community must be continued forward in the actual implementation of the steps defined within the continuum of care plan.

In order to ensure that we do not overlook any part of the system, we identified the critical sectors. Each sector was then broken into groups, each group into members, and each member into key leaders. This provides the ability to identify the needs that are common to each sector. Once we understand the needs, we should be able to facilitate services for that part of the system.

The following graph depicts the Critical Sector, Sector Groups, and Sector Members:

Critical Sector	Sector Groups	Sector Members
Government Agencies	Federal Agencies	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
		U.S. Department of Agriculture
	State Agencies	State Department of Housing and Community Development
		HOME Investment Partnership programs
	County Agencies	Mental Health Department
		Probation Department
		Social Services Department
		Economic Development
		Public Health Department
	Community Organizations	United Outreach
		El Dorado Women's Center
		South Lake Tahoe Women's Center
		Housing Coalition
		County Office of Education
Volunteer networks	Businesses	Marshall Hospital
		DSI Output
		CASA
		Rotary
		Kiwanis
		Lions
		Soroptimist's of Cameron Park
		Community Foundation

## **Controls and Evaluation**

Currently there are a limited number of resources that can be accessed for homelessness in our community, and we continue to come up against barriers to additional funding sources that could lay the ground work for actual 'staging centers' for the homeless where they can go to sign-in for a nights stay, take a shower, obtain a good meal, have a counselor to provide assessment of immediate needs, and transportation to resources. Once we obtain the funding necessary to develop a staging house, we can then move forward with the application and development of transitional housing where individuals can continue in their trek toward self-sufficiency. This will enable individuals/families the opportunity to learn skills necessary to live independent of any form of public assistance and truly become self-sufficient in our community.

This analysis demonstrates the ability to provide services; however, the unmet needs at this time are: 1) the development of the strategic plan allowing the jurisdiction to apply for and obtain funding sources, 2) county government willingness for actual shelters, and 3) community leaders coming together to develop the plan of action rather than unnecessarily duplicating efforts to address the same issue.. (EDC Housing Element, 2004)

Therefore, the goal through the development of this plan is to present to the community, through open meeting participation, a path that will work on the prevention of homelessness in the long-term and help those faced with homelessness now. The creation of a strategic plan provides the avenue necessary to open the door to affordable housing loans and grants from both the State and Federal governments. The participation by the community, non-profit organizations, faith-based organizations,

governmental agencies, and the leaders of our community will enable the department to fulfill our goals of serving those most in need at greatest risk in our communities.

The time is right to help those with the greatest barriers meet their needs by accessing services and resources in the community. It is our job to help those individuals/families in our community to understand that we are here to help them-help themselves.

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