



January 2010

THE BLUE BULLETIN

The Blue Bulletin is a periodic publication intended to help keep our community partners aware of upcoming events, issues, and news related to the implementation of the *Blueprint to End Homelessness*.

A Message from CHIP's Program Director



As we prepare for 2010, and the beginning of the eighth year of the community's 10-year plan to end homelessness, we have reflected on our community's progress to date and the significant work ahead of us. We have prepared a Community Progress Report that summarizes existing and enhanced or new commu-

nity resources that meet the goals and strategies of the City's 10-year plan. You can review that progress report by visiting our website at www.chipindy.org.

During the new year, CHIP will continue activities that support our coalition partners, our homeless neighbors, and the families and individuals in our community who are at risk of becoming homeless. These ongoing activities include the following:

- providing training and technical assistance to coalition partners;
- developing resources on behalf of coalition partners through activities such as seeking grants for collaborative efforts;
- coordinating the Continuum of Care application process and providing guidance to the appropriate use of stimulus funds;
- conducting research on best practices;
- conducting an annual street and shelter count;
- collecting additional data and monitoring outcomes;
- advocating on behalf of service providers and our local homeless population;
- coordinating limited direct service opportunities; and
- acting as a resource for the coalition.

We will also continue to promote awareness and service activities such as Indy Homeless Connect, CHIP's Annual Meeting, the Blueprint Celebration and the annual National Homeless Persons' Memorial Service.

This is what we do day to day, and everyday. In all of this, we have also outlined three priority community initiatives for 2010. These include:

- establishing an operational Engagement Center for chronically homeless individuals who are under the influence of alcohol or drugs;

- implementing Indy Resource Connect, which will include a series of local events where individuals at risk of homelessness can access services that will help them avoid becoming homeless; and
- engaging in a public awareness and partner-building campaign to increase Youth Programming and to establish new units of transitional housing for at-risk and homeless youth.

And, new for 2010, we will feature an enhanced website, increased attention to social media, and distribution of short videos of formerly homeless individuals and others making a difference in the local effort to end homelessness.

Engagement Center

One of the most challenging segments of our homeless population to care for and treat is comprised of those who are homeless and also chronically intoxicated as a result of mental illness and addiction. Both the *Blueprint to End Homelessness* and the *2007 Report and Recommendations of the Mayor's Crime Prevention Task Force* call for the establishment of an "Engagement Center" to serve this vulnerable population, as well as anyone who is publicly intoxicated and without a home.

An Engagement Center would provide these individuals with a safe refuge and access to long-term treatment, rehabilitation and housing. While long-needed and equally long-recognized as a need, our community has struggled to meet this need. Recent studies supported by CHIP and conducted by the Indiana University Center for Health Policy for 2009 indicate that on any given night in Indianapolis, there are nearly 600 individuals who are on the street or in shelters who face mental illness or substance abuse challenges. Over the course of a single year, our community invests **as much as \$11 million in public health care and criminal justice expenditures** for this population. This is an estimated \$3 million increase over a three-year period.

The study concludes that an Engagement Center would significantly reduce this burden on our public safety and public health budget while at the same time save lives and return many of these individuals to self-sufficiency. An Engagement Center will be capable of serving this same population at a cost of approximately \$1.2 million to operate annually.

We encourage the submission of news items about new programs, upcoming workshops or trainings, grant opportunities, or agency spotlights. Please limit the items to no more than 150 words and submit to Michael Butler at mbutler@chipindy.org.

Indy Resource Connect

Homelessness prevention is a goal of the *Blueprint to End Homelessness*. However, while our community's single night homeless count has decreased over the years since the Blueprint's implementation, recent economic challenges have increased the number of persons at risk of falling into homelessness. Indeed, between 2008 and 2009, our community saw a 78% increase in family homelessness, and more than 40% of the 1,500 people who are currently experiencing homelessness in our community are members of a "homeless family." Recent spikes in unemployment, evictions and foreclosures are only increasing this trend.

To address this issue, CHIP is implementing a prevention initiative modeled after "Indy Homeless Connect." This initiative, called "Indy Resource Connect," will consist of holding a series of local events throughout Marion County that will bring service providers and resources together under a single roof to provide individuals and families who are in financial or other crises and who are at risk of homelessness with easily accessible services at no cost. Services provided will include:

- individual and group employment assistance;
- financial education such as creating a budget and opening a bank account;
- credit counseling;
- accessing public benefits;
- financial or other assistance provided through the local township trustees' offices;
- legal services, and
- many other services.

Indy Resource Connect events will address barriers specific to the needs of those who may be experiencing financial or housing crisis for the first time, and the events will be held in familiar community locations that individuals may feel more comfortable accessing than traditional 'poor relief' sites. Also, by offering a large scope of services, individuals may be attracted to the event to access a particular service and while at the event, they may be introduced to services they did not know of previously.

The events will utilize a large number of volunteers to conduct intake interviews and to guide participants throughout the event. This individualized attention helps ensure that participants are aware of services and that they follow through on connecting to the services they need. Event sites will be chosen that are easy to get to, have adequate parking, and are located on public transportation routes. Free childcare will be provided to address the barriers adults with children may face while trying to interact with service providers.

Indy Resource Connect, November 10, 2009



Youth Programming

Youth programming and increased youth housing is also a goal of the *Blueprint to End Homelessness*. In evaluating our community's progress under the Blueprint, this was an area that fell far short of the goals that were set in 2002, but the need is just as significant, if not more so, today. Indeed, addressing youth homelessness and youth at risk of homelessness is both an immediate intervention as well as a method to prevent adult homelessness.

While youth homelessness prevention is an ongoing issue that will need to be addressed beyond the initial timeframe of the *Blueprint*, our goal for 2010 is to provide long-term preventative solutions to youth homelessness through improved housing and youth-centered transition services to young people in need of housing including those aging out of the foster care system, youth who have run away from home, or those who have been abandoned.

At the end of 2009, CHIP received a grant from the Glick Fund, a fund of the Central Indiana Community Foundation, to engage in activities over the next year to implement new youth programming activity and to drive the creation of new units of transitional housing for youth. Initial activities for 2010 will include a year-long campaign to grow community awareness of the issues of youth homelessness and to promote the work of those providing housing and services to youth, such as Stopover, Inc., Outreach, Inc., Restoring Lives West, and Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center.

A key component of the campaign will be the unification of one community voice to advance the call for youth stability, education and progress to self-sufficiency. During the next year, CHIP will

- cultivate support for the need for preventative services and housing for youth;
- continue more intensive research on national best practices on supportive youth housing models;
- develop key partnerships in the housing, service, and funding sectors;
- negotiate transition plans among service providers to help youth move from the system to independent living;
- provide training to service providers on how to identify and address the special needs of this population; and
- create a comprehensive strategic plan and operating model that integrates research and national best practices.

The new year offers new challenges for our community and for the provider network within it that works tirelessly to intervene and prevent homelessness. Through strong partnerships with the city administration, the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department, the Indianapolis Central Library, and with one another in the homeless service provider and advocacy community, CHIP looks forward to the opportunities these challenges provide within our community to continue to make progress on our city's 10-year plan to end homelessness.

*Michael Hurst
Program Director*