

# South Shore Network to End Homelessness

## Regional Report Card

Apr 2009-June 2010

The South Shore Network is one of ten regional networks across the state, **bringing together community agencies, government, faith groups, and businesses to implement regional strategies to prevent, reduce, and end homelessness** in Brockton, Quincy, Plymouth and surrounding South Shore towns.

**United Way of Greater Plymouth County** convenes the network and staffs the regional coordination. United Way's \$20,000 seed grant led to \$60,000 from private foundations and \$838,000 from the MA Interagency Council on Housing & Homelessness (ICHH). The network's partners then secured \$3.2 million in federal stimulus funds. Most of the network's resources have funded client rental assistance and case management; about \$80,000 annually funds the regional coordination.

### Success - Measurable Results

- 180 homeless families assessed and 118 moved rapidly to housing in the first 5 months of a new sheltering approach called "triage."
- 199 homeless individuals moved to housing (44 of them chronically homeless) and 80 to substance abuse treatment or other specialized services in the first 12 months of "triage."
- 206 families on the verge of becoming homeless in the last 12 months were kept housed.
- 25% of the approximately 40 families who seek shelter from the state each month are now being successfully diverted by community agencies to remain in housing.

### Innovations – How it works

The Regional Network is changing how we address homelessness on the South Shore from managing it with emergency shelter to ending it with housing-focused strategies. With facilitation by the Regional Coordinator and close cooperation among the family shelters and state agencies, the South Shore Network has started innovative practices that are reshaping service delivery and reducing homelessness.

- **Triage** – Launched in 2010 "triage" means every homeless family and individual is immediately assessed, matched to resources based on their needs, and helped to exit shelter rapidly for housing or other appropriate settings.
  - Old Way – Family Shelter: Shelter placements were done centrally by the state into the next available motel or shelter, often far from families' home communities. Long waits in shelters and motels for assessment, assistance, and housing resources were the norm. The region's service providers tended to work in isolation. Average time in shelter: 8-12 months. **Average state cost per family: \$26,000-\$40,000 for shelter only.**
  - New Way – Family Triage: Local control of shelter placements ensures families are kept in the region. Assessments are done within days to match families to the right setting for their needs. The region's service providers coordinate more effectively to ensure families are better matched to shelter, services, and rental funds. Average time in shelter: less than 60 days at some sites. **Average state cost per family: \$22,600 for 2 months of shelter and 12 months of flexible rental funds & housing stabilization services.**

- Old Way – Individual Shelter: Homeless adults at shelters typically waited weeks to see a case manager. A focus on managing people in shelter, rather than on rapid exits, was the norm.
- New Way – Individual Triage: Every person entering the region’s two shelters for individuals is assessed immediately; staff then works to implement an appropriate and rapid exit plan.
- **Flexible Funds** – The funds pay for short-term client rents and services to locate and keep housing. Nearly all of the homeless families in this region who moved to housing in recent months did so with flexible rental funds; so too did many homeless individuals. While some families and individuals with disabilities need longer-term housing subsidies and services to exit shelter, many people can move rapidly with flexible supports. The region has been at the lead in the state in accessing these resources to prevent and reduce homelessness.
- **Homeless Prevention** – Families about to enter shelter are helped by community agencies, on-site at the local welfare office or elsewhere in the community. Families are redirected to housing using newly flexible public dollars that pay short-term rents and case management to help them find and stabilize in housing.

## Ending Homeless with Regional Networks – What is Needed

- Continued funding for **regional coordination**.
- **Additional “flexible funds”** for homelessness prevention and homeless rehousing.
- Increased **flexibility in the state family shelter Emergency Assistance (EA) regulations** so more of the funding currently designated for shelter could be redirected to rental funds, housing search, and housing stabilization. *The South Shore region needs this flexibility to continue its triage outcomes. Without it, families will remain in shelter longer than necessary.*
- **Reformed EA eligibility** so more at-risk families could be prevented from homelessness and a **customized response** as every family doesn’t need the most expensive intervention, shelter. *The South Shore region needs this flexibility so more households can be kept out of the shelter system with rental funds, housing search, and stabilization; use of motels for shelter could then be eliminated.*
- **Fast track and prioritize state housing production funds for permanent supportive housing** for those at or below 30% of area median income. *The South Shore region needs better access to resources to create more housing for those very low-income and oftentimes disabled homeless individuals and families who remain in shelter the longest.*

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*The South Shore Network to End Homelessness includes: BAMSI/ City of Brockton Mayor’s Office/Brockton Public Schools/Bridgewater State College/Catholic Charities/Carolina Hill shelter/Congressman Stephen Lynch’s Office/ERSCC - Mary Martha Learning Center/ Father Bills & Mainspring/For Families/ Friends of the Homeless of the South Shore/Institute for Health & Recovery/Lutheran Social Services /MA Dept of Early & Secondary Education/MA Dept of Housing & Community Development/ MA Dept of Mental Health/MA Dept of Public Health/MA Dept of Transitional Assistance/Neighborhood Housing Services/North Easton Savings Bank/North Street Community Chapel - Hingham/Old Colony YMCA/Plymouth Area Coalition for the Homeless/Plymouth Housing Authority/Town of Plymouth/Plymouth Task Force for the Homeless/City of Quincy Community Planning Dept/Quincy Community Action Program/Quincy Housing Authority/Quincy School Department/St. Paul’s Episcopal Church - Brockton/School On Wheels/Self-Help, Inc./South Shore Chamber of Commerce/South Shore Community Action Council/United Way of Greater Plymouth County/ VA Boston Health Care System*