



Program Name: Missouri Homeless Study
Category and Subcategory: Special Achievement
HFA: Missouri Housing Development Commission

Although Missouri Housing Development Commission (MHDC) has been instrumental in efforts to combat homelessness in the state of Missouri, a comprehensive homeless study for the entire state had not been conducted since 2001. In 2008, MHDC's Community Initiatives department staff conducted the necessary research, compiled comprehensive data and released the Missouri Homeless Study on April 15, 2009.

MHDC created their Community Initiatives department in October 2006 to meet the needs of the very-low-income residents of the state. The Community Initiatives department administrates the Balance of State (BoS) Continuum of Care (CoC) and the Missouri Housing Trust Fund (MHTF). The BoS CoC provides technical assistance to social service agencies applying for continuum funding through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). MHTF provides funding to agencies that provide assistance to people who have incomes that are at or below 50% of the area median income. The Missouri Homeless Study provides resources for agencies in the fight against homelessness.

The process of creating the Missouri Homeless Study began in the summer of 2008. It was the opinion of MHDC that progress could not be made on ending homelessness until a study identified the needs and numbers of the homeless population of the entire state.

In Missouri, there are eight CoC, and each CoC has data-tracking systems and methods for reporting homelessness. To attain consistency and accuracy, the Missouri Homeless Study used data submitted in each continuum's yearly application for HUD-funded housing programs. The HUD application details each region's homeless count and breaks down the information into the following categories: unsheltered homeless, emergency shelter and transitional housing programs. Additionally, this study breaks down the subpopulations within the count, including unaccompanied minors, chronically homeless individuals, veterans, victims of domestic violence, homeless individuals with HIV/AIDS, and those dealing with substance abuse and mental illness.

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The other main source of information specific to Missouri homelessness is obtained from each continuum's database, using the HUD-approved Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Information gathered in the emergency shelters, transitional shelters, permanent housing and Shelter Plus Care programs reflect the number of individuals served in 2007 and 2008.

Through this study, all homeless services providers in Missouri have the ability to quantify the homeless population. By providing quantifiable data, MHDC has provided service agencies with the ability to seek local, state and federal funding support.

Social service providers from around the state have commended MHDC and have provided positive feedback stating, "...this study will allow us to seek funding from federal sources"; "MHDC has really stepped up to the plate and done an outstanding study"; "...this is exactly what Missouri needed to move forward in serving the homeless population"; and "...this has given us a real opportunity to be noticed at the federal level."

The process utilized to develop the Missouri Homeless Study can be easily duplicated by states interested in combating homelessness. The key to providing this study is collaborative partnerships between HMIS and service providers. Funding for the homeless study was made possible by MHDC; however, agencies wishing to conduct a homeless study are encouraged to search for grants at universities as alternate sources of funding.

This study has been supported by state officials, city officials and community providers. This document has allowed providers to quantifiably prove the need for homeless services in their regions and, therefore, allowed them to leverage funds for continued projects throughout Missouri.

The success of this program is based on collaboration of state agencies and services providers throughout the state of Missouri. City and state-affiliated agencies that took part in the creation of this study included MHDC, Department of Corrections, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Department of Mental Health, City of St. Louis, St. Louis County, Veteran's Affairs and Missouri Association for Social Welfare.

Also contributing were several social services agencies: Greater Kansas City Homeless Services Coalition, St. Joseph Continuum of Care, St. Charles Continuum of Care, Springfield Continuum of Care, Joplin Continuum of Care and Balance of State Continuum of Care. Each of these agencies provided quality, quantifiable data for their region.