

HOUSING RESOURCES FOR PEOPLE WITH SEVERE ALCOHOL ADDICTIONS IN ANCHORAGE

TALKING POINTS

Overview

Affordable appropriate housing for people with special needs for social support services in Anchorage is a challenging area. Several groups have been working to evaluate barriers to assisting homeless individuals and those with severe alcohol addictions or mental illness (or combinations of these three conditions) to find safe, affordable housing in the area. Economic factors, shifting state funding resources, challenges to proposed developments and community attitudes have been stumbling blocks to the homeless and disability/ mental health service agencies in the recent past.

As a result, many people with disabilities, severe alcohol addiction and mental illness end up incarcerated or cycling between institutional care, emergency level of services (i.e., hospital emergency settings, alcohol pick up/sleep off) and the emergency shelters or the streets/camps.

Problem or community need

- Homeless count: In January 2009, the Anchorage annual Housing and Urban Development point-in-time homeless survey revealed **2,962 individuals and families identified as homeless** on this day.
- Of these, **1,182 people met the HUD definition of ‘chronically homeless’ or ‘disabled.’** (Municipality of Anchorage HUD homeless count report January 2009)
- Within the 1,182 people identified in the homeless count as meeting federal definitions of chronically homeless or disabled, 736 or **62% were adults without children** in their household.
- In 2009, 14 individuals who were displaced and without a home died on the trails or in camps and received publicity, however, Bean’s Café reported **63 deaths in the larger population of homeless people in 2009.** (Bean’s Café Memoriam 2009, Anchorage)
- The Department of Corrections (DOC) estimates there were 8,000 discharges with approximately 40% (3,200) of these individuals being people with disabling conditions of alcohol addictions and/or mental illness or disability and who had no identified housing arrangement at the time of discharge during 2008 (2007/2008 HUD homeless count report, AHFC/DOC calculations)
- Anchorage officials report the high expense of dealing with one subset of the homeless population: **those with severe alcohol addictions. In 2009 alone, the costs to the fire department and the Community Service Patrol transport services was \$1.8 million and \$1.5 million respectively** (Municipality of Anchorage report of 2009 services costs, compiled February 2010, Diane Ingle, Department of Health and Human Services, Director)

Why are we pursuing an ordinance for housing for people with alcohol dependence?

The Mayor’s Homeless Leadership Team was charged with making recommendations to Mayor Sullivan on how to deal more effectively with the chronic homeless individuals who have severe alcohol addictions who are cycling through our emergency and safety services. The mayor’s goals for the leadership team are to make recommendations to the city on how to best:

- **Reduce deaths amongst chronically homeless alcoholics**
- **Reduce violence to and among the chronically homeless alcoholics**
- **Reduce neighborhood impacts from chronically homeless alcoholics**

The leadership team identified successful coordination and social service models that have worked in other communities and drafted the ordinance (AO2010-3 Severe Alcohol Dependence Housing) to allow Anchorage to replicate one type of model used successfully.

PLEASE PROVIDE INPUT ON THIS ORDINANCE TO YOUR ASSEMBLY MEMBER OR AT THE TUESDAY FEBRUARY 16TH ASSEMBLY HEARING