

# WICHITA & SEDGWICK COUNTY HOUSING FIRST PROGRAM

*A national best practice model  
designed to end chronic  
homelessness*

August 2011

# BACKGROUND

- **2006 Taskforce to End Chronic Homelessness (TECH) appointed by City Council and County Commission**
- **Taskforce charge was to:**
  - **Identify the issues related to ending chronic homelessness**
  - **Develop a plan to end chronic homelessness**

# THE TECH RECOMMENDED FIVE STRATEGIES TO END CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

1. Develop a One-stop Resource Center
2. **Housing First**/Permanent Supportive Housing
3. Additional Emergency Housing Options
4. Sustainable Funding
5. An Oversight Committee to help implement the plan



# WHAT IS “HOUSING FIRST”?

- Direct or near direct, placement of chronically homeless into permanent housing
- Supportive services are offered but not required
- Assertive outreach conducted to engage & offer housing to the homeless.
  - Once housed a low demand approach is used so that relapse does not automatically affect housing
    - Allow for client choice at every program intervention phase including:
      - Housing
      - Psychiatric and substance abuse treatment
      - Supported employment
      - Other recovery –focused supports
    - Use harm reduction approach to addictions rather than mandating abstinence, enrollment in a treatment program, or decrease in clinical symptoms
    - Help clients develop their own personalized goals
    - Apartment visits
    - Phone calls



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# WHO IS ELIGIBLE?



- The chronically homeless as defined by HUD
  - Unaccompanied person who has a disabling condition, **AND**
  - Has been continuously homeless for at least one year, **OR**
  - Has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years



# WHY THE CHRONICALLY HOMELESS?

- Typically been on the streets for long periods of time
- Most resistant to services
- Usually suffer from a complex layering of problems
- Have the highest rates of use of shelter and services
  - Ambulance rides
  - Emergency room visits
  - Police & EMS calls
  - Jail time
  - Court system
- Incur some of the highest associated annual costs per person
- This group is believed to comprise only 10% of the homeless population, yet utilizes 40-50% of resources

# WHY HOUSING FIRST?

## Research indicates:

- Participants are more receptive to treatment after being stabilized in housing
- Participants often seek treatment so that they can keep their apartment
- Housing enhances self-esteem and participants are more likely to seek employment and reconnect with their families
- Housing injects an element of dignity as participants have choices as to where they will live
- Saves money on services delivered to this population

# HOUSING

- **The Wichita City Council and Sedgwick County Commission approved funding for rent subsidies for 64 existing housing units**
  - Funding became available January 1, 2009
  - Scattered sites throughout Sedgwick County
  - Units will be accessible to transportation & other services (grocery stores, drug stores, etc)
  - One bedroom or studio units

# LANDLORD PARTICIPATION

- Vital to success of this program!
- The program provides:
  - Rent guarantee from time participant moves in and one month after moving out
  - Negotiated security deposits
  - Reimbursement for tenant damages up to an agreed-upon amount
  - Contact person(s) for landlord to notify should emergencies, questions, or concerns arise

# RENT

- **Rent payments from the City/County are made directly to the landlord**
- **The Housing First Program will pay the full amount of rent or a portion, if/when the participant has income and can contribute to the rent amount**
- **The program will pay utility costs, as needed and other costs associated with housing—application fees, deposits, and moving expenses**

# PARTICIPANT REQUIREMENTS

- ✓ **Desire housing**
- ✓ **Agree to maintain weekly contact with Case Manager**
- ✓ **If income is available, participant will contribute up to 30% of their income towards rent/utilities**

# SERVICES FOR HOMELESS CLIENTS

- **Rental assistance is provided, and is adjusted when the participant can pay a portion**
- **Participants are encouraged and assisted by their Case Manager and partners, to obtain income through entitlement programs, public benefits and employment**
- **Case management and/or counseling services are available to address mental or physical health needs, employment/training, and other basics of daily living**

# PROGRAM GOALS

- **Chronically homeless persons are placed into permanent housing**
- **Appropriate support services are provided to help participants achieve their maximum potential**
- **The lives of the most vulnerable members of our community are stabilized and enriched**
- **MAXIMIZE COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

# WHO BENEFITS FROM HOUSING FIRST?

- The entire community!



# HOUSING FIRST PROCESS: APPLICATION

- Service providers and other interested parties (including the homeless themselves) can enter the program from any community resource (no wrong door)
- An assessment form is completed by the Case Manager
  - If the potential client does not have a Case Manager, Sedgwick County Human Services staff may direct the person to COMCARE or other community case management services
- County Human Services staff will review application and either approve/deny

# HOUSING FIRST PROCESS: HOUSING LOCATION

- Once approved, Human Services staff informs Case Manager and notifies the City Housing First Program Specialist
- Program Specialist reviews list of participating landlords and participant's potential barriers for housing (criminal backgrounds, evictions, poor credit)
- Based on housing barriers and desired location to live, Program Specialist provides a list of 2-3 potential housing leads for the participant and case manager to visit

# HOUSING FIRST PROCESS: PAYMENTS

- Once participant decides upon a unit, that information is provided to the City Housing First Program Specialist
- Program Specialist requests documentation from landlord/property manager that confirms rental costs, schedules a move in day, prepares the paperwork, and submits a request for payment
- Program Specialist notifies Case Manager of move in date and arranges for utility service(s) if needed

# HOUSING FIRST PROCESS: MOVE-IN

- During move in, Program Specialist provides participant with “house warming gift” which includes: towels, bedding, linens, pillows, dishes, personal hygiene items, and cleaning supplies
- If participant requires furniture, Program Specialist will review inventory for availability and coordinate moving arrangements for these items
  - Housing First Specialist requested donations from various community resources; and all house warming gifts and furniture items are a result of this effort and the community’s generosity of others

# HOUSING FIRST STATISTICS

As of July 31, 2011:

- 109 persons have been housed, using local government funds
- 51 persons have exited the program
- 26 people have positively exited from the program
- 58 people remain successfully housed
  - Of the 58 currently housed, 38 have remained housed for over 1 year
- 6 applicants have been approved & are apartment searching
- 25 different apartment complexes/property owners have been utilized
- 10 zip codes are represented

# REASONS FOR EXITING PROGRAM

Of the 51 people who were exited:

- 13 were sent to jail
- 2 entered a long term treatment facility
- 9 moved out of town to be closer to family
- 11 had repeated lease violations and given 30-day notice to vacate
- 13 chose to exit program on their own as they had steady income and no longer needed/desired program
- 1 received a Section 8 certificate
- 1 received a HUD-VASH voucher
- 1 passed away

# RE-HOUSING

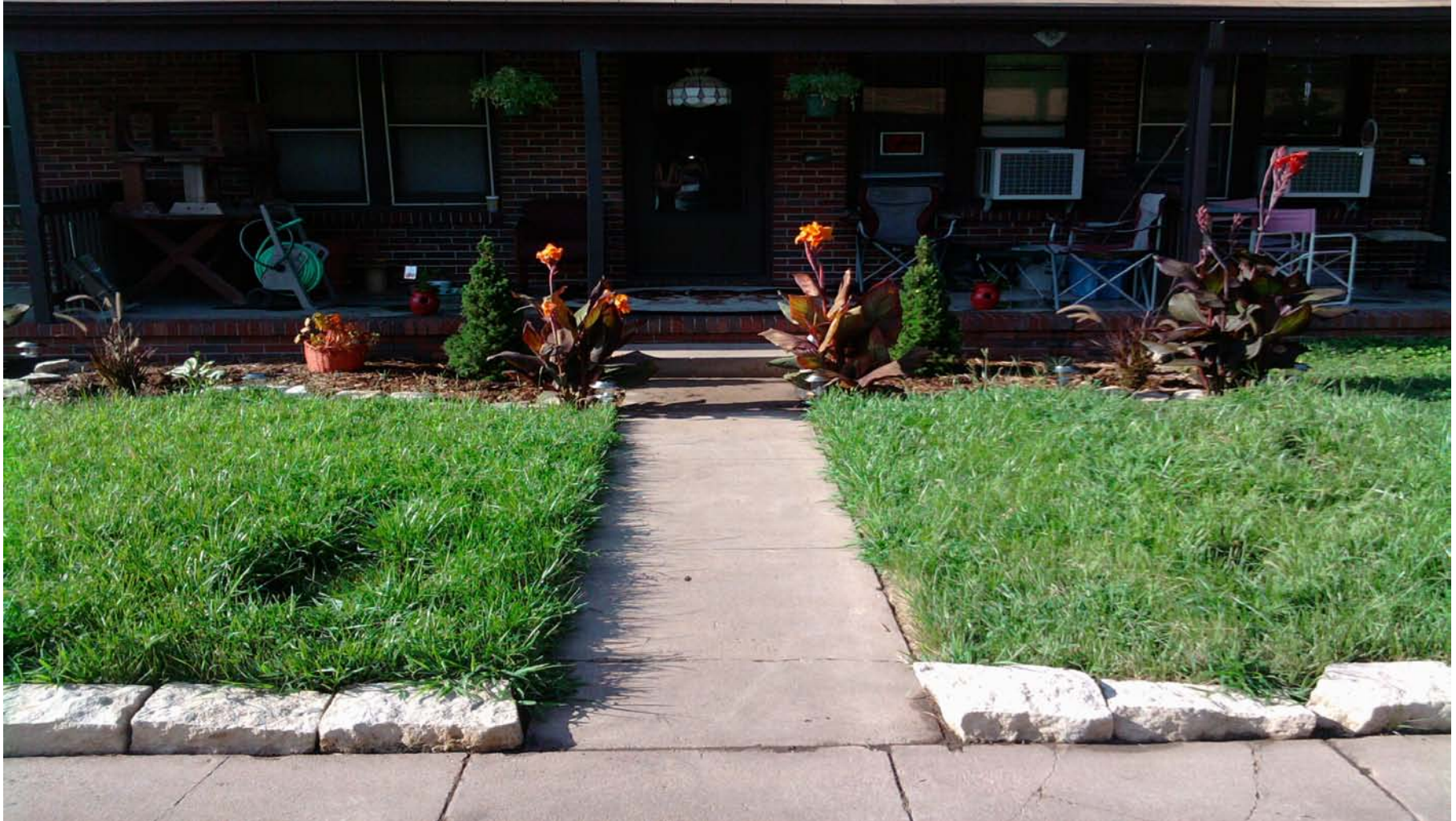
- **All participants that require re-housing assistance are reviewed on a case-by-case basis**
  - Program Specialist, Human Services staff, case manager, and participant meet to discuss reason(s) for vacating unit
  - Discuss other housing options (if appropriate)
  - If approved for re-housing, Program Specialist provides new housing leads to case manager

# FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR PARTICIPANTS

- **20 people financially contribute toward their housing in some manner!!**
  - **18 participants receive SSI/SSDI**

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# HOUSING FIRST PRIDE



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# CONTACT INFORMATION

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