

HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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Date: January 24, 2002

To: County Chair Diane Linn
County Commissioner Serena Cruz
County Commissioner Lisa Naito
County Commissioner Lonnie Roberts
County Commissioner Maria Rojo de Steffey

Cc: City Commissioner Erik Sten
Pauline Anderson, Poverty Advisory Committee
Paul Dagle, Housing and Community Development Commission
Bill Van Vliet, Housing and Community Development Commission
Lorenzo Poe, Office of School and Community Partnerships

From: Liv Jenssen, Co-Chair, Advisory Committee on Homeless Issues
Neal Beroz, Co-Chair, Advisory Committee on Homeless Issues

Re: Homeless Services in Multnomah County and the City of Portland

As co-chairs of the Advisory Committee on Homeless Issues (ACHI), a subcommittee of the Housing and Community Development Commission, we have a direct interest in the service delivery design for homeless services in the community. Today, the Board of County Commissioners will be asked to approve an Office of School and Community Partnerships. Included in this proposal is a commitment to a longer process to review how homeless services are provided county-wide. We would like to participate in this process.

We strongly support this examination of homeless services and propose it be done from the client's perspective, that is, we should be asking what happens to the homeless person or family who attempts to receive or does receive homeless services. In addition, we are committed to ensuring that homeless services are provided in a way that ensures maximum access and strong linkages to housing and any support services necessary to maintain that housing. We are pleased that you are not rushing into any immediate permanent changes regarding homeless services and look forward to a thoughtful discussion.

As you know, ACHI's workplan includes the coordination and development of the Multnomah County, City of Portland and City of Gresham Federal McKinney application. This involves working with all four homeless systems: homeless singles, homeless families, homeless youth and domestic violence. McKinney funds play an important role in funding homeless services, but all systems are funded from multiple sources and intersect a variety of other systems. ACHI's membership includes a diverse representation of stakeholders in the homeless services

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City of Portland



Multnomah County



City of Gresham

arena, including former consumers, homeless services providers, housing providers, advocates, scholars from academic institutions, a representative from communities of faith, individuals with experience in business, and providers from related systems such as mental health, corrections, alcohol and drug services, employment services, Adult and Family Services, veteran's services and HIV services.

Last year, in Multnomah County, over 13,000 individuals (either singles, family members or youth) received homeless services, ranging from a simple exchange with an outreach worker to shelter or housing. We will be providing a report at the end of July summarizing information we have learned over this year about services, needs and gaps, and outcomes, including the number of people who have obtained housing. We welcome the opportunity to be invited back to share with you what we have learned.

Our experience mirrors what many of you already understand; homeless services require improved coordination and a continued move toward universal access. This view has been strongly supported by the community: during a public hearing last June we heard from over 80 people, including consumers of homeless services (families, youth and single adults), providers and advocates, and the majority of them indicated that accessing services was frequently difficult and sometimes impossible. This is particularly important for special needs populations.

Please let us know how we can be helpful in future discussions. You can contact Liv Jenssen at (503) 988-4054 or Neal Beroz at (503) 238-0769 x125 or ACHI lead staff person, Rachael Duke, at (503) 802-8515.