

Colorado Community and Interagency Council on Homelessness

Top Twelve Recommendations

1. **Increase state general funding (Division of Housing) from \$2.1 million in 2008 to \$4.5 million for the development of affordable housing with targeting to populations at 30% of the area median income (AMI) and particular emphasis on those developments that provide supportive housing for homeless and special needs populations – this includes homeless families, veterans and persons with disabilities.**
 - a. In the Governor's budget cuts to the 2009-10 budget, this line was protected.
2. **Increase state general funding for public and private agencies to provide integrated substance abuse and mental health services to homeless populations.**
 - a. The Governor's 08-09 and original 09-10 budgets included spending that built toward this goal:
 - i. The 08-09 increase in funding for parole wrap-around services included such integrated services. Its targeted population included former inmates who had been or were at risk of becoming homeless. 08-09: \$1.8M; 09-10: \$2.4M
 - ii. The 09-10 anti-recidivism budget proposals included a tripling of therapeutic community beds in DOC.
 - b. Due to the persistent budget crisis, the parole wrap-around services were eliminated. Therapeutic community beds in DOC were added in 09-10, but at only half of the originally requested level.
 - c. However, in the changes to the budget of the Department of Corrections, over \$2M of the savings that will be realized are redirected to enhanced parole services at the front end of parole, including enhanced substance abuse and mental health services to newly-paroled individuals.
3. **Establish a state housing trust fund to expand the capacity to produce and preserve affordable housing units throughout the state for those in greatest need. Target 75% of funds to persons at 30% or below of area median income (AMI).**
 - a. Note that Colorado received a total of \$53M in federal funding from the Neighborhood Stabilization Program in its first round, \$34M of which came to the state. The state is also submitting an NSP II application for some \$64 M. The aim of the funding is to recycle foreclosed residential property into affordable housing units and assist in stabilizing neighborhoods hardest hit by foreclosures. 25% of the money must be used for the benefit of people at or below 50% of the area median income. This is not state money, and we cannot count on the money continuing, but it is relevant.
4. **Expand the Benefits Acquisition and Retention Team (BART) model in locations outside Denver. For example, an implementation method may be to allocate \$5,000 to \$10,000 to Supportive Housing and Homeless Programs and the Department of Corrections to co-host national Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR) trainers and community training for selected SOAR venues. Additional models to be explored.**

- a. CCH has agreed to take over as the responsible entity for SOAR in Colorado. DOC will be contributing one or more trainers.
5. **Ensure that the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Qualified Allocation Plan, administered by the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority (CHFA), prioritizes projects serving the lowest income households for the longest periods of time, particularly those providing supportive housing for homeless and special needs populations. This includes homeless families, veterans and persons with disabilities.**
 - a. The Governor is required to sign the QAP. He has communicated to CHFA his desire that among applicants satisfying threshold requirements, priority be given to projects serving the lowest income households for the longest periods of time. CHFA is conducting ongoing discussions about this with a broad range of affordable housing stakeholders.
6. **Fund development of Housing First programs to serve chronically homeless individuals with mental health and/or substance use disorders.**
 - a. Under current economic circumstances, there is no new funding to further this recommendation.
7. **Advance policy: “Mental Health Institutes will not discharge clients to shelters or similar temporary settings that will result in homelessness.”**
 - a. Some interest has been expressed in undertaking an examination of “no discharge to homelessness” policies, but the question of whether to do so and of resources remains outstanding.
8. **Secure ongoing, stable funding and work proactively with vendor to implement upgrades to existing software that result in an efficient and effective Homeless Management Information System.**
 - a. The state has set aside \$670,000 in HPRP funding to address HMIS issues, some \$30,000 for short term issues and \$640,000, across all three continua of care, for longer term solutions. Homeward Bound Pikes Peak may participate in a state-wide purchase of new HMIS software or may choose to use its portion of the set-aside to make improvements in the current software.
9. **Establish more supportive housing programs for persons re-entering the community from behavioral health settings, especially those who are suffering from mental illness.**
 - a. Under current economic circumstances, there is no new state funding to advance this recommendation.
10. **Strengthen and expand pre-release Benefits Acquisition Programs to assist individuals leaving the State Institutes, the Department of Youth Corrections, state prisons and jails in order to increase their chance of successful community integration.**
 - a. New ID rules promulgated by the Department of Revenue allow a Colorado Department of Corrections or Federal Bureau of Prisons ID card to establish identity, and only a birth certificate will be needed (so long as the first and last names and date of birth match) to establish the other 3 elements required to obtain a Colorado ID (age, name and lawful presence).
 - b. The Governor signed Senate Bill 6 this year. That statute mandates ID card processing by the Division of Motor Vehicles for inmates scheduled to be released from the jails of the 7 counties in the Denver metro area (Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas and Jefferson). Priority will be given to prisoners with serious mental illness.

c. DOC's new pre-release curriculum includes benefits instruction.

11. Integrate within the Statewide Internet Portal Authority an electronic resource directory that allows for "one-stop" customer access to all government information and services for persons who are homeless or at-risk of being homeless.

- a. The state has granted HPRP funding to support an RFP for the creation of an electronic resource directory, though not through the Statewide Internet Portal Authority.
- b. Separately, DOLA will use HPRP funding for coloradohousingsearch.com, buying 3 years of expanded search capability for this housing search engine, which will have an HMIS interface.

12. Appropriate funding for 1 FTE to staff the unfunded statutorily required Office of Homeless Youth Services within the Colorado Department of Human Services. The duties of this Office are to identify and remove obstacles to service provision; improve service quality; reduce expenditures caused by overlapping services; and identify funding resources for serving homeless youth.

- a. The Office of Homeless Youth Services will be funded for at least the next year, though not from General Fund.