

NORFOLK, VIRGINIA 10-YEAR PLAN PROGRESS REPORT—March 2008

Norfolk - which serves as the urban core for Southeastern Virginia and has a population 230,000 - is partnering in a regional strategy affecting over 1.2 million residents. Norfolk's Blueprint was launched in September 2005 and is now in its second year of implementation with more than seventy partners, including the federal Departments of Labor, Housing and Urban Development, Veterans Affairs, Health and Human Services, and the Social Security Administration all engaged in significant partnerships. The Blueprint serves as the basis for funding eligibility for the city's programs, with an expectation that the goals of the blueprint will be a focus of all applicants for city resources. Norfolk has reported a 25% decrease overall in homelessness and a nearly 40% decrease in chronic homelessness.

A new **regional 10-Year Plan** commitment was announced in February 2008, and there are new regional housing projects underway which involve investment from Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Chesapeake. Seven key elements were focused on in developing the Norfolk Blueprint, including Housing First, central intake for families, and Rapid Exit using the Hennepin County, MN model.

A new **focus on families** was launched in January 2007 and involved creation of a Central Intake (see prior e-news), prevention initiatives, and Rapid Rehousing strategies. Of 700 families per month seeking assistance, most families receive counseling only. 888 per year received financial help and/or ongoing case management. So far, only 12 families have required shelter placement after receiving help.

Under the new approach, referrals are accepted from all internal program areas within Norfolk's Child and Family Services (CPS, Foster Care, Adoptions, and Family Preservation) and a Memorandum of Understanding was developed by the City with community partners/shelters. A recent Memorandum of Agreement was created between NDHS and several community partners including three shelters, to provide shelter as well as intensive in-home services to families (Human Services Grant) and to establish centralized intake (known as the Norfolk Family Hotline) for homeless families that coordinates services among all providers and moves families from homelessness into permanent housing.

Community-based providers have benefited from the new system - which required no new staffing - which has shortened the length of shelter stays for homeless families served; targeted the appropriate families served by the agency; improved performance outcomes as more families exit to permanent housing; and decreased the administrative burden of the intake process while improving the information available on the housing and service needs of families served.

The city's **Housing First** initiative, modeled on Pathways to Housing, has 85 units planned with ACT team support. 18 people are now housed, with an average of 10 years' of homelessness history. A combination of CDBG, Continuum of Care, Section 8, local General Funds, private funds - a total of \$1.8 million per year - are invested in the strategy. After 18 months, 11 of 12 participants remain housed continually. 30% of current participants are veterans.

Norfolk also addressed the need for housing for the **reentry population** with a new 16-bed permanent housing initiative focused on non-violent ex-offenders which opened in December 2006. The city has also convened five successful **Project Homeless Connect** events, where more than 170 people have secured housing, and nearly 3,000 community volunteers - including hundreds of US Navy personnel - have welcomed homeless neighbors.