



2021-2024 HOMELESSNESS STRATEGIC PLAN

A three-year community plan to make homelessness a rare, brief, and one-time experience in Cumberland County.

June 30, 2021

Background

In the spring of 2021, Cumberland County Community Development Department, serving as the collaborative applicant representing the Fayetteville / Cumberland County Continuum of Care (CoC), set out to work with the community, homeless service providers, persons experiencing homelessness and county leadership to develop a strategic plan to advance local efforts to effectively address the needs of people experiencing homelessness. Facilitated by the consulting firm, OrgCode Consulting, the plan development began with conducting surveys, analyzing data, and conducting multiple group and one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders to prepare a Gaps Analysis of Homeless Services. This report laid the foundation for a three day retreat with leaders, service providers, and persons with lived experience in homelessness to draft the Three Year Homelessness Strategic Plan. The plan lays out the strategic objectives and action steps over four impact areas or the period of July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2024.

Anatomy of the Plan

Impact Areas: These are prioritized categories of need observed by leaders, providers and the community that require specific policy change, procedural optimization and increased attention and investment in order to accomplish the mission and realize the collective vision for the homeless response system effectively and efficiently.

Objectives: Specific transformations needed by the systems of care impacting households experiencing homelessness within the impact area essential to realize meaningful change.

Leading Voices: These organizations with their expertise, experience, and knowledge of resources, needs and experiences of people at risk of and experiencing homelessness. They can speak to the purpose of strategic objectives and actions. Leading voices can be tapped in shaping policy, procedures, initiatives and guiding change.

Action Steps: Representing the work that needs to be completed by leaders, providers, and the community in order to create the transformation envisioned through the stated strategic objective.

2021-2024 Homelessness Strategic Plan

Our Vision

Our system of care will meet the needs of all people at risk of and experiencing homelessness through a collaborative process anchored by our shared vision and priorities and supported by an innovative housing focused service delivery approach that is holistic, trauma informed, and culturally competent.

Our Mission

To make homelessness a rare, brief, and one-time experience in Cumberland County.

Impact Areas



ACCESS TO ASSISTANCE

The front door of the homeless response system is sufficiently resourced, staffed and coordinated to provide a person centered housing focused approach to serve all people who are at risk of and experiencing homelessness.



PERMANENT HOUSING

People should have access to safe, affordable housing solutions. Our housing first approach recognizes barriers to housing and provides quality housing-based case management that results in long term housing stability.



WELLNESS & OPPORTUNITY

Creating connections to supportive services and social networks addressing the employment, income, physical, mental, and spiritual needs of households to facilitate successful return to community and self-sufficiency.



COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

Community partnerships are essential to leverage and grow the funding, resources, leadership, and advocacy necessary to achieve the vision and mission of the Homelessness Strategic Plan.



ACCESS TO ASSISTANCE

The front door of the homeless response system is sufficiently resourced, staffed and coordinated to provide a person centered, housing focused approach to serve all people who are at risk of and experiencing homelessness.

ACCESS TO ASSISTANCE Strategic Objectives & Action Steps	Leading Voices
Objective 1: Bring the Coordinated Entry System to scale to meet access, assessment, prioritization, and housing referral needs.	Cumberland HealthNet, CoC, Cumberland County Community Development
<i>Action Steps:</i>	
1.1 Conduct an analysis of the Coordinated Entry System to understand the level and number of resources needed to improve the capacity, efficiency and coordination with street outreach, emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent housing providers.	
1.2 Develop a Coordinated Entry System marketing strategy to create community awareness of its purpose, access methods and services provided.	
1.3 Improve participation in the By-Name match and referral meetings by representatives of homeless services and housing providers. Update the Coordinated Entry System policies and procedures clarifying accountability for programs funded through Continuum of Care and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) sources.	
Objective 2: Develop the Day Resource Center.	City of Fayetteville, Cumberland County, CoC
<i>Action Steps:</i>	

2.1 Finalize the business plan for development, start-up, operations, and ongoing public/private funding, for the Day Resource Center.	
2.2 Develop a holistic, trauma informed supportive services model that will include coordinated access to housing navigation, employment, and health care resources.	
2.3 Develop an interim supportive services coordination model to pilot centralized access to housing navigation, employment, and health care resources during development of the Day Resource Center.	
Objective 3: Increase the inventory of year-round emergency shelter beds	City of Fayetteville, Cumberland County, CoC , The Salvation Army
<i>Action Steps:</i>	
3.1 Reactivate the 21 emergency shelter beds at the Hope Center for individual adult men who represent the majority of unsheltered homeless. Secure funding for an agency to take over operations. Increase capacity of providers to create new job opportunities (outside of volunteer only).	
3.2 Increase low-barrier, professionally staffed, housing focused emergency shelter beds through both existing providers and creating new partnerships.	
3.3 Ensure that all people staying in emergency shelter are provided access to housing resources, navigators, and case management.	
Objective 4: Increase the number and effectiveness of housing navigators and case management services at the front door of the homeless response system.	CoC, Cumberland County Community Development, Street Outreach and Shelter Providers, Cumberland HealthNet
<i>Action Steps:</i>	
4.1 Create formal partnership agreements with faith community homeless services providers to enhance case management services.	
4.2 Expand the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) user pool and data sharing protocols, to facilitate coordination of services between case managers, providers, and the Coordinated Entry System.	
4.3 Expedite the procurement of critical documents to address shelter access, benefits, employment, and housing requirements.	

4.4 Develop a real-time inventory of shelter and housing resources readily available to both providers and shelter stayers.	
Objective 5: Provide homeless prevention and shelter diversion programs to people at imminent risk of homelessness.	CoC, Cumberland County Community Development
Action Steps:	
5.1 Educate community and providers regarding a unified definition of homelessness to improve proper referrals to prevention and diversion services.	
5.2 Secure homeless prevention and diversion training, including learning best practices models to improve the provision of services more effectively and efficiently.	
5.3 Strengthen partnerships with supportive service providers to expand prevention and diversion resources and problem-solving solutions and options	
Objective 6: Create housing – focused street outreach programs to provide direct services to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness.	The Salvation Army, CommuniCare-PATH, Fayetteville Area Operation Inasmuch, Dream Center
6.1 Create Street outreach coordination committee between street outreach providers, law enforcement, and team members from the Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) program.	
6.2 Formalize coordination between institutional providers (medical and mental health providers, and re-entry) and Coordinated Entry.	
6.3 Strengthen the coordination between street outreach and the Coordinated Entry System to facilitate transitions from unsheltered homelessness to housing.	



PERMANENT HOUSING

People should have access to safe, affordable housing solutions. Our housing first approach recognizes barriers to housing and provides quality housing-based case management that results in long term housing stability.

PERMANENT HOUSING Strategic Objectives & Action Steps	Leading Voices
Objective 1: Increase the supply of affordable housing for extremely low and very low-income households.	Cumberland County Community Dev., Fayetteville Economic and Community Dev., CoC, Public Housing Authority
<i>Action Steps:</i>	
1.1 Prepare and apply for the HUD Continuum of Care Program Grant new permanent supportive housing project bonus for chronically homeless following a recovery-oriented, harm reduction housing model.	
1.2 Develop pathways to senior housing and assisted living for aging and disabled households.	
1.3 Develop additional units of tenant based rental assistance through federal HOME TBRA housing programs with City of Fayetteville/Cumberland County to provide both flexible one-time financial assistance and long term rental assistance up to 24 months.	
1.4 Utilize City and County CDBG and HOME resources to develop new housing units for special populations targeting households with extremely low income (household incomes that are less than 30% of the Area Median Income)	
1.5 Develop a <i>moving – on</i> strategy to successfully exit people from permanent supportive housing and freeing up housing opportunities for chronic homeless and recognizing that many will be households on a	

permanent fixed income and need to transition to affordable subsidized housing.	
1.6 Maintain a master inventory of all Continuum of Care, ESG, and other affordable, disabled, aging, group, boarding housing, and other resources.	
1.7 Pursue housing development opportunities with the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency (NCHFA) and North Carolina Office of Recovery and Resiliency (NCORR) resources.	
1.8 Build the capacity of alternative housing settings such as local group and boarding homes to meet housing quality standards and improve supportive services.	
Objective 2: Strengthen the partnerships between the Fayetteville Metropolitan Housing Authority (FMHA) to develop housing opportunities.	City of Fayetteville, Cumberland County, FMHA, CoC
<i>Action Steps:</i>	
2.1 Encourage the public housing authority to dedicate units for “homeless preference” within their agency plan.	
2.2 Improve application processes for the FMHA housing opportunities and create dedicated personnel within the homeless response system to assist clients with application preparation and documentation collection.	
2.3 Dedicate personnel (1.0) to complete FMHA housing applications on the COC side.	
Objective 3: Provide quality housing-based case management to support housing stability and self-sufficiency of program participants and to improve exits to permanent housing.	Cumberland County Community Development, CoC
<i>Action Steps:</i>	
3.1 Provide ongoing Excellence in Housing Based Case Management and other evidenced best practices training opportunities for housing providers.	
3.2 Create a learning collaborative among housing providers and case management staff to build capacity among providers.	
3.3 Build system capacity of housing navigators to assist in housing searches, housing placement, lease up and move in for private, subsidized, specialized and alternative housing solutions.	
Objective 4: Develop tenancy support programs that assist households in obtaining and maintaining housing stability and self-sufficiency.	Faith-based Organizations, CoC,

	Permanent Supportive Housing Providers
<i>Action Steps:</i>	
4.1 Certify local trainers in the ReadytoRent.org curriculum and provide regular training to clients at all stages of the housing process including after moving in to improve success in tenancy.	
4.2 Develop a resource guide for housing navigators, case managers and service providers to assist newly housed clients to access housing needs such as furniture, start-up kits, transportation, childcare, and other housing necessities.	
4.4 Provide follow-up support protocols for households who have recently exited permanent housing programs to reinforce housing stability.	
Objective 5: Develop a landlord engagement program to expand housing opportunities for households with vouchers, improve tenancy success, and housing program landlord relations.	Cumberland County Community Development, CoC
<i>Action Steps:</i>	
5.1 Conduct a landlord event to recognize success in permanent housing, educate on the supportive housing programs, and recruit new properties.	
5.2 Develop funding source to provide mitigation funds to upgrade rental units in order to meet housing quality standards.	
5.3 Develop landlord incentives program to address tenant screening practices that are barriers to accepting applications.	
Objective 6: Develop bridge housing for vulnerable and chronically homeless households to secure housing and prepare for transition to permanent housing.	Alliance Health, Cumberland County Community Development, CoC
6.1 Creation of Alliance Health Bridge Housing Program in July 2021 for homeless persons with severe and persistent mental illness who are exiting crisis, emergency department or incarceration providing 3-5 months to prepare for tenancy and connection to community and benefits.	
6.2 Develop Coordinated Entry System prioritization and referral protocols for households that need to transition from RRH to permanent housing programs in order to maintain housing and support housing stability.	



WELLNESS & OPPORTUNITY

Creating connections to supportive services and social networks addressing the employment, income, physical, mental, and spiritual needs of households to facilitate successful return to community and self-sufficiency.

WELLNESS & OPPORTUNITY Strategic Objectives and Action Steps	Leading Voices
Objective 1: Create partnerships between basic needs service providers and housing providers to maintain supports for people transitioning to permanent housing.	CoC, Faith-based Organizations
<i>Action Steps:</i>	
1.1 Define clear roles and responsibilities between Coordinated Entry System, basic needs providers, emergency shelter providers on the provision of services, communication and information sharing to facilitate a coordinated approach to connections and transitions in care.	
1.2 Provide life skills, soft skills, tenancy, and employment training for people who are unsheltered, staying in emergency shelter and in supportive housing settings.	
1.3 Improve the utilization of HMIS to provide timely recording of client follow-up, engagement, location, and service utilization to facility to improve capacity to locate persons upon match and referral to housing and complete housing navigation and application processes.	
Objective 2: Align mental health services, engagements with existing homeless service providers (e.g., meals, shelter, street outreach) to secure consistent centralized connections to services.	Alliance Health Providers and Standard Plan Providers, CommuniCare - PATH, CoC
<i>Action Steps:</i>	

2.1 Secure PATH team full access and integration with HMIS, other street outreach teams, emergency shelter, and the Coordinated Entry System to maximize their effectiveness and impact on unsheltered homeless needs.	
2.2 Develop standardized community wide intake protocols including interview and application packets across all providers to reduce duplication.	
2.3 Create a more systematic approach to connect, enroll, and prepare applications for persons to mainstream benefit programs such as Social Security income benefits, Medicaid, Medicare, and other aged benefits.	
2.4 Recruit more behavioral health providers to become members of the CoC and participate in CoC Committees.	
Objective 3: Develop care transition protocols for mental health, medical, and behavioral health services from the emergency response system setting to housing ensuring no breaks in patient care or services.	Alliance providers/ Standard Plan Providers, CoC
<i>Action Steps:</i>	
3.1 Educate and engage behavioral providers and primary care in the homeless service system.	
3.2 Access health care provider liaisons and connect them to homeless service systems so they become members and participate in CoC meetings.	
3.4 Ensure access to bridge housing for those exiting the systems of care.	
Objective 4: Provide opportunities for meaningful skill-building and employment sufficient to maintain housing.	CoC, Workforce Development, NC Works
<i>Action Steps:</i>	
4.1 Increase the availability and access to vocational rehabilitation opportunities for persons being served by the homeless services system.	
4.2 Strengthen the alignment of employment services providers (Workforce Development, NC Works) to the homeless services system. Create supportive employment programs targeting persons experiencing homelessness and participating in housing programs.	
4.3 Educate, reducing myths about employment in the community. Ensure partners have proper information about employment opportunities, making it a forethought throughout the system.	
4.4 Engage employers willing to employ our homeless population and create a preferred list of employers specifying who would employ high-barrier people	

Objective 5: Provide flexible transportation resources to support wellness and employment.	City of Fayetteville, Cumberland County, CoC
<i>Action Steps:</i>	
5.1 Develop a subsidized transportation program, expand the county transportation program and communication/education surrounding it	
5.2 Partner with companies (e.g., Lyft and Uber) to provide transportation services	
5.3 Create an accessible program for low-cost used cars (and car seats for children)	



COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

Community partnerships are essential to leverage and grow the funding and resources necessary to achieve the vision and mission of the Homelessness Strategic Plan.

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT Strategic Objectives & Action Steps	Leading Voices
Objective 1: Develop grant writing resource / liaison dedicated to seeking and applying for funding opportunities to expand housing and homeless services.	Cumberland County, City of Fayetteville, CoC
<i>Action Steps:</i>	
1.1 Add homelessness services and associated Strategic Plan needs to priority items for the City and County grant writers and formalize their regular communication with the homeless serving sector to maintain awareness of service needs and opportunities.	
1.2 Develop a funders network focused on homelessness in which to share information, opportunities and being prepared when funding opportunities seek multi-agency collaborations in their funding priorities, modeling community funding collaboration from resources such as Funders Together to End Homelessness (funderstogether.org)	
1.3 Develop relationships with key funding agencies, foundations, etc. for long term interest and engagement in the homelessness and housing needs.	
1.4 Develop a community flexible funding program to support funding of ancillary supports, deposits, and other small financial assistance needs essential for accessing housing or employment and providing a mechanism for the general public to support and participate in the Strategic Plan.	
Objective 2: Educate and influence community, business, and organizational leaders to champion and secure funding for solutions to homelessness.	CoC, Fayetteville Economic and Community Development, Cumberland

	County Community Development
<i>Action Steps:</i>	
2.1 Develop business plans for specific proposed programs and housing needs for formal presentation to community leaders to understand the impact of private investment to the goals of ending homelessness.	
2.2 Highlight the homeless services sector at key county wide and city wide events to raise awareness, educate the community on work being done, support needed and report out on progress in implementation of the Strategic Plan. An example would be a presentation at the Human Relations Commission Event.	
Objective 3: Professionally staff the Continuum of Care nonprofit organization.	CoC, Cumberland County Community Development
<i>Action Steps:</i>	
3.1 Prepare a business plan on the creation of full-time professional staff for The Fayetteville/Cumberland County Continuum of Care on Homelessness nonprofit organization in preparation for funding requests.	
3.2 Upon funding, conduct recruiting and hiring.	
3.3 Develop a Memorandum of Understanding that will clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the nonprofit agency director and the Cumberland County Community Development staff as they relate to the Strategic Plan, Continuum of Care and Collaborative Application duties to support an effective partnership in advancing the mission of the Strategic Plan and the Continuum of Care.	
Objective 4: Develop marketing and messaging strategies that will inspire community buy-in and support increased local funding.	CoC
<i>Action Steps:</i>	
4.1 Develop quarterly reporting dashboards on key homelessness data performance indicators and progress reporting for the Strategic Plan.	
4.2 Formalize through County news releases the report of the Strategic Plan roll out, quarterly progress reports and announcements of significant benchmark achievements.	

PROGRESS REPORTING

Quarterly reporting and an annual review of the plan will both allow the community to follow progress in the implementation and also allow providers and leaders to monitor and evaluate performance.

The Strategic Plan and reporting will be published on the Cumberland County website. Reporting will include a quarterly progress report and a data dashboard of key indicators of the homeless response system reported from the Homeless Management Information System.

Homelessness Strategic Plan Quarterly Reporting Template

	Total Action Steps	No Action	In Progress	Completed
Access to Assistance				
Permanent Housing				
Wellness & Opportunity				
Community Investment				
Summary of activity in the quarter:				

Homeless Response System Quarterly Dashboard Template

	In the Quarter	Change from last Quarter
Total number of new households entering the homeless system		
Number of households entering the homeless system after a previous exit to housing in the last 24 months.		
Total number of households exiting the homeless system		
Number of households exiting to permanent housing		
Significant data findings in the quarter:		

Appendix – Gaps Analysis Report
