

Mercer Alliance
To
End Homelessness
Strategic Plan

July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2021

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Strategic Plan

Mission

The Mercer Alliance To End Homelessness (Mercer Alliance) is an advocacy and system-building organization committed to ending homelessness in Mercer County.

We seek to accomplish this by pressing local, state, and federal governments to adopt policies focused on ending homelessness. We also convene government officials, homeless service providers, and other community partners in Mercer County to implement collaborative and data-driven systems to support our Coordinated Entry and Assessment System.

This Coordinated Entry and Assessment System ensures that homeless providers and other community partners:

- (1) Target those confronting the highest risk circumstances, including chronically homeless individuals, homeless families, homeless youth, homeless veterans, and other homeless persons.
- (2) Provide services based on Housing First, and other evidence-based models.
- (3) Ensure that homelessness persons receive safe and secure shelter services leading to rapid entry into permanent housing.

Vision

The Mercer Alliance advocates for public policies to end homelessness, and builds collaborative systems, based on strategies proven effective in ending homelessness for those confronting high-risk challenges – e.g., chronically homeless individuals, homeless families, homeless youth, veterans, among other target populations. Through these efforts, the Mercer Alliance will help homeless providers identify, prioritize, and move into permanent housing anyone who becomes homeless in Mercer County, and build support among public, private, and community stakeholders to ensure public policies and resources sufficient to end homelessness in Mercer County.

Goals:

Goal 1. Convening and Planning:

Convene collaborative partners (governmental and non-profit) to plan, develop, and assist in the implementation of systems to end homelessness.

Objectives:

- Continue efforts to assist in the creation and implementation of a fully compliant Coordinated Entry Process, which includes the strengthening of shelter services through collaborative public/private partnerships, as required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

- Continue implementation of systems to end youth homelessness, focusing on the unique needs of children under 18 and young adults up to the age of 24, with histories of child welfare and/or juvenile justice involvement.. Add new housing resources by January 2020.
- By September 2020, finalize a comprehensive system for individuals and families who are unsheltered. Plan will include new staffing resources to ensure participation in coordinated entry system.
- By September 2020, assist in the development a Plan with Trenton Housing Authority to apply for mainstream housing vouchers for seniors.
- By August 2019, expand the SOAR program by adding staffing. SOAR assists with SSI applications for those with high barriers to housing.

Goal 2. Utilizing Best Practices

Facilitate coordinated planning and funding strategies at the County and City levels with the goal of implementing best practices to end homelessness.

Objectives:

- By September 2019 identify with government partners financial resources to strengthen a system for unsheltered homeless population.
- Staff monthly system oversight meetings of government partners to continue coordination of services, implementation of best practices and establishment of common funding priorities
- Staff monthly Cease oversight meetings to continue coordination of services by non-profit partners for priority homeless populations.
- Monitor the implementation of “by-name” lists of priority homeless populations to ensure they move to permanent housing as quickly as possible.
- Coordinate training for Coordinated Entry System. Work with Advocates to do statewide training on Housing First and Rapid Rehousing.

Goal 3. Advocacy & Public Awareness

Implement advocacy and public awareness strategies to increase affordable housing and end homelessness. Assist in collaborative planning and implementation of advocacy and public awareness initiatives that inform and educate the public about homelessness, and about why ending homelessness is critical to the health, social, and economic interest of the community by taking the following actions.

Objectives:

- Collaborate with affordable housing advocates to increase access to permanent housing by supporting the Build A Thriving NJ plan for \$600 million in affordable housing and securing the endorsements state, county, and municipal officials for the Plan.
- Collaborate and coordinate with advocates and community-based organizations to help pass legislation on the state and federal levels related to poverty, health, and affordable housing that will also contribute to ending homelessness.
- Advocate for and make the public aware of the need for prevention and supportive service resources to end homelessness, including the expanded use of Medicaid funding to meet these needs.

- Develop a public awareness and social media campaign supported by corporate partners that documents the accomplishments of the Mercer Alliance and sets out our advocacy goals and objectives.

Goal 4. Plan for sustainability of organization

Diversify the skill-based and systems building capacity of the Mercer Alliance Board by recruiting board members to include those with private sector business experience, fund-raising expertise, wide-ranging community contacts and other skills and resources sufficient to strengthen the Board's problem-solving capacity, expand its donor base, and help the Mercer Alliance diversify its funding sources.

Objectives:

- Review by September 2019, categories of membership and current board makeup to strengthen the skill-base of the Board to include: business leaders; legal and accounting professionals; fund-raising professionals; community leaders with strong political and governmental contacts; among other skills.
- Recruit new board members based on the September 2019 analysis, and quarterly thereafter.
- Finalize fundraising plan by August 2019.
- Present to the Board options for leadership and staffing of the organization by July 2019.
- Over the course of FY 2020, secure funding from private and public sources to implement specific projects both for populations confronting high-risk challenges, and for support systems planning.
- Review status of sustainability plan quarterly, and make adjustments as needed.