TABLE

of

CONTENTS

A New Day

Grand Rapids, MI – November 20, 2018: Community Rebuilders announces it has been selected to receive $5 million from the Day 1 Families Fund to quickly expand its aggressive and innovative approach to fighting family homelessness throughout Kent County, Michigan

The headline above represents an unprecedented opportunity to help families with children in our community who are experiencing homelessness. Our commitment to utilizing the Bezos Day 1 Families Fund is to be bold and innovative and to help our community achieve the goal of ending family homelessness in Kent County.

Working with scarce resources, multi data systems and reporting tools can be difficult and aggravating work. Across systems and the community we are all faced with the same daily challenge a family working to survive and thrive in Kent County. Despite setbacks, challenges and efforts to navigate services, families are struggling to get the services they need to achieve their hopes and dreams. As a community we are compelled to act and desperately want to serve these families.

"I just want my family to have a home."

"I don't want to be afraid anymore."

These are the cries of children living day to day with no place to call home. Cries that service providers and parents are all too familiar with. To achieve the goal of ending family homelessness there must be a community wide effort that focuses on housing affordability and stability as well as an effective crisis response system.

This is an important and exciting opportunity for our community to demonstrate collective leadership and work toward this goal with shared energy, vision and a sense of urgency.

We invite you to read this document and consider how you can be part of this agile, innovative and impactful approach. We must seize this opportunity and strengthen the fabric that holds our community together. Families, friends, service providers, churches, schools, health care, public officials we all have a role to play in ending family homelessness.

What can you do? Join us with a pledge to end family homelessness!

Thank you,

Vera Beech

Executive Director, Community Rebuilders   **2**
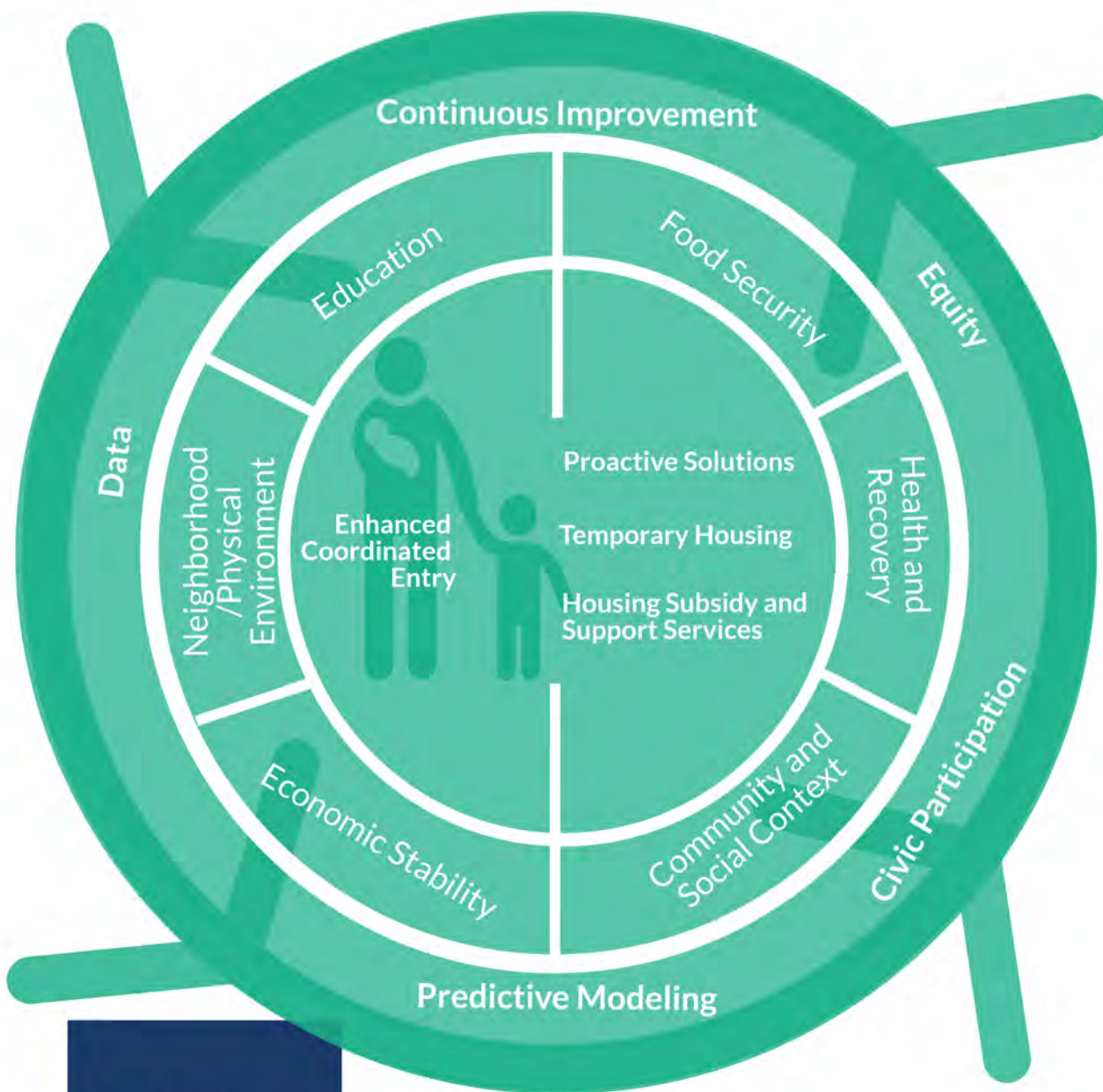
Developing social capital to make family homelessness rare, brief & nonrecurring.

Our Vision

The solution to homelessness is housing. An effective response system quickly reconnects families to housing and supports their ability to stay there!

Our Mission

Rebuilding hope through housing opportunities for families and individuals with support services during transitions.

Community Rebuilders is driven to end family homelessness by making homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring. Our Day One Families Fund will enable us to tap into the passion, energy and insights of our communities assets: interdisciplinary organizations, allies working to end homelessness, and citizens at large. We believe interdisciplinary collaborations lead to solutions that are bigger than the sum of its parts.

As a starting point, we believe a structured approach of system mapping will lead to improved accessibility, quality, and a range of services and supports for persons experiencing homelessness in Kent County. We believe system mapping can play an important role in promoting a comprehensive, evidence-based, outcome-oriented system of homeless services and supports.

We recognize this map may not meet the planning needs of all systems. This process is structured to specifically support the goal of making homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring for families experiencing literal homelessness in Kent County.

We will emphasize the impact on outcomes and use results to guide future strategic planning. We will map what is currently in place, identify gaps and strengths, and build a model system based on that data. We are committed to ensuring that any decision the map informs reflects the best quality of evidence available. We will identify the who, what, where, when, why and how of the system = **the system assets.** We will do so with the curiosity and drive to implement solutions collectively, as any decision we make will reflect the best quality of evidence available.

We will direct funding toward the areas of greatest impact:

Responses that are data-driven and outcome focused.

Interventions that minimize total time spent homeless.

Programs that focus first on helping families get a home.

Evidence-based services that help families heal and thrive.

Confusing definitions are real

*No single source of data tells the whole story of homelessness
and other housing needs in our country.*

There are a variety of different data sources that can and should be used at the community level to drive local planning; action and investments; strengthen the coordinated responses required to end people's homelessness and also to address broader housing needs.

Different definitions of homelessness within federal statutes and programs as well as different definitions of housing needs can be confusing to navigate. However, we also acknowledge that differentiated definitions allow us to recognize meaningful distinctions among the individuals and families experiencing housing needs and crises in our communities, making it possible to more effectively tailor our responses, use our resources most efficiently, and engage the larger array of mainstream systems and services in order to best address current and projected needs.

Recognizing all of this, it is our hope that this document can be helpful by clarifying the specific population that our Day One Fund will serve in support of a community effort to make family homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring.

> ## FAMILIES TO BE SERVED WITH DAY ONE
>
> ### *Literally homeless families with children under the age of 18*
>
> **Families who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, which includes:**
>
> 1. Places not meant for human habitation, outdoors or in a vehicle
> 2. An emergency shelter or domestic violence shelter
> 3. A motel or hotel paid for by a voucher
> 4. A transitional housing program
> 5. Families who are fleeing domestic, dating, or sexual violence
> 6. Families who will lose their housing in 14 days or less

Families will be prioritized, including those with the highest need/risk using an enhanced coordinated entry process. Immediate attention will be paid to families living outside in cars and other unsheltered locations, moving them to housing, offering shelter and supportive services as priority.

Our Day One Funds are not intended for unstably housed families. This includes those living in a self-paid motel or hotel, those who are commonly referred to as "doubled-up" or "couch surfing", and those households who may be moderately or severely rent burdened, either paying more than 30% or 50% of their household income respectively for housing.

HUD defined worst case housing will not be included in the definition of homeless families served by our Day One Fund. This includes very low income renters who do not receive government housing assistance and who pay more than half of their income for rent, live in severely inadequate conditions, or both.

As a community we recognize that multiple definitions and data sets exist and, further, that all of the above scenarios are important to address with adequate and appropriate resources.

While our Day One Fund specifically seeks to make homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring for literally homeless families, we also know that in order for our entire community to be strong and healthy it is important to recognize the many other organizations who are actively addressing the families who are unstably housed and/or who lack affordable housing.

# Social Equity: Linking Metrics to our Mission and Values

Community Rebuilders seeks to implement practices that foster, strengthen and maintain equitable outcomes. We seek to provide goods and services and interactions that reduce and ultimately eliminate disparity, marginalization and discrimination while increasing inclusion. To this end, our work and this document have been influenced by and include content recommendations from The American Society of Public Administration's Center for Accountability and Performance.

We acknowledge that the terms "fairness" and "equality" are subjective and have excluded them from our definition.

DEFINITION: Social equity refers to policy formulation and implementation, public management practices, the provision of goods and services and organization/consumer/stakeholder interactions that reduce (and ultimately eliminate) disparity, marginalization and discrimination while increasing social and political inclusion.

1. Community Rebuilders strives to be deliberate in considering how actions, programs and policies impact different social groups. Even the most comprehensive approach to social equity measurement will not be as effective and beneficial to the widest range of stakeholders if it is not conscious of the impacts to marginalized populations.
2. Community Rebuilders' ongoing effort is to produce a culture that values social equity, issues of equity, and dedicates resources (human and financial) to develop sound strategies to implement highly comprehensive approaches for social equity measurement.
3. Community Rebuilders understands that effective and meaningful social equity practices are not void of historical and social context. Considerations of both historical and social contexts offer meaning to measurement data and a clearer picture to evaluate and understand shifts in equity. An evaluation of data that excludes context is limited in its breadth and depth of understanding how and why change occurs.

Ultimately, it is only when equity is experienced by those who are most marginalized, underrepresented or not represented that true social equity is achieved.
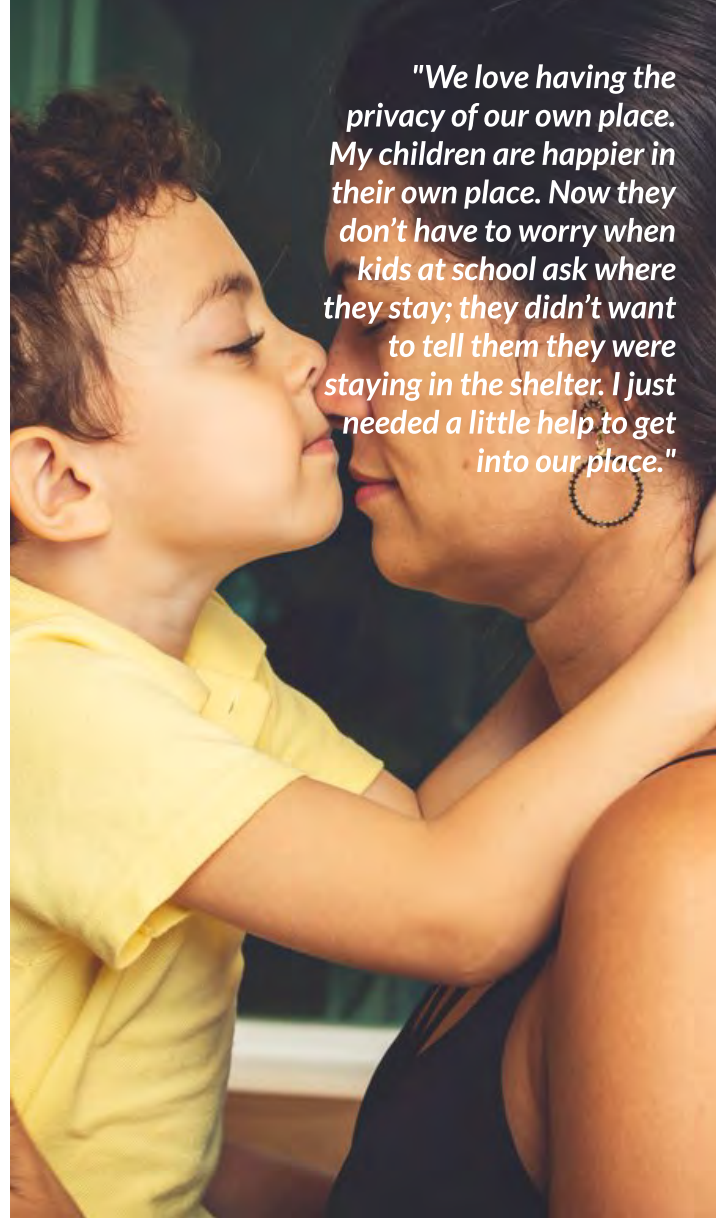
"We love having the privacy of our own place. My children are happier in their own place. Now they don't have to worry when kids at school ask where they stay; they didn't want to tell them they were staying in the shelter. I just needed a little help to get into our place."

What we will measure

Metric 1: Racial dis-proportionality based on key metrics

Type: Outcome Metric

Purpose: The racial dis-proportionality metric helps Community Rebuilders monitor the demographics of households to see if there are disparities between who enters the system and specific programs, the level of service they receive and their likelihood of achieving positive outcomes.

Metric 2: Racial distribution of service provision

Type: Process Metric

Purpose: Comparing this metric to estimates of homeless households by race can help identify if there are racial disparities in the provision of services.
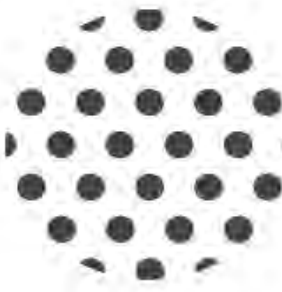
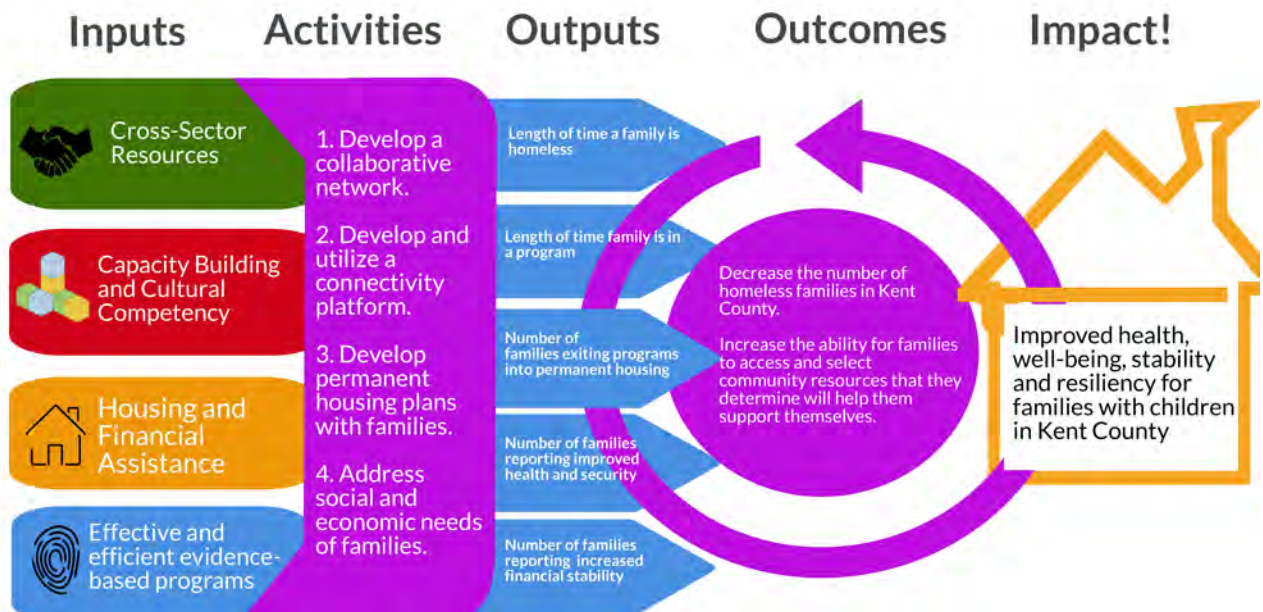| INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	IMPACT!
The resources and expertise within the community we rely on to produce the best outcomes	The data-driven and openly evaluated efforts	Outputs are evaluated on both quantitative and qualitative factors	Intended accomplishments for our community	Creation of a healthy environment for families with children

Defining a Systems Framework for making family homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring.

Essential components of an effective framework:

1. Defining the key program types that are responsive to diverse client populations and respective needs.
2. Ensuring programs have clear, consistent and transparent eligibility and prioritization processes to support right matching of services for clients.
3. Using a common assessment tool to determine acuity or need, direct client placement, and track client progress.
4. Having clear and appropriate performance measurement indicators and quality assurance expectations at the program and system level to monitor and evaluate outcomes.
5. Utilizing data to direct strategies and assess program and system impact in real time, like a Homeless Management Information System.

USING DATA TO BUILD EVIDENCE

The following section outlines the tools used to measure and evaluate not only program performance but also system performance.

These tools work to establish a common language that support the system planning framework; measure progress along the common agenda of making family homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring; enable greater alignment among the goals of different organizations; encourage more collaborative problem-solving; and become the platform for an ongoing learning community that gradually increase the effectiveness of all efforts to end homelessness.

Our vision for performance measurement is the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the family homelessness system.

The desired objective, is to make the biggest impact with funding investments directed towards our collective goal of ending family homelessness in Kent County. Our approach to metrics is based on the belief that the skills, knowledge, and expertise for improving the family homelessness system is found in the community.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

KPIs align with system goals and are used by agencies to inform practice through regular review of data. Knowledge gaps are identified by these KPIs and program changes are driven by best practices. These will ultimately influence funding decisions, ensuring they are transparent, align with larger system goals and are based on programs that meet or exceed performance expectations.

UNDERSTANDING RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISPARITIES

Equitable strategies to address homelessness must include programmatic and systems level changes, and they must begin to seriously address homelessness prevention. It is not enough to move people of color out of homelessness if the systems are simply setting people up for a revolving door of substandard housing and housing instability. Efforts must begin to go upstream into other systems—criminal justice, child welfare, foster care, education, and health-care—and implement solutions that stem the tide of homelessness at the point of inflow. (Sparc Phase One Report)

CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

While using data to influence real-time decision making may seem obvious, it is not common practice for many in the social service sector. Though we recognize the importance of data in developing agile responses to social issues, we are still working through the creation of an integrated, agile ecosystem that truly closes the gap between evidence and practice.

This systems framework recognizes that one organization's effort within the homeless system is deeply impacted by the work of others.

Much of today's progress would not have been achieved without the information mined from HMIS, emergency shelter data or research, and their use in performance management, funding decision-making, and strategic planning. However, in order to truly measure sustainable change and understand the effectiveness of our system, we need to clearly define success and develop the appropriate metrics to assess it. We have an opportunity to leverage technologies to do this and yet we have much to learn on the implementation side.

Civic Participation: The perspectives and experiences of front-line workers and people with lived experience are especially valuable through their direct experience with the system components. Additionally, where integration of an interactive client journey exercise is not available, data collected from past or current consumers can be provided as a source of information.

Performance Measurement Using Experiential Data: Survey questions should address the implementation of the process. Results will identify accessibility of the system, confirm the soundness of the assessment tools and provider referral network, and expose system gaps/needs. Targeted survey tools can explore these specific issues and questions.

Macro Level Predictive Modeling: Utilizing historical data sets paired with consumer experience, predictive modeling integrates a cross-sector approach to account for and quantify assumptions and influential factors that impact family homelessness in our community. The compilation of factors such as macroeconomics, public policy, local resources and racial and ethnic disparities, can support ongoing efforts to either scale up or scale down particular interventions and aid in the development of data driven risk assessments.

We believe an effective coordinated entry system is essential. We envision a connectivity platform that creates efficiencies and streamlines the process for families to access services through a cross-sector continuum of care. We envision a fully integrated system that serves to allocate assistance as effectively as possible, thereby ensuring access to the most appropriate and available services no matter where a family presents or what difficulties they face. This system provides access, assessment, prioritization and referral, and secure data collection and evaluation of the system. Enhanced coordinated entry will bring community agencies across sectors together to improve the health and wellness of families experiencing homelessness.

What we will support and encourage our community to measure for an enhanced coordinated entry system:

Systems Level Data
- ▸ Number of people completing assessments referred to an appropriate resource based on severity of need or risk
- ▸ Number of referrals that have real time status updates of accepted or declined within 3 business days versus number of referrals made to project
- ▸ Rate of project inventory versus number of referrals made to project

Aspirations

ACCESSIBILITY: Access will cover the entire geographic area and is easily accessed by families seeking housing and/or services.

EQUITY: To consistently apply one or more comprehensive standardized assessment tool(s), applying a consistent process throughout the community in order to achieve equitable access to housing and services within the community.

PRIORITIZATION: To prioritize families experiencing homelessness ,a specific and definable set of criteria must be documented, made publicly available and applied consistently throughout the community.

EFFICIENCY: To utilize a data system to manage information, ensuring privacy and compliance with local, state and federal data and technical standards. Consumers are not excluded for refusal to participate in data sharing.

EFFECTIVENESS: For service providers and consumers to evaluate intake, assessment and referral processes at least annually to consider the quality and effectiveness of the experience for participating services and households.

DIVERSITY OF APPROACH: Expansion beyond the "usual places" using social media and web-based opportunities.

A comprehensive proactive homeless response system assesses individual household needs and understands that many households seeking emergency shelter currently have a safe and appropriate place to stay, even if temporary. This often involves these households staying temporarily or moving in with family or friends. Some of these households avoid entering emergency shelter by maintaining their current housing or by securing other permanent housing if linked to services.

Proactive solutions should be readily available for literally homeless families requesting emergency shelter, who have otherwise identified no other housing options and a lack of financial resources or supports to avoid homelessness. One such evidenced-based intervention is Rapid Resolutions.

RAPID RESOLUTIONS: An intervention that seeks to identify safe and appropriate alternatives to shelter, once a family has become homeless. An immediate conversation is begun to determine the circumstances contributing to the families immediate housing crisis. The focus of the conversation is on clearly delineating the material conditions directly related to the family's choice to seek shelter at that moment, rather than long-standing poverty or behavioral health issues which might also be present. Rapid Resolutions seek to be proactive and help families explore their own housing options earlier.

Key Activities Include:

- A problem-solving conversation with household
- Efforts to return participants to previous residence
- Efforts to avoid shelter and resolve homelessness
- Support to rapidly reduce the housing crisis with limited resources and use of natural supports
- Reducing trauma associated with entry into a homeless crisis response system
- Reducing crisis response system inflows
- Concentrating resources and limited affordable housing stock on those with greater barriers
- Supporting family reunification and reducing isolation
- Mediating the causes for housing loss and ensuring safety
- Providing flexible one-time financial assistance

What we will support and encourage our community to measure for proactive solutions:

Systems Level Data

▸ Number of families avoiding literal homelessness

Aspirations

DYNAMIC PRIORITIZATION: Ensuring that the crisis response system's most intensive interventions (PSH and RRH) are prioritized to serve the highest need persons first.

REDUCTIONS IN CRISIS REQUESTS: Persons with lower vulnerability are assisted through less intensive strategies that focus on problem-solving, and reduce and ultimately eliminate wait times for housing assistance.

Temporary housing accommodations are considered a short-term option for persons experiencing homelessness which does not require a signed lease agreement. Temporary housing accommodations should support flow from a housing crisis to housing stability, while the aim of the system is to produce the most rapid and effective permanent housing connections for those experiencing homelessness.

Temporary housing accommodations include:

▸ Traditional emergency shelter settings including drop-in and pop-up shelters
▸ Single/multi-unit dwelling in which the stay is temporary and no lease holder rights are afforded
▸ Free hostel-type settings
▸ Interim Housing/Bridge Housing /Transitional Housing

Connection Centers: Connection centers provide prioritized emergency accommodation to highly vulnerable literally homeless families. The autonomous environment utilizes a rights-based approach to food security and does not constrain people's movements or time. Immediate connection to housing and services is facilitated by a housing resource specialist with a goal of obtaining permanent housing. No lease holder rights are afforded; in place of such rights is a mutual living agreement which supports choice and independence.

Interim/Bridge Housing: Used interchangeably, HUD defines interim housing not as a type of housing, but rather as a housing situation where a person experiencing homelessness has applied for and accepted a permanent housing resource, but an obstacle prevents them from moving immediately into housing; (e.g., apartment getting painted, has a voucher but is looking for a unit, etc.). In such cases where it has been determined necessary to keep the client engaged and moving towards housing, a temporary solution must be utilized.

Transitional Housing (TH): The focus of TH is to move literally homeless people as quickly as possible into permanent housing, while providing the supports they need to remain stably housed. The housing is medium-term and typically less than, but up to, 12 months.

What we will support and encourage our community to measure for temporary housing accommodations:

Systems Level Data

▸ Length of time families spend in temporary accommodations
▸ Exits to permanent housing

Aspirations

RIGHTS - BASED APPROACH TO FOOD SECURITY: *Respecting t*he right to food: to not interfere with one's ability to acquire food. *Protecting* the right to food : to ensure that others do not interfere with access to food. To *fulfill* the right to food: to facilitate/create social and economic environments that foster human development, and to provide food to people in circumstances when self-provisioning is beyond their control.

HOUSING FOCUSED: Include housing focused services which support the flow from housing crisis to housing stability by rapidly exiting users to permanent housing.

EQUITY: Ensure equitable access while addressing disparities in access to programs, staffing and structure. Welcome self-identified family and kinship groups and have the capacity to accommodate partners, pets and possessions of users.

Effective homeless response systems seek to reduce barriers to housing and provide voluntary support services for individuals and families experiencing a housing crisis. Proper assessment and prioritization, along with consumer choice creates a path to permanent housing .

Effective systems prioritize households based on three service delivery interventions: Housing First, Strengths-Based, and Trauma Informed. Each is structured to provide a tailored amount of financial assistance and support services based on the needs identified by the household and a standardized assessment process. This programming includes:

Short/Medium Term Assistance: Includes limited financial assistance and may include voluntary housing stability support services for up to 24-months. Plans are individualized based on the household's needs and wants, and work to create strong connections to community-based organizations, including mental and physical health services, employment and income, benefits access, and health and nutrition.

Long Term Assistance: Includes housing stability support services and financial assistance indefinitely. Plans are individualized based on the household's needs and wants, and work to create strong connections to community, including mental and physical health services, employment, benefits access, etc.

What we will support and encourage our community to measure for housing stability and support services:

Systems Level Data

‣ Exits to permanent housing
‣ Retention of permanent housing
‣ Length of time to housing move in
‣ Families who connect to health, education, employment and other services
‣ Families report an increase in well-being
‣ Increase in income

Aspirations

ACCESSIBILITY: Provide easy, immediate and predictable access .

HOUSING FIRST: Include voluntary housing - focused supportive services determined by and tailored to individual household needs, wants and desires. Provide services where rules are limited and reasonable for the safety of all, and expectations on families are minimal, transparent and reasonable.

PROGRESSIVE ENGAGEMENT: In short/medium term housing programs, financial assistance is tailored to rapidly exit families successfully to permanent housing.

EQUITY: Ensure equal access by addressing disparities in access to programs, staffing and structure.

Those experiencing housing instability often face a multitude of challenges – mental health issues, addictions, domestic violence, limited education, barriers to employment, a breakdown in kinship networks, or involvement with multiple systems like child intervention and corrections.

These micro-drivers typically generate the dynamics that contribute to housing instability at an individual level. Additionally, we believe it is vital to focus on the larger social and economic forces, such as unemployment, limited affordable housing, discrimination, and the social stigma that occurs in situations where there is unequal social, economic and political power. We believe cross-sector service systems have an important role in building capacity, and advocating for persons experiencing homelessness in an anti-oppressive manner.

We intend to align diverse cross-sector services and resources to improve health and equity for families experiencing homelessness.

Social Determinants of Health (SDoH)

Conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, and play affect a wide range of health risks and outcomes. These conditions are known as social determinants of health (SDoH).

We know that poverty limits access to healthy foods and safe neighborhoods and that more education is a predictor of better health. We also know that differences in health are striking in communities with poor SDoH such as unstable housing, low income, unsafe neighborhoods, or substandard education. By applying what we know about SDoH, we can not only improve individual and population health, but also advance health equity. (Center for Disease Control)

SYSTEMS ALIGNMENT

By aligning key systems and partners in the effort to end family homelessness in Kent County, our community can apply a holistic and coordinated approach to meeting the unique and fluid needs of homeless families.

Through a process of internal and external evaluation, service efficacy will be evaluated and best practices will be promoted. By addressing these SDoH, racial and ethnic equity will be continuously addressed.

ECONOMIC STABILITY

INCOME
EMPLOYMENT
EXPENSES
DEBT

NEIGHBORHOOD AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

AFFORDABLE HOUSING
TRANSPORTATION
SAFETY
ZIP CODE/GEOGRAPHY

EDUCATION

LITERACY
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

FOOD SECURITY

ACCESS TO HEALTHY AND AFFORDABLE FOOD

COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

FAMILY
SOCIAL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
SUPPORT SYSTEMS
DISCRIMINATION

HEALTH AND RECOVERY

TAILORED HOME CARE
HEALTH COVERAGE
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
PROVIDER AVAILABILITY
QUALITY OF CARE

A HOLISTIC APPROACH

to making family homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring.

TAKE THE PLEDGE

We desire a future where every Kent County family . . .

(Tell us what future state do you desire for Kent County families?)

_____

_____!

Given the complexity of family homelessness, we recognize that this effort can not be accomplished by one organization, level of government, sector or system. This effort will require a broad interconnected system to meet the diverse needs of Kent County families.

Our organization agrees with the aims of the Day One Families Fund to make family homelessness in Kent County rare, brief and nonrecurring. We envision a future where all Kent County families have access to safe, affordable and permanent housing.

Organization/Agency Name: _____

Primary Contact: _____ **Title:** _____

Email Address: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

LET'S DO THIS.

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Acknowledgments

Resources, Mavericks and Mavens

We would like to thank and acknowledge the local, state and national organizations, service providers, funders and researchers for their collective knowledge, best practices and feedback on this document.

Supplemental

Research and Additional Readings

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