

# Athens-Clarke County Homeless Coalition

Strategic Plan 2022 - 2024

## Executive Summary

Our coalition of over 50 service organizations in Northeast Georgia work daily and directly with individuals facing poverty and homelessness in our area. These organizations work to provide housing, employment, health and educational services to those in need. The coalition works to serve those organizations so that they may continue to have the resources necessary to make an impact each day.

It is vital that we continue to evaluate our efficacy as an organization so that we may continue to collaborate with and provide assistance to our community through our service organization members and those they serve daily. This document is to be used as a guide for our Governing Board and members to utilize for the next two years (2022 - 2024) as we navigate additional funding coming to our community and so that we may work together to achieve our community and organizational goals.

We have identified several goals over the course of 2021 (for a full list of goals and priorities see “Goals” on pages 6-8):

### Evaluate

- Measure Continuum of Care progress through HUD System Performance Measures and priorities utilizing HMIS and Point-in-Time Count data reports.
- Utilize local reports and community initiatives to evaluate progress and direct funds to address gaps in services.
- Promote active participation in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and utilize HMIS data to inform funding.
- Assess demographic trends to address racial disparities.

### Educate

- Provide educational opportunities for Homeless Coalition membership, stakeholders, decision-makers, and the community.

### Collaborate

- Cultivate and strengthen membership and participation of the Athens-Clarke County Continuum of Care in an effort to work together toward solution-based goals.
- Partner with mainstream service providers to support homeless services, eliminate barriers and connect providers.
- Identify and engage landlords and affordable housing providers to build partnerships with the Coalition and homeless service providers.

## Prevent

- Identify prevention programs in the community and work to prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless and/or entering the shelter system.

## Reduce Harm

- Reduce harm in accessing basic needs including but not limited to shelter, food, sanitation services, bathrooms, hygiene products, and safely storing belongings.
- Reduce trauma experience through trauma-informed practice.
- Reduce harm in substance use.

## Transform

- Identify opportunities to assist member organizations in preventing and ending homelessness in Athens-Clarke County.
- Identify, navigate and change landlord and community perceptions of individuals and families experiencing homelessness and/or mental health disorders including but not limited to substance use disorder
- Work continuously to realize the goals listed in this strategic plan and opportunities for the Coalition to achieve success.

## Introduction

This strategic planning document was created as a tool to assess and address the state of the Athens-Clarke County Homeless Coalition: Continuum of Care. It was created over the course of 2021, including a strategic planning session held June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021, by the organization's Board of Directors via Zoom including Cory Scott, Nicolette Tobin, Blayne McDonald, Katie Molina, Scott Long, John Morris, Jason Leonard, Emmett Allen, Sara Shropshire, and Michael Bien and an additional meeting held in-person at the Athens-Clarke County Library on July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021, including Katie Molina, Sara Shropshire, Michael Bien, Emmett Allen, John Morris, Blayne McDonald and Hayley Banerjee.

## Background

The Athens-Clarke County Homeless Coalition: Continuum of Care (Homeless Coalition) is the Athens-Clarke County Continuum of Care (GA-503) in accordance with the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act. The Homeless Coalition is recognized as the broader Continuum of Care for the purposes of identifying the needs of homeless individuals and families, planning for resources to end and prevent homelessness and poverty, and advocating for additional solutions to address homelessness and poverty in Athens-Clarke County.

## Vision

To prevent and end homelessness and poverty in Athens-Clarke County, Georgia.

## Mission

To ensure collaborative planning, educational opportunities, technical assistance, resource development, and program advocacy for homeless service providers while assisting both directly and indirectly, the homeless and underserved population in Athens-Clarke County, Georgia.

## Structure

The Homeless Coalition (as the local CoC) includes all organizations and individuals actively engaged in Continuum of Care activities. Homeless Coalition membership is open to the public. Ending and preventing homelessness requires a regional approach and full participation from the range of stakeholders in the homeless continuum of care. As the CoC, the Homeless Coalition will identify key issues to address homelessness and will mobilize stakeholders to achieve the goals of ending and preventing homelessness.

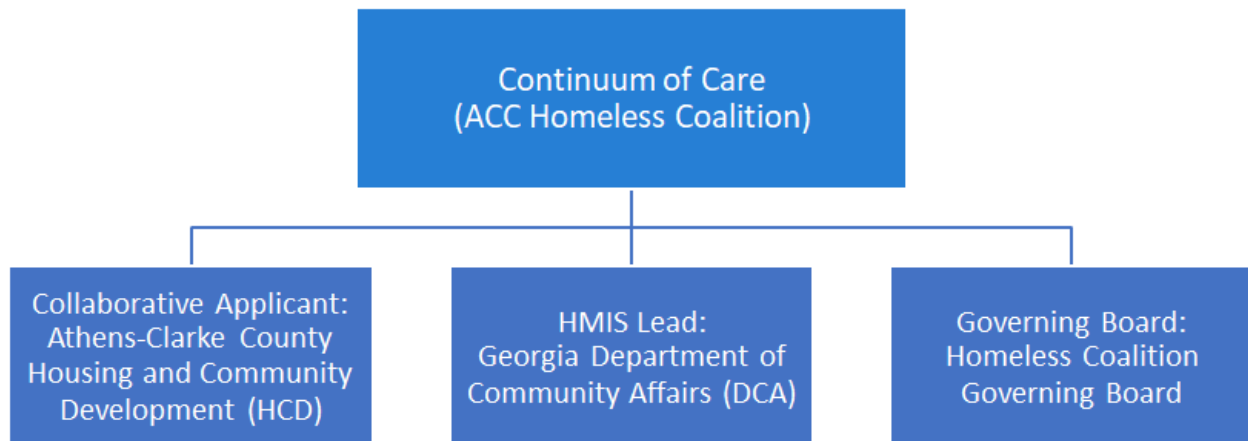
Members of the Continuum of Care/the Homeless Coalition shall be those relevant organizations and individuals who are interested in, and supportive of, the community's goals to end and prevent homelessness. Voting members shall be relevant organizations and individuals who participate in the membership fee structure (as possible).

Relevant organizations include, but are not limited to:

- Homeless and formerly homeless individuals
- Nonprofit homeless service providers
- Local governments
- Social service providers
- Victim service providers
- Universities
- School districts
- Businesses
- Advocates
- Elected officials
- Law Enforcement
- Affordable housing providers

The full Homeless Coalition membership shall meet 3 times a year in: January, May, and September. The Governing Board shall meet 6 times a year in: February, April, June, August, October, and December. Committees will meet 12 times a year, once every month in the calendar year.

The Homeless Coalition/CoC is composed of a governing board, collaborative applicant, HMIS Lead, and advisory committees addressing key issues in Athens-Clarke County.



## Governing Body

**Homeless Coalition Governing Board** Provides oversight and leadership for the Continuum of Care. Designated as the CoC board as defined in the CoC interim rule section 578.5(b):

1. Be representative of the relevant organizations and of projects serving homeless subpopulations; and
2. Include at least one homeless or formerly homeless individual.

## Committees\*

**Housing Solutions** Raises awareness of the discrepancy between the number of families and individuals in Athens and the number of affordable housing units. Works to engage the community, stakeholders and officials to create housing solutions.

**Landlord Engagement and Retention** Engages landlords to work with service providers to house low-income clients through various housing programs including but not limited to Rapid Rehousing and Shelter Plus Care.

**Housing Management Information System (HMIS)** Monitors performance of CoC projects through HMIS data, coordinates required CoC reporting (PIT, HIC, AHAR), and provides training to HMIS users.

**Communications** Monitors and updates the Homeless Coalition website and social media platforms as well as the Homeless Coalition email account and online meeting account (Zoom).

**Encampment Engagement and Planning** Works to engage the community, stakeholders and officials in the creation of and planning of a homeless encampment in Athens-Clarke County.

**Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Homelessness** A collaboration with the Athens Domestic Violence Task Force, to work towards bringing awareness, education and policy for domestic violence and sexual assault in the homeless population. Creates and updates VAWA Emergency Transfer Plan.

\*max cap of 10 people per committee

## Collaborative Applicant

**Athens-Clarke County Government: Housing and Community Development Department (HCD)** HCD is the designated Collaborative Applicant for the Athens-Clarke County (GA-503) Continuum of Care and performs the following tasks:

- Submits the annual consolidated CoC application to HUD on behalf of the CoC
- Serves as fiscal agent and administrative entity for the CoC
- Serves as local HMIS System Administrator

## HMIS Lead

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs' (DCA) Georgia Housing and Finance Authority (GHFA) serves as HMIS Lead in the state of Georgia's HMIS implementation. DCA's responsibilities as HMIS Lead include:

## Project Management

- Oversee the operation and management of the GHMIS including continual monitoring of data system (not system user) compliance with all HUD Data and Technical Standards.
- Maintain GHMIS Participation Agreements with all participating agencies and users.
- Administer HUD HMIS awards for Continuum jurisdictions within the GHMIS implementation.

## System Functionality

- Enter into a formal contractual relationship with the GHMIS Vendor that outlines the requirements and responsibilities of the Vendor, including those required by HUD through its Data and Technical Standards, rules, notices, etc.
- Ensure the Vendor's software system maintains timely compliance with all Data and Technical Standards to include Privacy and Security Standards.
- Ensure software system maintains timely compliance with any other required standards set by other Federal and State programs that require HMIS use.
- Ensure the software system, within reasonable development timeframes, is capable of producing all HUD required reports, including data quality and monitoring reports.

## Policies and Procedures

- Develop and maintain GHMIS Policies and Procedures in accordance with HUD requirements and notices.
- Develop and maintain a privacy plan, security plan, and data quality plan for the HMIS in accordance with HUD requirements. This (or these) document must be reviewed and adopted by the HMIS Steering Committee.
- Monitor participating agency compliance with security, privacy and confidentiality policies.
- Provide Continuums with tools necessary to monitor agency compliance with HUD Data Standards including reports and access to raw agency data.
- Set minimum general participation and timeliness standards for agencies. (Continuums can set more stringent requirements if they deem necessary.)

## Training and Technical Assistance

- Ensure required basic training is available to participating agency staff and accessible on a regular basis.
- Ensure technical assistance and help desk support is available and accessible to participating agencies on a regular basis.
- Ensure Continuums have access to reports, technical assistance, and training required to develop a data quality improvement plan when necessary.

# Goals and Objectives

---

## Evaluate

Measure Continuum of Care progress through HUD System Performance Measures and priorities utilizing HMIS and Point-in-Time Count data reports.

- Reducing/Ending Chronic Homelessness
- Reducing Length of Time Homeless
- Increasing Employment for Homeless Persons
- Preventing/Ending Veteran Homelessness
- Reducing Returns to Homelessness
- Increasing Income of Homeless Persons
- Preventing/Ending Family Homeless
- Overall Reduction in Number Of Homeless Persons
- Increasing Utilization/Receipt of Mainstream Benefits
- Preventing/Ending Homelessness of Single Adults
- Overall Reduction in Persons Homeless for First Time

Utilize local reports and community initiatives to evaluate progress and direct funds to address gaps in services.

- HUD Data and Assessments
  - Point in Time Count
  - Housing Inventory Count
  - System Performance Measures Report
  - Longitudinal Systems Analysis
  - Annual Performance Reports
- Community Initiatives
  - Envision Athens
  - Athens Wellbeing Project
  - Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) Report
  - CCSD Summative Data Report

Promote active participation in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and utilize HMIS data to inform funding.

- Ensure all homeless service providers are participating in the HMIS



- Ensure HMIS Data Quality
- Provide HMIS Training to HMIS Users
- Determine a sustainable funding source for HMIS costs
- Review HMIS performance of federally-funded homeless programs quarterly and annually
- Utilize program performance and HMIS Data Quality in CoC funding recommendations
- Utilize HMIS to track coordinated entry system effectiveness

Evaluate demographic trends to address racial disparities.

Determine racial disparities among homeless subpopulations:

- Individuals
- Families
- Veterans
- Individuals with Disabilities
- Sheltered vs. Unsheltered Populations

## Educate

Provide educational opportunities for Homeless Coalition membership, stakeholders, decision-makers, and the community.

- Best Practices for survivors of domestic violence and safety planning
- Trauma-Informed Care and confidentiality in Homeless Services
- HMIS User Training
- Landlord engagement for housing providers
- Anti-Discrimination Training: Equal Access to Housing and Homeless Services
- Cultural competency
- Fair Housing/Tenant Rights
- Ongoing conversations with decision-makers on best practices, homeless services and affordable housing
- PIT Count
- Individual vs Family Homelessness
- Auxiliary services
- McKinney Vento Act vs HUD Homelessness
- CCSD
- Health, healthcare and mental health
- Work with communications committee to complete and distribute a resource guide

## Collaborate

Cultivate and strengthen membership and participation of the Athens-Clarke County Continuum of Care in an effort to work together toward solution-based goals.

- Homeless and Formerly Homeless Individuals
- Emergency Shelters
- Permanent Housing Providers
- Domestic Violence Shelter
- Athens-Clarke County Unified Government
- Law Enforcement
- Employment Services
- Philanthropic Organizations
- Mental Health Providers
- Hospitals
- Downtown Business Owners
- Landlords
- Faith-based Community
- Advocates

\*Current gaps in membership include childcare providers, long term affordable housing providers, and homelessness prevention and diversion services providers

Partner with mainstream service providers to support homeless services, eliminate barriers and connect providers.

- Clarke County School District
- Division of Family and Children Services
- Social Security Administration
- Department of Labor
- Social Service Providers
- Veteran Affairs
- Law Enforcement: ACC Police Department, ACC Jail, ACC Diversion Center, ACC Probation
- Hospitals and Emergency Rooms

Identify and engage landlords and affordable housing providers to build partnerships with the Coalition and homeless service providers.

- Educate landlords about benefits of housing programs
- Explore use of risk mitigation funds to focus on building housing stock
- Promote high quality housing options, especially for low-income individuals and families

- Facilitate lunch and learn meetings with housing stakeholders
- Facilitate rent readiness training and certificate

## Prevent

Identify prevention programs in the community and work to prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless and/or entering the shelter system.

- Prevent evictions through education regarding tenant rights and Fair Housing laws
- Promote Homelessness Prevention programs
- Promote Diversion programs
- Collaborate with the Clarke County School District Homeless Education program to support families and children vulnerable to entering the shelter system

## Reduce Harm

Reduce harm in accessing basic needs including but not limited to shelter, food, sanitation services, bathrooms, hygiene products, and safely storing belongings.

- Increase the diversity of types of shelter (camps, hotels, perennial shelter, etc.)
- Increase the coordination of food distributions and access to water for refilling water
- Create access to restrooms and general hygiene facilities (bathrooms for camps, downtown, etc.)
- Increase the coordination and share of information of free and inexpensive clothing
- Create opportunities for people to secure their belongings (lockers, lockboxes, etc.)
- Increase coordination of hygiene products provision (especially feminine products)

Reduce trauma experience through trauma-informed practice.

- Reduce trauma in land reclamation or displacement scenarios via a set procedure, collaborative response, effective communication to displaced individuals, assistance in moving, case management/resource connection, and alternative option to residing on unsanctioned land
- Reduce trauma for special (such as domestic violence, disability, mental illness, substance use, etc.)
- Reduce trauma induced by other community members via trauma-informed care trainings

Reduce harm in substance use.

- Increase access to clean equipment for substance use
- Increase access to Naxolone/Narcan
- Increase education in outreach/engagement regarding safe substance use and recovery resources

- Increase availability of recovery resources, programs, etc. that are diverse, accessible, and serve specific populations

## Transform

Identify opportunities to assist member organizations in preventing and ending homelessness in Athens-Clarke County.

- Continue to apply for public, private, local, regional, and state funding whenever possible
- Utilize funds to assist member organizations with growth of existing programs and outreach to new programs
- Develop a housing continuum and track to provide a smarter, more incremental path to sustainable housing
- Rethinking and planning affordable housing and mixed-use housing

Identify, navigate and change landlord and community perceptions of individuals and families experiencing homelessness and/or mental health disorders including but not limited to substance use disorder

- Educate the community on individual and family homelessness

Work continuously to realize the goals listed in this strategic plan and opportunities for the Coalition to achieve success.

- Draft an action plan to accomplish goals listed in the strategic plan assigned to specific committees