

# United States Interagency Council on Homelessness

## City Focus Group Summary

March 14, 2003

Indianapolis, Indiana

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### ▪ **Welcome and Introductions.**

Mr. Mangano thanked Indianapolis' Mayor Bart Peterson and Deputy Mayor Carol Coleman for hosting of today's focus group, and welcomed city officials representing sixteen cities across the country.

### ▪ **Updates.**

#### Federal - Council

1. Regional Coordinator Positions – 10 positions soon to be filled
2. \$35 million Joint NOFA – due April 14
3. President's Budget Proposal
  - i. Samaritan Initiative – doubling of resources in FY '04
  - ii. Other Targeted Resources – increase of 14% in homeless resources in proposed '04 budget
  - iii. Mainstream Resources – increases in foster care transition resources and substance abuse treatment and housing funds
4. Census Information – need for street counts and baseline numbers for family homelessness, chronic homelessness
5. Family Resources – innovative initiatives

### ▪ **Ten-Year Planning Process**

#### US Conference of Mayor's Challenge

Mr. Mangano spoke of the welcomed challenge to the U.S. Conference of Mayors at their winter meeting in Washington that by next January 100 mayors will have signed on to 10 year plans to end homelessness in their cities.

#### Indianapolis.

Mayor Bart Peterson welcomed the focus group to Indianapolis, Indiana and recalled his city's process of prioritizing homelessness and adopting its *Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness*, which included 4 critical points:

1. Develop staff interest in *Ten Year Plan To End Homelessness*.

2. Appoint a champion from outside the provider community.
3. Adopt a reasonable approach to funding development.
4. Educate public officials to the many faces of homelessness.

### Chicago.

Commissioner Ray Vazquez outlined the core tenets to Chicago's Housing First. The most effective solution to homelessness is to provide affordable housing with the supports that make it sustainable. In an effort to do this Chicago will:

1. Prevent homelessness whenever possible.
2. Rapidly re-house people when homelessness cannot be prevented.
3. Provide wraparound services that promote housing stability and self-sufficiency.

The plan outlines three strategic initiatives to begin the process of system change. These initiatives and their objectives form our agenda for change over the next five years. Through them Chicago will:

1. Expand the range and availability of prevention strategies, increase their immediate accessibility, and improve their long-term effectiveness.
2. Expand the availability of affordable permanent housing: increase its accessibility; and transition the existing tiered shelter system into a Housing First system.
3. Provide transitional services that ensure linkages to community resources, and increase the availability and awareness of the formal community supports.

### ▪ **Street Counts – Repetitive**

### New York

Commissioner Linda Gibbs and Deputy Commissioner Maryanne Schretzman presented a summary of the first New York City *Homeless Outreach Population Survey* conducted February 24, 2003. The Survey was conducted in Manhattan, by dividing the geography into small units classified as high medium and low concentrations of homeless persons. Volunteer groups were spread out across the borough from midnight until 4 a.m. The Commissioner has projected that data will soon be forthcoming. Ms. Schretzman recognized Boston's homeless street count as the "blueprint" studied by New York to prepare for their survey.

## Boston

Director Eliza Greenberg said that Boston has been conducting its census with volunteers, city workers, City Year and advocates for over a decade at little to no cost. Boston conducts its census on the second Monday in December. Census information is collected on the streets and at any location with the residential capacity to house people experiencing homelessness including: shelters, hospitals, jails and treatment facilities.

## Tampa

Cynthia Miller, Director of Intergovernmental Relations, described Tampa's summer census conducted by the provider community. Details of this year's census included 23% of those counted described themselves as employed, while nearly 700 individuals in county jail are listed as having no address at the time of discharge.

## Philadelphia

Rob Hess, Deputy Managing Director for Special Needs Housing, described Philadelphia's quarterly *Walk and Ride* count, coordinated by both street outreach teams and the police department. Mr. Hess said that street death had all but been eliminated for three main reasons: 1) treatment slots in mainstream facilities 2) increasing cross training between providers and police and, 3) additional funds for street outreach.

## Seattle

Alan Painter, from the Department of Community Services, described Seattle's street count conducted in late October. Volunteers collected census information on the city's homeless population including persons living on the street, "car campers", persons using emergency rooms and homeless shelters.

## Portland

Heather Lyons, Director of Homeless Programs, described Portland's census, conducted by non-profit outreach groups working in cooperation with local police. The street population is counted annually on the streets, within "tent City", and increasingly in cars.

Note: In their conduct of street counts the focus group was asked: "Have any of you found women with one or more children living on the streets? All cities, except Tampa, Florida, responded that their census reported no women living on the streets who were accompanied by one child or more. Tampa, Florida reported that there were "a few" women and children living on the streets on Tampa.

- **Next Focus Group – July 16, 2003**