

**CONTINUUM OF CARE
ACTION PLAN TO
END HOMELESSNESS
2015 - 2017**



— GRAND RAPIDS AREA —

**COALITION TO END
HOMELESSNESS**

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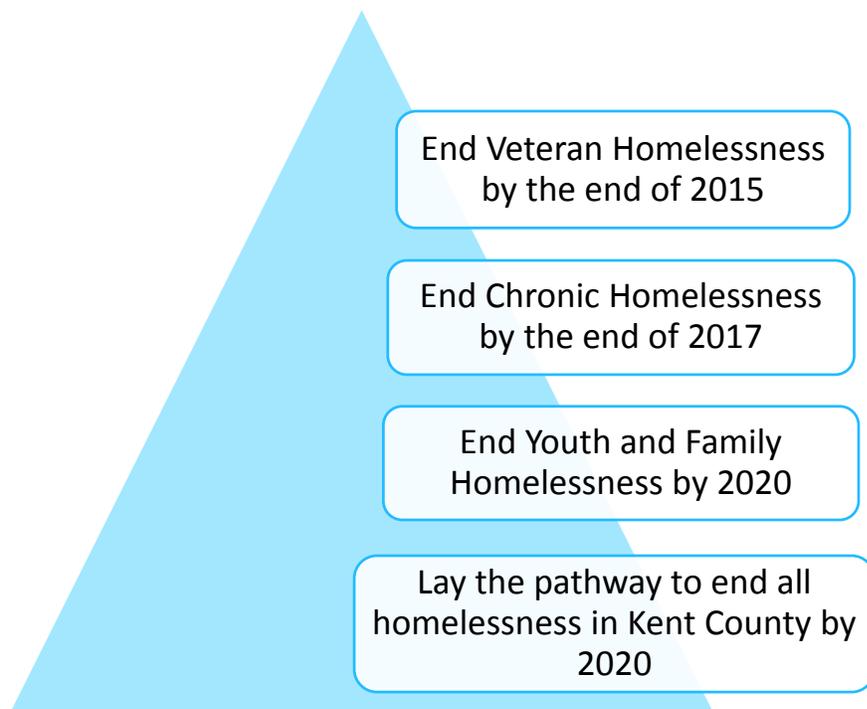
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Background and Overview

In 2004, the Grand Rapids Area Coalition to End Homelessness worked with community leaders to create The Vision to End Homelessness, a 10 year plan. This plan enabled the community to cast a vision for ending homelessness and outline the system changes that would be necessary to achieve the goal to end homelessness. Since that first plan was created, Kent County has made significant progress toward this goal, creating more than 450 additional units of Permanent Supportive Housing and substantially expanded its efforts in the creation of Rapid Rehousing options in the community. Still, the problem of homelessness persists for many households and especially for some of the most vulnerable populations. Over these past 10 years, much has been learned from extensive research and experience at national, state and local levels. In 2015, the community needs a new plan to carry forward the work that was begun in the 10 year plan. This document serves to build upon the vision that was created before and to set forth steps critical to achieving the specific goals in ending homelessness for the next three years.

While ending homelessness in the broadest sense is something that this community has been, and will continue, to work towards, this new plan sets targeted goals that align with how national research and best practices are evolving. The reasons for this are multiple. First and foremost, capitalizing on population specific funding while it is available will maximize the dollars available for permanent housing in this community. Additionally, ending veteran and chronic homelessness are both reachable goals, and for many in the community, moral imperatives.

The specific goals identified within this plan are as follows:



These goals and the methods for achieving them were created through a process that welcomed community input. A Planning Committee consisting of members from the elected leadership of the Coalition, established a framework to guide conversations. Seven main performance indicators were identified and eight targeted and special sub-populations or topics were also established during the process.

The seven identified performance indicators include:

- Reduction in the number of households experiencing homelessness
- Reduction in the number of unsheltered households
- Reduction in the length of time households experience homelessness
- Reduction in the number of times households experience homelessness
- Increase in the percentage of households exiting to permanent housing
- Improvement in the employment rate and incomes for program participants
- Increase in the number of units dedicated to chronically homeless

The eight targeted populations or sub-populations include:

Veterans	Chronically Homeless
Families	Youth
Domestic Violence	Reentry
Older Adults	Single Adults

Although single adults, older adults, domestic violence survivors and re-entry populations do not have specific end goal dates attached to them, the community felt these were important populations on which we *could not lose focus*. The outcomes that will be used to measure success for chronically homeless, veterans, families and youth, will also be outcomes for the aforementioned population groups. This document enumerates the strategies and actions needed to achieve these outcomes for all of the targeted groups. While prioritizing certain types of households, the community must also take steps to ensure no one is left behind.

The framework draft was shared with the Coalition membership. Planning sessions were held to invite conversation around each of these population areas. Thirty-two (32) individuals representing 20 organizations participated in these meetings. These groups reviewed outcomes to determine their relevance for each population area as well as the specific strategies needed to achieve the desired results.

This resulting document is intended to be a roadmap to reach the goals established. However, this is not intended to be a static document. It is anticipated that course correction will be necessary over the span of years this document covers. This plan is intended to be a living document, to have progress measured against the steps and outcomes regularly and adjustments to be made as needed.

At the April 23, 2015 CoC Membership meeting, this document was unanimously approved by the full Continuum of Care membership body.

Community-Wide Goals

Meet national goals in ending homelessness for veterans, chronically homeless, families and youth.

Lay the pathway to end all homelessness across Kent County.

Position the Grand Rapids/Wyoming/Kent County Continuum of Care as a nationally competitive community.

Steps to Achieve Community Goals

1. Ensure adequate supply of permanent housing resources for targeted populations, e.g. permanent supportive housing for Chronically Homeless

a. Determine housing need and resource availability for each targeted population (chronically homeless, youth, families, veterans, and non-chronic single adults)

Principle Actors: Contracted Agent (CSH) & Steering Council

Activity: Complete an analysis that assesses resource availability for each targeted population

Measurement: Analysis completed by December 2015

b. Align funding to address identified gaps

Principle Actors: Funding Review Committee & Steering Council

Activity: Review analysis and make recommendations for programmatic shifts to meet the need

Measurement: Alignment between housing resources and identified need.

2. Ensure high performing programming to support successful exits from homelessness

a. The Coalition will work to ensure programs to end homelessness are high performing

Principle Actors: Housing and Service Providers, Steering, Executive & Funding Review Committee

Activity: Providers will report outcomes on HUD benchmarks for programs quarterly

Measurement: HUD performance indicators, utilization rates and referral history, 6, 12, and 24 month exit data for participants

b. Housing and Service providers will continually identify best practices and apply them uniformly across programs

Principle Actors: Housing and Service Providers, Steering Council

Activity: Providers will update Service Standards for each service component type in the community by September 2015

Measurement: Updated Service Standards approved by Steering Council and CoC membership by September 2015

- c. Housing and Service Providers will provide timely and accurate reporting of services provided

Principle Actors: Housing and Service Providers, Data Quality Committee

Activity: Data Quality committee will work toward improving data reports according to the Data Quality and Monitoring plans

Measurement: HMIS data standards and local benchmarks for data quality are met, as outlined within the Data Monitoring Plan

3. Support efforts in the community to maintain and increase affordable housing

- a. Engage in community planning efforts supporting policy change to increase affordable housing

Principle Actors: Coalition Staff & Steering Council

Activity: Attend and support community efforts to increase affordable housing, identify ways to support municipalities (land use policy and ordinance development, participate in community planning sessions for the joint Kent County/ Grand Rapids/Wyoming Consolidated Plan, participate in City of Grand Rapids facilitated housing policy workgroups, etc)

Measurement: Coalition staff and leadership will review staff reports on this measure at least annually, beginning June 2016

- b. Routinely inform CoC Membership of efforts within the community to increase housing affordability

Principle Actors: Coalition Staff & Essential Needs Task Force Director

Activity: Report to CoC membership in meetings and other communications about efforts and opportunities to increase affordable housing

Monitoring: As reflected in meeting minutes, the number of efforts of which membership was kept informed

System-Wide Performance Measures

Performance Measure 1

Reduce the number of people who experience homelessness.

Measurement: Establish HMIS baseline

Preventing homelessness from occurring at all is the most effective means to avoid trauma to families and the creation of larger barriers which might prevent the household from moving forward successfully. While reducing the duration and rate of return to homelessness, the community must also support efforts to ensure households will remain securely and safely housed.

1. Reduce number of households moving from imminent risk of homelessness to homeless

- a. Identify additional funding sources to support Housing First solutions, including prevention and diversion

Principle Actors: Steering Council

Activity: Explore community sources and strategies to increase amount of unrestricted funding

Measurement: Identify current unrestricted amounts by May 2015 and measure growth annually

- b. Establish a baseline measurement of households assessed for services facing imminent homelessness who later report being literally homeless

Principle Actors: HMIS System Administrator and Users Group

Activity: Identify methods to measure if those calling facing imminent homelessness later call as literally homeless to create a baseline measurement

Measurement: Number of households who may have been prevented from homelessness

- b. Become a High Performing Community (HPC) as defined by HUD.

Principle Actors: Steering Council

Activity: System Coordination Committee will monitor progress towards reaching status of High Performing and report to Steering Council bi-annually

Measurement: Number of performance measures towards being an HPC accomplished and number needed

2. Work with other systems to prevent homelessness

- a. Work with Prisoner Reentry to improve permanent housing outcomes within MI Department of Corrections Prisoner Reentry program.

Principle Actors: Reentry Service Providers

Activity: Coalition staff will increase access to Housing First practices to support permanent housing outcomes for reentry population

Measurement: Identify current permanent housing outcomes in reentry work and assess improvement annually

b. Reduce homelessness for persons exiting foster care.

Principle Actors: Youth Service Providers

Activity: Increase coordination between foster care and homeless service providers to ensure transition plans are sustainable for youth and prevent homelessness after benefits expire

Measurement: Establish a plan to measure and reduce homelessness post foster care discharge

c. Make housing plan assistance training available to discharge planners across systems

Principle Actors: Housing and Service Providers

Activity: Provide housing planning assistance training for providers planning discharge for consumers from medical, mental health, foster care and reentry systems

Measurement: Training attendees that report increased competency in assisting households in preventing homelessness or obtaining affordable housing via pre and post testing

Subpopulation Breakout	
Performance Measure 1 Reduce the number of people who experience homelessness.	
Objective	Targeted Populations Affected
Reduce number of households moving from imminent risk of homelessness to homeless	Veterans, Youth, Families, Older Adults, Domestic Violence, Single Adults
Work with other systems to prevent homelessness	Youth, Older Adults, Reentry

Performance Measure 2

Reduce the number of unsheltered households.

Measurement: Central Intake data

While the majority of the work will be focused on access to affordable, quality permanent housing as a path to ending homelessness, the dangers inherent in any person remaining unsheltered are such that our community must work to ensure all persons in need, are able to secure safe shelter that can accommodate them and their family appropriately. Over the next three years the Coalition to End Homelessness will work to ensure all households are able to access appropriate shelter and housing resources as necessary.

1. Ensure access to shelter that meets the household's needs

- a. Work with providers to ensure plans are in place to ensure adequate shelter space to house households as they present, with no conditions on marital status, genders, or ages

Principle Actors: Emergency Shelter Providers, Coordinated Assessment, Outreach Partners

Activity: Providers will have plan in place by December 2015

Measurement: Difference in number (gap) of those presenting for shelter and those receiving shelter

- b. Within system gaps analysis, assess capacity of shelter available for youth under 18 and strengthen if necessary

Principle Actors: Youth Providers

Activity: Providers will have an analysis by December 2015

Measurement: Difference in the number of youth presenting for shelter and those receiving shelter

- c. Form a workgroup to explore safe emergency shelter best practices for youth aged 18-24

Principle Actors: Youth Service and Housing Providers & Emergency Shelter Providers

Activity: Providers will have plan in place by December 2015

Measurement: Workgroup issued recommendations for changes, formal plan approved based on recommendations

- d. Work with providers to establish standards to ensure shelters serve persons regardless of gender identity, mobility impairments, religious affiliation or other characteristics

Principle Actors: Community Advocates & Emergency Shelter Providers

Activity: Providers will have plan in place by December 2015

Measurement: Evaluation tools to be developed by committee (e.g. consumer surveys)

2. Increase resources available for Housing First interventions

- a. Conduct a system analysis to understand need for resource components (i.e. rapid re-housing, permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, etc.)

Principle Actors: Steering Council & Contracted Agent (CSH)

Activity: Providers will have analysis by December 2015

Measurement: Completed analysis

- b. Increase the number of Housing First programs in the community

Principle Actors: Steering Council

Activity: Using multiple methods of realigning and maximizing existing funds and securing new

Measurement: Number of units increased annually by program component type

3. Target frequent service users for supportive housing options

- a. Work with medical providers, law enforcement and missions to create a plan to identify Frequent Users of emergency services and target for assessment to determine prioritization for permanent housing, and plan for those who are not prioritized through other system resources

Principle Actors: Emergency Shelter Providers & System Representatives

Activity: Develop a plan by June 2016

Measurement: Plan has been created

4. Ensure those unable to stay in emergency shelter have safe alternatives

- a. Connect mental health, law enforcement and medical providers to access Housing First interventions for high risk individuals

Principle Actors: Emergency Shelter Providers & System Representatives

Activity: Develop a plan by October 2015

Measurement: Completion of a plan.

- b. Create service standards that include processes for consumers with concerns about services received

Principle Actors: Emergency Shelter Providers

Activity: Develop service standards by October 2015

Measurement: Standards in place

5. Increase number of outreach efforts that result in completed housing assessments

- a. Coordination between Outreach workers in the community to work towards Housing First across fields

Principle Actors: Outreach Partners & Coordinated Assessment Committee

Activity: Create working agreements, goals for housing and any appropriate training by June 2015

Measurement: Number of outreach contacts resulting in housing assessments and placements

Subpopulation Breakout	
Performance Measure 2 Reduce the number of unsheltered households	
Objective	Targeted Populations Affected
Ensure access to shelter that meets the household's needs	Veterans, Chronically Homeless, Youth, Families, Older Adults, Reentry, Domestic Violence, Single Adults
Increase resources available for Housing First interventions	Veterans, Chronically Homeless, Youth, Families, Older Adults, Reentry, Domestic Violence, Single Adults
Target frequent service users for supportive housing options	Veterans, Chronically Homeless, Older Adults, Reentry, Single Adults
Ensure those unable to stay in emergency shelter have safe alternatives	Veterans, Chronically Homeless, Youth, Families, Older Adults, Reentry, Domestic Violence, Single Adults
Increase number of outreach efforts that result in completed housing assessments	Veterans, Chronically Homeless, Youth, Families, Older Adults, Reentry, Domestic Violence, Single Adults

Performance Measure 3

Reduce the length of time households experience homelessness.

Measurement: HUD Outcome reports compared to state benchmarks

The work of this community to end homelessness is done through the framework of the Housing First philosophy and there is an emphasis on moving households to safe, secure permanent housing as quickly as possible, with no pre-conditions set as readiness for housing. This philosophy does not mean that lengths of stay in shelters should be capped, or that households should be paired with a resource that does not meet their need in order to be housed more quickly. Each step taken towards reducing the length of time people experience homelessness should be paired with considerations for the indicators of households exiting programs into permanent housing and of reducing returns to homelessness.

1. Increase resources available for permanent housing in the community, including rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing

- a. Conduct a system analysis to understand need for resource components (rapid re-housing, permanent supportive housing, etc.)

Principle Actors: Steering Council & Contracted Agent (CSH)

Activity: Complete analysis by December 2015

Measurement: Analysis completed

- b. Increase the number of housing units and projects using Housing First in the community

Principle Actors: Steering Council & Funding Review Committee

Activity: Use strategies to maximize and realign existing funds as well as secure new

Measurement: Number of units and projects increased annually by program type

2. The Coordinated Assessment system connects households to resources effectively

- a. Referrals are made to program openings within 48 hours of the opening notification to HAP

Principle Actors: Coordinated Assessment Committee & Housing and Service Providers

Activity: Review of referrals by Coordinated Assessment Committee and report to Steering Council quarterly

Measurement: Tracking and reporting of utilization, turnover and capacity of housing programs

- b. Increase number of permanent housing units available for referral

Principle Actors: Housing and Service Providers, Funding Review Committee

Activity: Reallocation, grant seeking, voucher use

Measurement: Number of units and percent increase each year

3. Target long term stayers (longer than 30 days) in emergency shelters for housing assessments

a. HAP coordination with emergency shelters to improve numbers of households connected to housing

Principle Actors: Emergency Shelter Providers, Service Providers, & HAP

Activity: Outreach for assessment and housing placement, HMIS records completed

Measurement: Number of households from emergency shelter receiving permanent housing

Subpopulation Breakout	
Performance Measure 3 Reduce the length of time households experience homelessness.	
Objective	Targeted Populations Affected
Increase resources available for permanent housing in the community, including rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing	Veterans, Chronically Homeless, Youth, Families, Older Adults, Reentry, Domestic Violence, Single Adults
The Coordinated Assessment system connects households to resources effectively	Veterans, Chronically Homeless, Youth, Families, Older Adults, Reentry, Domestic Violence, Single Adults
Target long term stayers (longer than 30 days) in emergency shelters for housing assessments	Veterans, Chronically Homeless, Youth, Families, Older Adults, Reentry, Single Adults

Performance Measure 4

Reduce the number of times any household experiences homelessness.

Measurement: HUD System Performance measures, post program exit

Projects intervening to end homelessness must not only work to rapidly resolve a household's episode of homelessness, but work to ensure sustainability of the housing solution to avoid a household experiencing another episode of homelessness.

1. Update service standards for community RRH and PSH to ensure best practices are used in all housing services

- a. Work with service providers to identify best practices and establish agreed-upon, updated community standards of practice

Principle Actors: Housing and Service Providers

Activity: Service providers will work together to create service standards

Measurement: Service standards approved by CoC membership by June 2015

2. Ensure shelter exits are driven by securing permanent housing and not to meet deadlines of stays

- a. Develop Coordinated Assessment processes to address issues of extended shelter stays

Principle Actors: Emergency Shelter Providers & Coordinated Assessment Committee

Activity: Review lengths of stay, permanent housing options, contributing factors to longer stays

Measurement: Number of households from emergency shelter receiving permanent housing, mean, median and mode reported for length of stay in shelter

3. Increase households' ties to support systems and natural supports

- a. Ensure service standards include referrals and service delivery with a goal of continuity post-exit

Principle Actors: Housing and Service Providers

Activity: Referrals to support systems by case managers

Measurement: Number of households retaining permanent housing post program exit (6, 12, and 24 months)

4. Prevent unstable exits from permanent housing resources, e.g. temporary employment, loss of voucher due to absence from housing (when return is known)

- a. Identify ways households might lose vouchers and advocate for change on those that would strengthen stability

Principle Actors: Steering Council & Housing Commissions

Activity: System advocacy to change policies that adversely affect housing stability

Measurement: Number of barriers eliminated annually, decrease in number of unsuccessful exits from permanent housing vouchers

b. Coordinate with the Workforce Development sub-committee to improve employment income for consumers

Principle Actors: Essential Needs Task Force Director & Steering Council

Activity: Joint attendance in meetings and planning to identify system overlap

Measurement: Increase in employment income for households

5. Reduce unsuccessful exits from permanent supportive housing, such as eviction

a. Support flexibility in the system to allow for program changes if resource was not a good fit

Principle Actors: Housing and Service Providers

Activity: Identify alternatives to eviction

Measurement: Decrease in program exits due to eviction

b. Provide forum for service providers to share best and promising practices in support services

Principle Actors: Housing and Service Providers

Activity: Forum for service providers to meet monthly by component type by December 2015

Measurement: Service provider feedback on group efficacy

Subpopulation Breakout	
Performance Measure 4 Reduce the number of times any household experiences homelessness.	
Objective	Targeted Populations Affected
Update service standards for community RRH and PSH to ensure best practices are used in all housing services	Veterans, Chronically Homeless, Youth, Families, Older Adults, Domestic Violence, Single Adults
Ensure shelter exits are driven by securing permanent housing and not to meet deadlines of stays	Veterans, Chronically Homeless, Youth, Families, Older Adults, Reentry, Domestic Violence, Single Adults
Increase households' ties to support systems and natural supports	Veterans, Chronically Homeless, Youth, Families, Older Adults, Reentry, Domestic Violence, Single Adults
Prevent unstable exits from permanent housing resources, e.g. temporary employment, loss of voucher due to absence from housing (when return is known)	Veterans, Chronically Homeless, Youth, Families, Older Adults, Reentry, Domestic Violence, Single Adults
Reduce unsuccessful exits from permanent supportive housing, such as eviction	Veterans, Chronically Homeless, Youth, Families, Older Adults, Domestic Violence, Single Adults

Performance Measure 5

Increase the percentage of households exiting to permanent housing.
Measurement: Establish HMIS reports with baseline (Goal of 92% in 2015 across CoC funded programs)

One of the truest measures of efforts to end homelessness being successfully implemented is whether, at program exit, a household is permanently housed.

1. Create opportunities for successful exits from permanent supportive housing

- a. Implement a “move up” plan to Housing Choice Vouchers for consumers no longer in need of additional housing supports

Principle Actors: Permanent Supportive Housing Providers & Housing Commissions

Activity: Create administration plan and implement

Measurement: Number of permanent supportive housing units made available annually

2. Increase successful exits from housing programs

- a. Explore unsuccessful exits across program types and use lessons learned to strengthen programs and system

Principle Actors: Housing and Service Providers

Activity: Form a workgroup of providers to share information on unsuccessful leavers

Measurement: Evaluate exits that were not to permanent housing, report findings to Steering Council and other committees as appropriate bi-annually

Subpopulation Breakout	
Performance Measure 5 Increase the percentage of households exiting to permanent housing.	
Objective	Targeted Populations Affected
Create opportunities for successful exits from permanent supportive housing	Veterans, Chronically Homeless, Youth, Families, Older Adults, Single Adults
Increase successful exits from housing programs	Veterans, Youth, Families, Older Adults, Domestic Violence, Single Adults

Performance Measure 6

Improved employment rate and income amount.

Measurement: Establish HMIS reports with baseline (Goal of 27% across CoC-funded projects in 2015)

The ability to obtain and increase financial means of supporting housing costs is critical for households to remain housed long after assistance has been received. The community recognizes that this goal will be accomplished by different means dependent upon each household's circumstances.

1. Increase collaboration with other ENTF subcommittees and their programs

- a. Explore collaboration opportunities with each sub-committee

Principle Actors: Essential Needs Task Force Director & Steering Council

Activity: Share goals and plans with subcommittees and discuss areas of congruence.

Measurement: Number of projects or efforts involving other subcommittees annually

2. Improve numbers completed and outcomes for SSI & SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR) applications

- a. Staff and service providers to serve on SOAR Steering Committee to further SOAR

Principle Actors: Service Providers & SOAR Lead

Activity: Participate in planning efforts for SOAR and increase numbers of applications completed and approved for the community annually

Measurement: Number of SOAR applications submitted and approved annually, rank of community's accomplishment statewide and nationally

3. Increase households' income through employment or accessing benefits

- a. Reach goal of 27% of households served increasing income from employment and 89% of households served obtaining mainstream benefits across all component types

Principle Actors: Service Providers

Activity: Coalition staff will provide information on referrals to employment and mainstream benefits; service providers will work to improve income for each household

Measurement: Percent of households with increased income or mainstream benefits, reported quarterly

Subpopulation Breakout	
Performance Measure 6 Improved employment rate and income amount.	
Objective	Targeted Populations Affected
Improve numbers completed and outcomes for SOAR applications	Veterans, Chronically Homeless, Older Adults, Reentry
Increase households' income through employment or accessing benefits	Veterans, Chronically Homeless, Youth, Families, Older Adults, Domestic Violence, Single Adults

Performance Measure 7

Increase the number of units dedicated to chronically homeless.

Measurement: Establish HIC baseline (Goal of 429 dedicated beds in 2015)

This measure will specifically target the goal of ending chronic homelessness by December 2016. It is important that the amounts of chronically homeless dedicated units match the need within the community.

1. Improve targeting of existing units to highest priority households

- a. Develop mechanisms for increasing turnover for those no longer in need or desirous of housing with support services (Move Up, HCV, Portable PBV) (see 4.1.a.)

Principle Actors: Permanent Supportive Housing Providers, Housing Commissions

Activity: Create administration plan and implement

Measurement: Number of permanent supportive housing units made available annually

- b. Ensure the HUD Prioritization of Chronically Homeless Households guidelines are followed in the process of prioritization for housing resources.

Principle Actors: Coordinated Assessment Committee

Activity: Committee will use HUD guidance in the prioritization of households, shifting policy or practice as necessary

Measurement: Process documents and evaluation of Coordinated Assessment process

2. Ensure chronic homelessness numbers are accurately measured

- a. Educate community Housing and Service Providers on chronic homeless definition and documentation

Principle Actors: Housing and Service Providers

Activity: Coalition staff will provide training on chronic homeless definition to providers at least annually

Measurement: All agencies that enter HMIS data will be trained by December 2015

- b. Review current chronic homeless designations for accuracy

Principle Actors: Housing and Service Providers

Activity: Coalition staff will work with providers to ensure all chronically homeless designated households are accurately assessed

Measurement: All chronically homeless records will be reviewed by March 2016

Subpopulation Breakout	
Performance Measure 7 Increase the number of units dedicated to chronically homeless.	
Objective	Targeted Populations Affected
Improve targeting of existing units to highest priority households	Chronically Homeless
Ensure chronic homelessness numbers are accurately measured	Chronically Homeless