

**Minutes**  
**Homeless Task Force**  
**MEETING DATE: October 31, 2007**  
**United Way**  
**7:00 – 8:30 a.m.**

**Taskforce Members**

Rev. Cheryl Jefferson Bell Sue Castile Gypsy Claar Connie Dietz Sharon Fearey Jack Focht Patrick Hanrahan Lou Heldman Bishop Michael Jackels Bishop Scott Jones Steve Martens Janet L. Miller Tim Norton Marsha Stanyer Mary K. Vaughn

Ex officio members: Winston Brooks Bill Buchanan George Kolb Ron Holt

**Welcome**

Jack Focht called the meeting to order at 7:00 a.m. Minutes were approved.

**Report on Kansas Statewide Summit on Homelessness**

The meeting began with a report by Janet Miller on the Kansas Statewide Summit on Homelessness. The Summit was held on October 23-24 in Manhattan, KS. Ms. Miller indicated that information was gained and contacts were made on the regional and national levels. Also, the conference reiterated the national trend towards a housing focused approach rather than a temporary shelter focused approach. In addition, information was provided on the progress on federal legislation involving homeless issues.

**Resource and Referral Center Service Options**

Next, discussion shifted toward Resource and Referral Center service options. Since the last TECH meeting, service options for the Resource and Referral Center have been refined. Ms. Miller began the discussion with a proposed Resource and Referral Center statement that outlined the purpose/mission of the Center. The statement included the following highlights:

- The Center would be welcoming and open to all homeless populations;
- Be open 24/7;
- Provide a point of access to community resources;
- Offer needs assessment services;
- Offer some on-site services; and
- Partner with governmental and non-profit community agencies.

During the discussion of the statement of purpose for the Resource and Referral Center, the following amendments were made:

- Add language consistent with safety and well-being of all clients;
- Include language documenting capacity for 150 individuals; and
- Add language stating the Center is meant to enhance, not replace existing, services.

After discussion concluded about the Resource and Referral statement of purpose, discussion moved towards deciding potential service options for the Center. TECH members were asked to re-examine services options and brainstorm new ideas.

The following amendments were made to the Resource and Referral Center document:

- Change peer counseling provided by People's Net be to peer support;
- Bring together welcome desk reception area with HMIS/2-1-1 access;
- Add provide a safe and secure environment component to security;
- Amend dining service area component to indicate lunch service donated or with a partner; and
- Include notation that states that the Resource and Referral Center plan is predicated on an additional 50 overnight shelter beds.

It was reiterated that the Resource and Referral Center is not exclusively for chronic homeless but should serve the entire homeless population.

As discussion continued, a question was raised about the fact-based evidence that led to the conclusion that a Resource and Referral Center needed to be open 24-hours. It was stated that many services provided in the community have a curfew and many people working their way out of homelessness need a "place to be." For example, most shelters do not accept people after 9 p.m., leaving homeless unprotected from the elements during the night-time hours. While it was proposed that the Resource and Referral Center be open 24-hours, it was reiterated that services would not be provided 24-hours a day/7 days a week. Some Task Force members stressed the importance of finding a human rehabilitative approach other than taking homeless to jail.

As conversation continued about possible services, questions were raised about whether or not beds will be included in the Resource and Referral Center. Currently, the plan does not include beds. Many TECH members expressed the concern that including beds will turn the Resource and Referral Center into a shelter. Some suggested that the Resource and Referral Center would be a "place to be" until a homeless individual could be connected with a service provider. It was stated that the Resource and Referral Center is predicated on a "Housing First" approach and the Resource and Referral Center should be used as a resource to find housing.

While the Task Force continued to deliberate services, questions were raised about services currently provided in the community. It was stated that TECH should not duplicate services but support what is available in the community. For example, the Lord's Diner provides dinner in the community. It was suggested that the capacity of the Lord's Diner could be expanded and TECH's plan should support resources available in the community. Also, it was reiterated that a solution must include a partnership between government, the non-profit sector, and the faith-based community.

As TECH members continued to discuss service options, Debbie Donaldson and Beth Oaks were asked to speak about services provided by COMCARE and the United Way. Ms. Donaldson highlighted COMCARE's mental health 24/7 crisis line. Any person in crisis can receive help. Also, Ms. Donaldson discussed the Sedgwick County Offender Assessment Program (SCOAP). The program is open 24 hours and works to keep people with serious mental illness out of jail. With this program, there are currently four beds available.

Next, Beth Oaks of United Way spoke about United Way's 2-1-1 program. United Way 2-1-1 is available across the State of Kansas and is as readily used as 9-1-1. This service is available 24/7 and partners with the Kansas City area to provide services on weekends. Those that work with 2-1-1 have special training and must be proficient in using the 2-1-1 system. While current 2-1-1 workers do not utilize HMIS, it was suggested that 2-1-1 workers could utilize the HMIS bed component to help find shelter for homeless individuals in the future.

Next, questions were raised about the cost of a Resource and Referral Center. Some Task Force members asked if a cost estimate had been assembled in conjunction with the Resource and Referral Service document. It was stated that the level of need for the community must be determined to find out whether there are alternatives that may work. Also, concerns were expressed about the location of the Resource and Referral Center. Although many services are provided downtown, it was stated that it should not be assumed that the Resource and Referral Center should be located downtown.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 a.m. The next meeting is scheduled for November 14, 2007 at United Way located at 245 N. Water.