



## Initial Questions and Notes for Follow-up Sessions

as of 3.1.10

*Working groups are invited to submit their questions, which will be posted at [leecountyunitedway.org](http://leecountyunitedway.org) for the benefit of group members and COMPASSION '10 advisor Susan Pennock.*

### **Dropout Prevention Working Group**

1. How can we get more community members involved with our students — in mentoring, for example — even at the elementary level? We would like to see communities work one-on-one with students.
2. We would like a better understanding of the causes of dropouts.
3. What are our county's dropout statistics and demographics?
4. How can we recruit more students to our 21st-Century grant programs? (We have programs in place, but we can't get many students to sign up, even though the needs assessments were great.)
5. What can we do to enhance transitions from elementary to middle school, and from middle to high school?
6. How do we build meaningful relationships with parents?
7. We would like more training in establishing a quality mentoring program.

### **Food Working Group**

1. There is a need to update the organizational "211" information — ask for instructions on how to update that information.
2. Is there a need to combine the food groups for more? Cooperation?
3. Transportation available to food, maybe from COLTS (the County of Lee Transportation System) or St. Stephen's "On the Road Again" ministry?
4. Are there food stores that will deliver food —maybe Lowes? Kerr Drug delivers medication.
5. Training needed for client/agency initial contact person?

## Homelessness and Housing Working Group

*The notes from the homelessness working group includes the group's activities beyond the recent roundtable.*

### **1. How will we define "homelessness" in Sanford and Lee County so we can properly analyze and discuss it as a problem?**

The Mayor's Task Force will rely on the federal definition of homelessness so our approach to managing the problem is consistent with and supportive of state and federal initiatives. The federal definition for homelessness as outlined in Title 42, Chapter 119, Subchapter I, Section 11302, of the U.S. Code is:

For purposes of this chapter, the term "homeless" or "homeless individual or homeless person" includes:

- (1) an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and
- (2) an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is-
  - (A) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill);
  - (B) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or
  - (C) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

The above definition addresses homelessness from a broad perspective and includes people who are either temporarily or chronically homeless. It views homelessness across the spectrum of socio-economic categories, generally ignoring the financial abilities of those who lack a permanent residence. This definition also counts (as homeless) those individuals who use local or regional institutions or facilities for their residence, even if they have a reasonable long-term, but non-permanent place to stay.

### **2. A. Who are out homeless populations and what are the contributing factors to homelessness in Sanford and Lee County?**

Homelessness in Lee County seems to stem from the same causative factors that create problems in other counties and municipalities of comparable size and geography. The Sanford area has a mix of industrial, agricultural and service-oriented labor markets that suffer the extremes of the business cycle. As the local job market expands and contracts, the financial solvency of our population changes, resulting in fluctuations of our homeless population. Sanford also suffers from the same criminal, moral and anti-social behavior challenges affecting other communities, including a growing teenage pregnancy problem, drug/alcohol abuse problems, gang behaviors among our youth, and an unacceptably high drop-out rate from public schools. All of these factors lead directly or indirectly to the city's homelessness.

There is a steady state number of chronically homeless individuals, highly visible to the citizens of Sanford, principally consisting of two classes - (a) those who are mentally ill or emotionally disturbed; and /or (b) individuals who have a chronic substance abuse problem. Conservative estimates place the number of people in this category at around 50. These people daily congregate in places where loitering is tolerated around the city. There are at least 10 such sites, principally in the eastern and southern quadrants of the city. Most of these individuals are adult men, aged 21 - 50, with limited education, poor work habits, virtually all of them possessing a criminal record.

There exists a less visible but no less chronic population of homeless females who have challenges similar to the male population. These adult women fall into one or more of three categories- (a) mentally ill / emotionally disturbed; (b) chronic substance abusers; and (c) prostitutes. Typically, these homeless females resign themselves to panhandling and/or work as prostitutes because they suffer from mental illness (or similar anti-social problems) and because they have a substance dependency that must be financed. They move very frequently, taking residence with boyfriends or 'johns' for days or weeks at a time. Some even have children they leave with a local family member or other care provider while they pursue their independent lifestyles.

There is a small but growing number of homeless youth, mostly males aged 15 - 20 years of age,

who have dropped out of school and liberated themselves from their families. This is a particularly social cohort of individuals, with gang-oriented behaviors. They are a particularly aggressive group believed to be perpetrating a sizeable percentage of local crime. Because these individuals choose not to seek employment and have no familial support or government assistance, they finance their independent life-styles through robbery, theft, and other illegal means. This group of individuals contributes markedly to the growth in our jail and prison populations and to growth in our chronically unemployed.

Another less visible but growing cohort of homeless people in the local community is unwed (single) moms, aged 15 -25, who are unemployed and either unable or unwilling to move in with their relatives to ensure adequate support for their children. These families tend to migrate from house to house around the community, being taken in wherever space is available. Most of these women hope to receive child support from the biological fathers of their children, but few manage to receive meaningful and regular assistance through child support enforcement. Most of these women have not completed high school and have little if any vocational aptitude. Their children become their meal tickets through TANF, food stamps, WIC subsidies, and other government assistance. However, few of these families have permanent, reliable housing because they lack the kind of regular income necessary to secure a lease.

The local community has a widely fluctuating number of homeless traditional families. Typically, this group does not remain homeless locally for more than a few days or weeks because one of the parents will find local employment (and be able to lease a home); or because the family eventually moves away from Sanford and Lee County to find work or residence elsewhere. The economic cycle and local unemployment rates in Lee County directly affect the homeless population in this category. During economic expansion with near full employment, we have few if any families in this situation. However, there are weeks during high unemployment (such as during the spring and summer of 2009) where Sanford has had a dozen or more traditional families suffering the stigma of homelessness for a protracted period of time.

There is a rising number of Latino families migrating to Sanford and Lee County, many of whom do not possess green cards and are not U.S. citizens. Many of these families have school-aged children who speak English as a second language. Typically these families take up residence on the east side of Sanford and they frequently cohabitate with friends or other blood relatives who preceded them here and who are already living in a single family unit. Technically, many of these Latino families fall into the homeless category, but they manage to find a place to reside even when they are out of work; so getting an accurate count on their numbers is difficult to measure.

One final category of homeless individuals found in Sanford includes those who have been recently released from jail/prison, often on supervised parole. The Department of Corrections requires that these individuals maintain an address here in Sanford, but often these addresses are temporary (and sometimes are for a short-term stay in a local homeless shelter). Because these individuals have a criminal record and usually have a limited education and erratic work history, they have a difficult time securing full employment and an even tougher time getting a permanent place to reside. Included in this population is one particularly complex category of people that, by law, must maintain and publicly report a valid address-the small number of registered sex offenders (RSO's) in the city. These RSO's have limitations on where they are allowed to reside and they typically re-locate frequently. Some end up being homeless and are in violation of the law when they cannot find a place to stay. RSO's are a difficult group to find even temporary housing for. Most shelters in North Carolina refuse them admittance.

***B. Can we reasonably predict the numbers and types of homeless people/families we will have based on the changing socio-economic landscape?***

Intuitively, the homeless population in Sanford and Lee County rises and falls with the general economic situation, and with local employment. There are, however, a number of chronically homeless individuals, mentioned above, who will resist remedial programs (such as drug and alcohol rehabilitation) and full-time employment, so they will find it impossible to secure long-term housing accommodations. Our best estimate of the number of chronically homeless is approximately 50 individuals.

We can roughly project trends in (temporarily) homeless individuals and families. We know from experience that, as the economy worsens, we have a geometrically higher rate of homelessness. Because so many of our local families live at or just above the federal poverty level even during the best economic circumstances, the number of homeless people increases disproportionately when unemployment rises and when salaries/wages fall. Throughout the spring/summer of 2009, we estimate our temporarily homeless population in and around Sanford has remained above 250

people.

Because there are no formal reporting channels on homelessness, and because local government and non-profit agencies do not freely share information about their homeless clients, we do not presently have the means to accurately predict and proactively manage our homeless population.

**3. A. What are the socio-economic impacts of homelessness on our City? Are there any specific (degrading) effects on our City that require attention? (For example-crime rates, economic cost to the city or county, future costs attributable to degraded healthcare and reduced education, etc.)**

Homelessness in our community introduces a variety of problems that can be devastating to individuals, families, and the general public. Homelessness is costly to our taxpayers and impacts the city in many ways.

The typical chronically homeless person who is also a substance abuser and/or a mentally ill / emotionally disturbed individual will spend 20 or more days a year in local and regional hospitals for a variety of reasons-kidney and liver problems, cardio-respiratory distress, flu/pneumonia, etc. An average day of stay in the hospital for these uninsured (or Medicaid covered) people will typically exceed \$1000. Moreover, the average 'street person' will end up being incarcerated for 7-30 days per year for reasons of trespassing, panhandling, or other misdemeanor offenses. This jail time costs local taxpayers an average of \$2500 or so per year. Prosecution and court related expenses for their criminal activities are also at taxpayer expense.

Local volunteer organizations cater to the homeless population. Sanford's local men's and women's shelters (including Haven), the Breadbasket, Bread of Life and CUOC ministries, and the several church-sponsored food and clothing banks all provide recurring support to homeless individuals. Undoubtedly, the cumulative expense for the average homeless family – served throughout a one-year period – amounts to a thousand dollars or more. For homeless individuals receiving drug or alcohol abuse detoxification and rehabilitation, the total value of services can easily exceed \$10,000 in total expense for a year.

Perhaps the most disturbing and significant costs to the local community come as the outcome of criminal activities directly or indirectly related to homelessness. We simply cannot capture the costs stemming from the several murders, rapes, armed robberies, child abuse cases, and for the innumerable petty crimes that result from the same factors that cause local homelessness. Indigent youth often end up in gangs, committing heinous crimes including murder, rape, and armed robbery. Young children in homeless families suffer from poor diets and often are vulnerable to child abuse or neglect. Worse still, the cycle of homelessness tends to repeat itself from one generation to the next. Many of our local homeless adult clients in Sanford were homeless during their youth and are now the parents of children who are suffering the same trauma of not having a place to call home.

Many of our homeless individuals are incapable of working because of physical disabilities they caused themselves. Many will eventually suffer debilitating illnesses and become incapable of working because of poor lifelong health habits (including smoking, drug use, and drinking). When they qualify for SSI, their disability payments can range from \$250 a month to over \$2000 a month, depending on their condition. Over a lifetime, these SSI payments and the accompanying Medicaid health costs can easily exceed \$100,000 for an individual. Interestingly, many of the chronic homeless people in Sanford receive monthly SSI payments for injuries they sustained while drunk or engaged in other illegal acts. They then use their permanent monthly SSI checks to finance their chronic drinking or drug problems. In effect, the government helps perpetuate their bad behavior, which, in turn, contributes to homelessness by subsidizing it financially.

**4. Which group(s) of Sanford's Homeless population do we desire to serve?**

• **Street people who may be contributing to the crime rate in our city** - clearly it is an advantage to the community to get homeless people off the street. Those without a place to stay in the evenings need a safe and secure place to overnight, especially during inclement weather.

• **Street kids who have dropped out of school, are legally free, and could become gang members** - we need to find places for these kids to congregate in a wholesome and productive manner (like a closely monitored Christian Teen Center). We need ordinances to combat gang tendencies and a range of alternative activities for youth outlets. We need residential facilities that can act as a safe house for liberated youth.

• **Homeless mothers with children who have no practical means of support and whose children may have resulting emotional or physical health issues** - this is a growing problem and we need suitable facilities for these moms to reside. Low cost boarding homes, low cost day care, and readily available employment for these moms are essential. We need classes and mentoring for

teens to counter the growth in teen pregnancy.

- **Chronically homeless adults (loners) who have apparent mental health issues** - The actual numbers of these people are tough to pin down, but we know of some 20+ men and women who exhibit anti-social behavior or other clinical psychological problems that remain homeless here in Lee County. Several cycle in and out of jail and the local men's shelter.

- **Chronically homeless adults (loners) who have apparent chemical dependencies** -- this problem is worsening. The recent loss of no cost substance abuse counseling and treatments has reduced the motivation for homeless chronic substance abusers to seek help. We desperately need a detoxification facility and a Stage I (in-resident) treatment facility in Sanford and Lee County. Presently, we have to take these people out of county for most services.

- **Temporarily homeless families who have lost jobs, but who may likely end up being re-employed within a few months** - it's hard to judge precise numbers of these families, and the numbers vary widely as employment fluctuates. House fires and plant closings are the principal causes for family displacements that lead to homelessness. The network of churches in Lee County most commonly helps these families out, but often the readily available support is hit and miss.

- **Itinerant adults (including or excluding undocumented workers) requiring temporary or seasonal housing as they search for work or for brief periods of stay in Sanford** - this isn't typically a large problem. Normally, these itinerants cohabitate with others in single family residences, or they leave town if work dries up.

- **Recently released correctional inmates who are not yet able to secure employment and have no place to stay** - it is very challenging for recently paroled prisoners to find meaningful work, and to obtain a place to stay so they can meet the requirements of their parole. We need a local facility that can facilitate Parole Office check-ups yet permit the residents to pursue shift work at late or early hours.

- **Other groups or classes of homeless people** - Registered Sex Offenders (RSO's) is a class of people we should consider mustering support for. Recently, there have been several of these RSO's wandering the city, panhandling and looking for help, without having a suitable reportable residence (two of them were living in a tent on an unauthorized lot in the east side of town). We need to know where all sex offenders are staying and they need to be monitored if they are to be in and around youth or vulnerable females.

## **5. A. What are the present facilities and programs that serve the homeless population?**

There are dozens of organizations and churches that extend a helping hand to the city's homeless population. The majority of these are listed in the United Way's 2-1-1 Directory. Many are also listed in the local phone directory. Facilities that are specifically set aside to house the above categories of people are limited, though. Presently, we only have one men's and one women's facility designated as a short-term (no-fee) boarding house-the Outreach Mission. These homes can house up to 6 or 8 at capacity; but a few more are accommodated during extremely cold weather. There are two or more half-way houses for (Stage II) recovering substance abusers, including Lifeline Ministries (sponsored by Beaver Creek Baptist Church) and Lighthouse Recovery Program (run by DBR Ministries and Grace Chapel). In addition, Sanford Housing Authority provides some assistance for families as space comes available.

## **B. Which facilities and programs are adequate and which ones have gaps or are underserving our homeless populations?**

Our ability to house and feed the homeless in Sanford is underserved across the board. While an improving economy in the years ahead may reduce the demand for facilities, Sanford is struggling to cope with the present homeless problem and its many manifestations. Although we have the ability to transport citizens away from Sanford to facilities in other counties so they can be housed and supported, Sanford needs to be able to provide a greater degree of support locally.

We need a much larger facility (or group of houses) to accommodate 25 or more adult men undergoing skills training and Stage II recovery from drug or alcohol abuse, similar to the Durham Rescue Mission's "Victory Program."

We need boarding houses that can take in street kids and single moms. We need skills training opportunities, a better temp services network that the unemployed can use for securing short-term jobs, and more facilities our youth can use for recreation and other productive purposes.

We desperately need a medical facility at which alcoholics and some classes of drug abusers can receive closely monitored 3- or 4-day detoxification. This could be at CCH, or another local (residential) facility. We also need a Stage I treatment facility for chronic drug and alcohol abusers where intensive counseling and support groups are provided for 2- or 4-week periods (similar to the ARCA program in Winston-Salem, the Solus Christus program in Greensboro, or the Harvest House

program in Dunn).

**6. A. What initiatives already started will address our homeless problems?**

The Sanford Outreach Mission provides the only extant shelters for men and women in the community. Haven provides temporary housing for battered women, and the Lifeline Ministries provides some (pay-as-you-go) half-way house services. The Bread of Life Ministries (old Mclver School) has draft plans to open a men's shelter by Winter 2010-11 that will provide shelter and job training for chronic substance abusers wishing to turn their lives around.

**B. When will they mature and which local agency is responsible for managing each program?**

None of the above programs is yet fully mature; and all suffer from serious financial needs to fulfill all program goals. Attempts are being made to secure recurring support through mission funding from local churches. All of these programs are independently organized and operated. Of the above programs, only the Haven is thought to be receiving United Way campaign or governmental assistance. All of these program areas need increased financial support to achieve their short- and long-term service goals related to the community's homeless challenges.

**7. A. What resources do we have today for tracking and reporting on our homeless populations?**

Only informal data and statistics are captured by local agencies and organizations. The Sherriff's Office and County Jail have some relevant data on vagrancy that is not immediately accessible to private citizens. The Sanford Housing Authority also maintains waiting lists and other relevant information that might help us monitor homelessness and direct resources to reduce its impact. Again, this data is not freely shared or accessible to private citizens for privacy reasons. Some of the local privately run organizations (including Sanford Outreach Mission, CUOC, and the Bread of Life) maintain client files and extensive data on their clients and their problems. We have some data on more than 2500 local families who have sought varying forms of assistance (including housing) from those organizations. However, there is no formal or recurring coordination between and among organizations and agencies that cater to these needs.

**B. What are the current records/statistics?** Accurate relevant statistics on Sanford and Lee County homelessness are not readily available. Sanford Housing Authority has a few data points of interest pertaining to resources and wait times for housing, but this data is not entirely reflective of homeless problems for all categories of people. (See attached Spreadsheets for the SHA list of Resources).

**8. A. What information and referral resources do we have today that can be used to get homeless people to servicing agencies for assistance?**

The best, most thorough resource for referring clients to organizations or agencies where help is available is the United Way's 2-1-1 service.

**B. How are these resources accessed?**

This service can be accessed 24x7 through the internet, or by telephone. One of the limitations is that this service is not staffed by a local person-the call center is in Durham, and the operators there access our Lee County 2-1-1 database to make referrals. Another limitation is the frequency with which the 2-1-1 data files are updated. Ideally, all organizations and agencies in the 2-1-1 directory would keep all their data updated. The process for updating that info and for making checks to ensure the database is complete and accurate can use some improvement. Nevertheless, the 2-1-1 service is vitally important to the community and should serve as an important referral tool as we expand our resources to accommodate the homeless.

**9. What community resources or programs exist that can materially support new facilities to target homeless populations?**

There are precious few community and state resources available to address Sanford's homelessness. Unlike many communities and counties across the state, Sanford lacks a scalable capability to house more than a handful of single men and women for short periods of time. Volunteer organizations routinely carry homeless people out of our county to rescue missions, shelters or treatment facilities where help is available. There are abundant local buildings that are vacant and available; but most require a sizeable purchase price and/or significant renovations to be habitable for homeless individuals.

**10. What federal grant or assistance programs are available for us to tap into in solving**

### **some aspects of our homeless problem?**

A wide range of federal grants and stimulus funds reportedly are available to address housing and/or treatment facilities. We are unaware of anyone in the Sanford area who monitors and tracks such resources or who might be thoroughly familiar with the methods required to secure federal funding assistance. We need to work in coordination with community, state, and federal officials to identify and pursue financial resources so planned facility renovations or development can occur in the next 12-24 months.

#### **11. A. What can the local network of churches do to help reduce the impacts of homelessness in our community?**

There are more than 150 Evangelical Christian and Catholic Churches in Sanford and Lee County. Some are quite active in supporting local shelters and missions; about 10 of them support the only current no-fee shelter-the Sanford Outreach Mission. Much more can be done if we can find a way to energize and unite the local churches to support the effort to house our homeless.

#### **B. How do we collaborate to ensure support from our churches is well used and effectively applied?**

In short, we don't. This is an area requiring significant improvement if we are to be successful. We need to establish a local method for communicating the community's problems to all Pastors/Churches to ensure situational awareness; then we need a forum for them to collaborate and coordinate their respective church responses.

#### **C. What federal or state (government) restrictions may be imposed that could limit the involvement of our local churches?**

There will always be conditions or restrictions applied when federal monies are being applied, even to funded faith-based services. It is unlikely church participation will be altogether excluded or substantially impaired as a condition of federal funding. More likely is the fact that use of federal funds will impose lots of federal reporting and local records management.

#### **12. A. How can we best organize our public and private organizations and agencies into a partnership to effectively manage the community's homeless problem(s)?**

Two important things are needed-relevant information to educate the public; and a forum by which local actions can be coordinated. We already have the prospects of a forum through the United Way's periodic workshops and seminars. If the United Way will sponsor us meeting quarterly for awareness and discussion, we will greatly enhance the coordination of our efforts. We also need the Sanford City Council, Broadway Town Council, and Lee County Board of Commissioners to show interest in homelessness and related social issues, and to promote and encourage local programs that target homelessness. If United Way is joined in this effort with most of our local civic organizations and churches, we can accomplish much more than we do at present.

#### **B. Is there one best agency or organization that can be chartered to monitor and report on Sanford's homeless problems?**

Aside from the United Way's help in sponsoring periodic forums, there really isn't one overarching agency or organization that has potential jurisdiction over or responsibility for homelessness. Perhaps the Sanford Housing Authority (SHA) is the closest public agency with appropriate authority to oversee or coordinate activities oriented on homelessness. But conventional wisdom would seem to suggest our problems with homelessness transcend a single agency and that we would be better served through a public-private partnership, with representation across the spectrum of agencies and organizations. If the Sanford Mayor's Task Force on Homelessness were expanded in scope and participation to address the spectrum of county-wide homeless services, it has the potential to be the most appropriate organization to monitor, manage, and report on homelessness.

#### **C. Is there a financial or other material advantage to be gained by funneling public monies through a specific agency (like SHA)?**

This is still an unknown. We have not yet developed an exhaustive list of prospective public sources for financial or other material support.

#### **D. What specific challenges will we face with privacy (or HIPAA-specific) restrictions that would deny information sharing across our public-private partnership?**

Under present federal regulations, none of the current collaborators are HIPAA covered entities, subject to specific privacy or security restrictions on our healthcare-related data. However, care must be exercised to safeguard sensitive personal and family data that might be gathered and used as part of our efforts to address homelessness. A mechanism must be put in place to de-identify individual clients for purposes of public disclosure and reporting.