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*Community Alliances & Strategic Efforts*

***A CASE Plan to Prevent, Reduce and  
End Homelessness in Toledo and Lucas County Ohio***

*July 2008*

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*“All Citizens of Toledo and Lucas County Desiring to be ‘Homed’ Will Be”*

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### ***CASE PLAN VISION***

*All citizens of Toledo and Lucas County desiring to be 'homed', will be.*

*"Homed" is living in safe, affordable permanent housing with adequate resources and support systems so as to achieve one's potential and contribute to the well being of one's immediate household and the community at large.*

### ***GUIDING PRINCIPLES***

- Ending homelessness is the responsibility of our entire community – everyone has a role to play.
- The experience of homelessness will be tolerated for the shortest time possible.
- Outcomes are client and data driven.
- Consumers must be involved in the decision-making process, including the development, implementation, and evaluation of the ***CASE Plan***.
- Best practice models will be used and adopted to meet the needs of our community.

## ***INTRODUCTION***

***Carleton S. Finkbeiner***

*Mayor, City of Toledo*

“The City of Toledo is committed to working in a public/private partnership to advance the objectives of the CASE Plan to prevent homelessness; to deliver quality, coordinated, and comprehensive services to those facing homelessness; to provide a sufficient supply of safe, decent, and affordable housing; and to be responsive to the community's needs. Cooperative implementation of the plan will have a positive and lasting impact for the most vulnerable members of our community.”

***Joe McNamara***

*City of Toledo Council*

“The Toledo-Lucas County community is blessed with respect to the fact that we have many passionate advocates for the disadvantaged and the homeless. The TLCHB CASE Plan sets the noble goal of ending homelessness. The plan is a tool to harness our community passion and channel it into an agreed-upon strategy. This collaboration is an exciting approach to addressing a problem for which we must all take responsibility. As chairman of the Toledo City Council Community & Neighborhood Development committee, I am proud to be part of this effort and proud that our community is working together to better the lives of our brothers and sisters.”

***Tina Skeldon Wozniak***

*President, Board of Lucas County Commissioners*

“It's essential that we strive to make life better for everyone in our community, especially those who are most vulnerable. We simply must do all we can to coordinate our efforts, seek out partnerships, and provide pathways out of poverty so that we may someday soon end homelessness in our community once and for all.”

**INTRODUCTION** *(continued)*

***Clement Cybulski***

*Executive Director, Lucas County Veterans Service Commission*

"The Veterans Service Commission is dedicated to working with the TLCHB to address the issues of homelessness in Toledo and Lucas County, taking special interest in the needs of homeless who are veterans of the U.S. Military Service."

***Bill Kitson***

*President & CEO, United Way of Greater Toledo*

"The CASE Plan aligns with and furthers United Way's work of creating financial stability. These are the type of comprehensive, long-lasting solutions our community needs in order to advance the common good."

***Jane Moore***

*President, Toledo/Lucas County Homelessness Board*

"Homelessness is not a problem any one person or even one group can solve on its own. That's why, by sharing this plan, the Board hopes to engage the entire community in working together to ensure better lives for all residents of Toledo and Lucas County."

***Paula D. Lewis***

*TAAEH President*

"Ending homelessness is the responsibility of our entire community. We, as service providers, see daily the effects of people experiencing homelessness and we strive to serve them well and hope to see an end to homelessness."

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **“Homeless”:**

*Residing in emergency shelter; or transitional housing for homeless, or in places not meant for human habitation, such as abandoned buildings cars, parks, alleys, and sidewalks.*

### **“Chronically Homeless”:**

*An unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been homeless for a year or more, or has had at least four episodes of being homeless in the past three years*

### **“Precariously Housed”:**

*Those on the brink of homelessness. They may be doubled up with friends and relatives or paying extremely high proportions of their resources for rent.*

The Community Alliance and Strategic Efforts Plan to Prevent, Reduce and End Homelessness in Toledo/Lucas County (**CASE Plan**) is outcome-focused and data driven. It demonstrates a clear intent to move from managing homelessness to preventing and ending it by providing permanent solutions through a coordinated effort of the mainstream social programs and services. To accomplish this, the following steps and goals, addressed simultaneously, are required.

**Measure Outcomes:** It is essential that the best data possible is collected and analyzed to support the identification of needs, trends and indicators of what is and isn't working. Desired outcomes must be defined and results measured. Another critical component is to create a planning process that focuses on action steps to produce the outcome of ending homelessness. This requires that we include homeless providers, homeless and formerly homeless persons, public and private local agencies, organizations whose clients are either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, and other stakeholders vested in ensuring the stability and sustainability of our community and the safety, health and welfare of its citizens.

**Close the Front Door:** Homeless Prevention is fundamental to ending homelessness. Prior to becoming homeless, many people are often precariously housed with limited resources. Many are clients of public systems of care and assistance. These include mental health, public health, welfare and veteran systems, as well as criminal justice and child protective service systems (including foster care). Ironically, the more effective the homeless assistance system is in caring for people, the less incentive these other systems have to deal with the most troubled people and the more incentive there is to shift the cost of serving them to the homeless assistance system. This situation must be reversed.

Preventing homelessness depends on three factors: housing stability, sufficient income, and adequate, accessible support services. It further requires the cooperation and coordination of local social services and all eligible mainstream federal and state benefit programs and services (e.g. SSI, SSDI, childcare, food stamps) especially with those institutional facilities and treatment centers that have discharge responsibilities. Homeless prevention holds the most promise for cost-savings and effective resource management throughout the service sectors, and it strengthens the possibility for permanent solutions to end homelessness. Plus, it elicits good problem solving and decision-making by the affected person, thereby preserving the dignity and self-respect of the individual.

**Open the Back Door:** Effective and rapid placement of homeless families and individuals into safe and affordable permanent housing is a vital necessity to end homelessness. Best-practice models demonstrate that people experiencing homelessness for the least amount of time possible are better able to break the cycle of homelessness.

***Toledo Lucas County Homelessness Board***

*An independent, non-profit, centralized body made up of 25*

*directors, five of whom are appointed by the Mayor of the City of Toledo, five appointed by the Lucas County Commissioners and two elected by the Toledo Area Alliance to End Homelessness.*

*The remaining 13 directors are elected by the board and are made up of community members representing consumer, faith, service, business, and public concerns).*

*Its primary role is to plan for and oversee a coordinated, targeted, and comprehensive response to homelessness in Toledo and Lucas County, including its prevention, reduction and elimination.*

**Coordinated Homeless Services** coupled with **Sufficient Affordable Housing** are required to address this reality. The shelter and transitional housing system within the Toledo /Lucas County Continuum of Care should be designed and coordinated to minimize the length of time people remain homeless, and reduce the number of times they become homeless. For the chronically homeless, rapid housing means independent permanent housing or permanent supportive housing (housing with services). For families and less disabled single adults it means getting people very quickly into permanent housing, equipping them with life skills, connecting them with benefits for which they are eligible and linking them with support services. For those whose homelessness is primarily a result of limited finances because of under-employment, burdensome debt and / or poor credit, case management support efforts must focus on raising potential for self-sufficiency through increased education, better employment, debt reduction and budget management.

**Build the Infrastructure:** Assuring a strong and responsive infrastructure is the ultimate key for eliminating the experience of homelessness in our community. While systems can be changed to prevent homelessness and shorten the experience of homelessness, ultimately people will continue to be threatened with instability until:

- the supply of affordable housing is increased to meet the documented need;
- incomes are adequate to pay for necessities such as food, shelter and health care through increased income fostered by education, training opportunities, job creation and benefit access;
- disadvantaged people can adequately access and receive the needed health and social services.

Therefore, all attempts to change the homeless assistance/prevention system must take place with the context of larger efforts to help people break the cycle of poverty.

**Community Engagement, Coordination & Oversight:** Preventing, reducing and ending homelessness is a community responsibility. Everyone has a role to play. The Toledo Lucas County Homelessness Board is dedicated to serving as shepherd of the process and committed to keeping the process on track and fostering a broad, countywide response to those experiencing and those most at risk of experiencing homelessness. Incorporating these steps into the CASE Plan of emerging strategies will change the dynamics of homelessness in Toledo and Lucas County. While it will not stop people from losing their housing, it will alter the way in which housing crises are managed. While it will not end poverty, it will require that housing stability be a measure of success for those who assist low-income people.

## OVERVIEW & PROCESS

**“Continuum of Care”:**  
*A local planning process that helps communities plan for and provide a full range of prevention, emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing and supportive service resources to address the various needs of homeless individuals and families*

In 2003 a Toledo Homeless Task Force of 30 community leaders was constituted by the City of Toledo to assess the city’s and county’s current homeless situation (estimated to be more than 2,700 persons annually) and its homeless service system, and to make recommendations that would promote cost efficiency and improve service effectiveness throughout the Toledo / Lucas County Continuum of Care.

In June of 2004, the Task Force prepared and presented Homelessness in Toledo and Lucas County: A Comprehensive Community Needs Assessment and Action Plan. Its Needs Assessment and Action Plan components greatly informed subsequent planning and action steps culminating in the **Community Alliance and Strategic Efforts (CASE) Plan**. These steps included: 1) the formation of the *Toledo Lucas County Homelessness Board (TLCHB)*; 2) full implementation of the *Toledo Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)*, a computerized tracking system and data collection tool designed to capture system-wide information about the characteristics and service needs of the community’s homeless; and 3) increased investment in permanent supportive housing targeting the chronically homeless individual.

In March 2007 the City of Toledo, Lucas County Commissioners and United Way of Greater Toledo each awarded TLCHB \$25,000 to equip the board to better engage the community and provide leadership for the development of the **CASE Plan** and oversight of its action steps. This charge includes overall management and implementation of the **CASE Plan** through ongoing analysis, monitoring, evaluation, reporting and revision of priorities and steps as warranted; establishing policy and standards; providing project and program guidance; ensuring agency capacity supports positive outcomes; assisting in securing funding; and facilitating and promoting community involvement in the **CASE Plan**.

In the past two years TLCHB has assumed responsibility of the Toledo/Lucas County Continuum of Care and supervision of the Toledo HMIS project. As lead agency, it has prepared and submitted a successful HUD Supportive Housing Continuum of Care Consolidated Grant Application, securing \$1.4 million renewal dollars for 10 programs, and adopted standards for homeless service providers. It has hosted two annual “*Case to Care*” community wide meetings to foster community engagement, collaboration and investment in the **CASE Plan**.

The first CASE to Care to End Homelessness community meeting was held in November 2007. Seventy-five people representing local government, homeless and social service providers, religious leaders, funding and community organizations, homeless advocates and consumers, and housing providers were in attendance. Matt White, primary consultant of the 2004 Comprehensive Community Needs Assessment and Action Plan, working closely with TLCHB and Toledo HMIS, presented a 2007 Needs Assessment Update, which affirmed with the data collected over three years that estimations and

assumptions of who are homeless in our community made in the 2004 document were on the mark. The break-out sessions and conversations also affirmed that the action steps noted in 2004 remain relevant and encouraged planners to incorporate the following into its further strategic planning and actions: affordable housing; community coordination; employment and skills development; special population/sub-population concerns (mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, emancipated youth); coordinated case management; health and nutrition; and data evaluation and research.

The second CASE to Care to End Homelessness community meeting was held in June 2008. Consultant Matt White and associates from the Coalition on Housing and Homelessness in Ohio facilitated the meeting. Eighty persons representing those noted above, including 16 consumers, attended. The primary purpose of the meeting was to review and react to the draft outline of the ***CASE Plan to Prevent, Reduce and End Homelessness***. The group engaged well in the process and generally embraced the direction of the ***CASE Plan***, especially in the areas of affordable housing, prevention, education and income needs, and consumer participation. The group's feedback and recommendations positively contributed to the final draft of the ***CASE Plan***.

Participants of the *Case to Care* community meetings, government officials, other community leaders and TLCHB reviewed the final draft of the ***CASE Plan*** and were asked to submit their reaction and comments for consideration by the TLCHB prior to its final approval. The ***CASE Plan*** was approved by TLCHB on July 30, 2008 and was presented to the Mayor of the City of Toledo, the City of Toledo Council and the Lucas County Commissioners for their endorsement process. All three entities endorsed the ***CASE Plan*** in September 2008. A comprehensive summary document and a full documentation of the ***CASE Plan*** were published and widely distributed in October 2008.

*“I came to Toledo with my children, Anissa, and Jennah, in June 2008 for a job interview and got the job, but my children and I were homeless. Thanks to the help received from caring homeless providers in the Toledo community, we have been sheltered and are entering a transitional housing program. We are going to be okay and make it. We will never forget where we came from because it will remind us where we are going.” - Carla Morrow*

## TOLEDO/LUCAS COUNTY HISTORY WITH HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

The *Toledo Area Alliance to End Homelessness* (TAAEH) is a long-standing, strong network of homeless service providers, advocates and other community stakeholders that seeks to build collaboration among its members, promote solution-oriented approaches to homeless issues through direct services, and work with TLCHB in strengthening the Toledo/Lucas County Continuum of Care (*Attachment A*).

TAAEH, formerly the Shelters Directors Association, has been the community's primary responder to the needs of the homeless for more than 20 years, as well as the primary advocate for a comprehensive plan to prevent, reduce and end homelessness in our community. Recognizing the natural limitations of an agency/service-based organization to lead comprehensive community-based planning and oversight of the current homeless service system as it moves from managing homelessness to its prevention and reduction, TAAEH played a key role in the formation of the TLCHB.

In 2002 TAAEH created a Homeless Management Information System task force and was instrumental in securing the Toledo HMIS project with one of its members, Family Outreach Community United Services, as the project sponsor. While supervision of HMIS is now the responsibility of the TLCHB, TAAEH remains active in the HMIS subcommittee and receives regular reports from HMIS to assist in its program planning and service delivery recommendations. TAAEH members serve on every TLCHB committee and are essential participants in the planning, reviewing and submission of the community's Consolidated Continuum of Care grant application to the U. S. Housing and Urban Development Supportive Housing Program.

The *Toledo/Lucas County Continuum of Care* addresses all of the fundamental components of a Continuum of Care. They are:

- *Homeless prevention/shelter diversion* to prevent people from losing housing and subsequently needing to access homeless services.
- *Outreach and assessment* to identify an individual's or family's service and housing needs, to engage them in those services, and to link them to appropriate housing and/or service resources.
- *Emergency shelter* as a safe, decent alternative to living on the streets.
- *Transitional housing* with supportive services to help people develop the skills necessary to get and keep permanent housing.
- *Permanent supportive housing* as service-enriched housing designed to address the long-term housing and service needs in a single program.
- *Permanent housing* available to all residents of Toledo and Lucas County in affordable, safe, accessible locations.

The *Toledo/Lucas County Continuum of Care* is well established. Though not yet equipped to meet all the current need, it provides a range of services moving homeless households, single and family, into long-term permanent housing. It possesses the potential for service efficiency and expansion as stronger collaborations are built and resources are made available, especially in the areas of prevention, outreach and affordable housing. *(See Attachment A)*

The Toledo Lucas County Homelessness Board, as lead agency, guides the Continuum of Care planning structure, which includes the work of the TLCHB CASE committee, HMIS sub-committee, TAAEH, *CASE to Care* community forums, and Continuum of Care Application Exhibit 1 and review committees. *Toledo/Lucas Continuum of Care* is broad and includes organizations from the public sector (*state government, public housing, education, law enforcement, local workforce investment board*) and the private sector (*non-profit organizations, faith based organizations, funding and advocacy groups, businesses, medical entities, homeless and formerly homeless*).

**2008 Toledo Lucas County Homelessness Board of Directors**

Jane Moore, President  
United Way of Greater Toledo

Paul Tecpanecatl, Vice-President *(Lucas County Appointment)*  
Poggemeyer Design Group, Inc.

Clement Cybulski, Secretary *(Lucas County Appointment)*  
LC Veterans Services Commission

Judy Sparks, Treasurer  
Huntington Bank

Michael Allen *(Lucas County Appointment)*  
Lucas Metropolitan Housing Authority

Steve Anthony  
Toledo Area Ministries

Nancy Atkins  
Retired, Toledo Metropolitan Mission

Norma Bielski  
Mercy Health Partners

Janet Boswell *(TAAEH Appointment)*  
Family House

Toby Fey  
Advocates for Basic Equality

Robert Franklin *(Lucas County Appointment)*  
LC Children Services Board

Craig Gebers  
The Source (Zeph Center)

Maria Gorny *(City Toledo Appointment)*  
Department of Neighborhoods

Paula Lewis *(TAAEH Appointment)*  
Beach House

Ken Leslie *(City Toledo Appointment)*  
Strategic Search Consultants

Jackie Martin *(Lucas County Appointment)*  
Mental Health & Recovery Services Board

E. Mickens  
Toledo Community Development Corp.

Donna Mitchell  
Lucas County Juvenile Court

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