



**CHAPTER EIGHT
HOMELESSNESS**

HOMELESSNESS

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF HOMELESSNESS IN DUPAGE COUNTY

Although the number of chronically homeless individuals in DuPage is relatively low (fewer than 200), over 2,800 experienced one or more episodes of homelessness, and over 22,000 have received services to prevent homelessness.

Homeless persons can be male or female, individuals or members of family groups. They can be unaccompanied

youth, the elderly, people with physical, mental, or developmental disabilities, veterans, and/or persons with addiction disorders. There is no one specific person or type who is homeless. There are, however, basic demographic data which can create a picture of what statistically a homeless individual in DuPage County looks like.

The statistically typical homeless person in DuPage County is:

- a single, white male
- age 41
- high school diploma or more
- never been to prison

While there are some homeless persons whose problems are limited to a lack of money, most experience mental illness, physical illness, domestic violence, or substance abuse problems in addition to having limited funds. Among homeless families, 79% have experienced domestic violence. Among single homeless individuals, 21% reported substance abuse, 21% reported dual diagnosis, and 23% reported mental illness.

HOMELESSNESS BY RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP

Although the statistically typical homeless person in DuPage is white, African Americans make up a significantly disproportionate percentage of the homeless population.

Figure 8-1
HUD TABLE 1A: HOMELESS AND SPECIAL NEEDS POPULATIONS

Part 1: Homeless Population				
	SHELTERED		UNSHELTERED	TOTAL
	EMERGENCY	TRANSITIONAL		
Individuals who are Homeless	123(A)	269 (A)	42 (A)	434
Families with Children who are Homeless	24 (A)	102 (A)	3 (A)	129
Number of Persons in Families with Children who are Homeless	81 (A)	304 (A)	8 (A)	393
Total (lines 1 + 2a)	204	573	50	827

Part 2: Homeless Subpopulations			
	SHELTERED	UNSHELTERED	TOTAL
	Chronic Homelessness	169 (A)	50 (A)
Severely Mentally Ill	246 (A)	<i>Optional for Unsheltered</i>	
Chronic Substance Abuse	134 (A)		
Veterans	24 (A)		
Persons with HIV/AIDS	35 (A)		
Victims of Domestic Violence	123 (A)		
Youth (Under 18 years of age)	30 (A)		

A = Adults

Figure 8-2
HOMELESSNESS BY RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP

	% OF HOMELESS POPULATION	% OF GENERAL POPULATION
White	63.2%	78.7%
African American	19.8%	2.9%
Latino	11.9%	9.0%
Other Race/Ethnicity	5.2%	9.4%

STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPING A SYSTEM TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS

DuPage County has developed a structure for the homeless continuum of care that emphasizes participation and information sharing. The DuPage Continuum planning process has been in existence for eight years and includes mechanisms for ongoing needs assessment, gaps analyses, strategic planning, coordination with mainstream services, the implementation of a continuum wide computerized client information system, and coordinated service delivery. The continuum is used as an advisory body for several funding sources including CDBG homeless funds, ESG funds, HUD Continuum of Care SuperNOFA funds, and State homeless funds. The continuum has developed a vision statement as follows:

The DuPage County Homeless Continuum of Care is committed to creating a community response to end homelessness in our county.

We will:

- Create solutions to promote self-sufficiency
- Maintain a seamless network of community resources
- Provide food, clothing and shelter to meet basic needs
- Build capacity through the responsible allocation of resources.

The DuPage Homeless Continuum of Care is coordinated under the leadership of the DuPage County Community Services Department. The DuPage Homeless Continuum planning structure consists of a Chairperson's Forum and three standing committees – Community Outreach, Grants/Funding, and Needs Assessment. The Needs Assessment Committee has an active subcommittee for the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). There is also a User Group for the HMIS system. DuPage County provides funding for a technical consultant to the Continuum whose primary duties are to maintain direct contact with all Committee Chairs and ensure that the Continuum committees are focused and progressing toward the goals that are established by the Continuum.

The DuPage County Homeless Continuum has committed to joining the national effort dedicated to ending homelessness by 2010. This effort involves four components:

- Develop a Plan to End Homelessness in every community.
- Make mainstream programs accountable for preventing and ending homelessness.
- Shift the focus of the homeless assistance programs from short-term support services to long term solutions.
- Work towards creating an infrastructure, including sufficient income and affordable housing, that can support permanent housing for everyone.

In April 2004, the full membership of the DuPage County Homeless Continuum adopted a Plan to End Homelessness (Figure 8-3). This plan adopts a "Housing First" approach based on these two principles:

- The best way to end homelessness is to help people move into permanent housing as quickly as possible.
- Once in housing, formerly homeless people may require some level of services to help them stabilize, link them to long-term supports, and prevent a recurrence.

Figure 8-3
COMPONENTS OF THE DUPAGE PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS

COMPONENT	RESPONSIBLE COMMITTEE(S)
1. Needs Assessment Data - The DuPage Homeless Continuum is using Service Point by Bowman for its Client Management Information System (CMIS). The focus will be on 100% participation by all homeless providers, agreeing on the type of data needed, setting up the reports needed to analyze the data, what information has to be input to obtain these reports, and obtaining needs assessment data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs Assessment Committee • CMIS Users Group
2. Emergency Prevention – The DuPage Homeless Continuum will have in place an Emergency Prevention system that assists the maximum number of persons possible and operates efficiently. The focus will be on obtaining more funds from private sources, supporting the staff costs for these programs, maximizing the use of public funding to help more persons, streamlining procedures, identifying means for increasing timely access to prevention resources, identifying requirements that are a barrier for obtaining help now, and using other mainstream programs as a part of an overall homeless prevention effort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants Funding Committee • Prevention Providers
3. Systems Prevention – The DuPage Homeless Continuum will work with local and state governments to ensure that discharge policies for persons leaving public systems such as jails, hospitals, mental health facilities, and the child welfare system are being implemented to prevent them from becoming homeless. The DuPage Homeless Providers will ensure that all eligible persons will be enrolled and benefit from all mainstream programs (mental health, substance abuse, TANF, child welfare, SSI, VA, Medicaid, KidCare, etc.) for which they are eligible that can assist in meeting their housing needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Outreach Committee • DuPage Federation
4. Outreach to Unsheltered – The DuPage Homeless Continuum will have an outreach and engagement system in place that reduces barriers to housing homeless persons who are not sheltered. A key focus will be the development of low demand housing which will provide housing for unsheltered persons with mental illness and substance abuse treatment needs. A system of communication among human service providers will be developed and utilized to provide outreach services to the unsheltered homeless so that they can be rapidly placed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Outreach Committee • DuPage Federation
5. Shorten Homelessness –The shelter and transitional housing providers will have procedures in place to minimize the length of time persons remain homeless and the number of times they become homeless. There will be incentives for all providers to get persons into permanent housing as quickly as possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs Assessment Committee
6. Timely Re-housing – The DuPage Homeless Continuum has in place skilled housing search and placement services available to facilitate the rapid re-housing of persons losing their housing and persons who are homeless and need permanent housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs Assessment Committee
7. Support Services – When persons are housed, they will have timely access to funded services that will provide health care, mental health services, substance abuse treatment services, etc. necessary for maintaining housing stability. All funding streams for support services will be fully utilized to maximize the services available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants Funding Committee • DuPage Federation
8. Increasing Income – In order to support housing costs, the DuPage Homeless Continuum providers will assist homeless persons in securing enough income to afford rent by rapidly linking them with employment and/or benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Outreach Committee • DuPage Federation
9. Creating Permanent Housing – In the last five years, the DuPage Homeless Continuum has funded 54 permanent supportive housing individual beds with the DuPage Health Department. They have also funded permanent supportive housing units for 5 families through Catholic Charities. Another 23 permanent housing units for families and individuals with Catholic Charities and DuPage P.A.D.S. have been funded. The DuPage Homeless Continuum will identify and develop an adequate supply of all types of permanent housing. To achieve this goal, the Continuum will work to expand the number of permanent supportive housing units, expand the supply of community affordable housing units, increase the number of rent subsidies for market rate housing units, and explore the opportunities for developing safe haven, shelter plus care, and single room occupancy housing . The DuPage Homeless Continuum will communicate and participate with housing groups such as the DuPage Housing Authority and the DuPage Housing Action Coalition. It will establish relationships with housing developers, government housing programs, county government and municipal government regarding housing needs for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants Funding Committee • DuPage Federation

The specific objectives and action steps for each of the nine components in the Plan may be viewed at <http://www.dupageco.org/humanservices/homeless/index.htm> The DuPage Homeless Continuum will continue to review and revise its Plan to End Homelessness as it works to implement its objectives.