

Churchill County Social Services

STRATEGIC PLAN



Addressing Poverty & Homelessness in Churchill County

2007 - 2010

INTRODUCTION

Churchill County Social Services prior to 2000 was motivated to assist residents in their immediate needs to end a one moment crisis situation. Through these motivations emergency services of rent, utilities and indigent issues were addressed. During the next two years the Social Services Department started to see the increase of more involved crisis situations and identified the previous services offered only addressed the immediate need, but was not assisting the community to develop the skills to provide for ongoing needs related to their situations.

Through development of formal regional and statewide groups such as, Rural Nevada Continuum of Care and Nevada Association of Community Action Agencies it started to assist the Social Services Agency to develop in a more modeled approach to address community needs that resulted in assisting with poverty on a larger level.

In Churchill County the growing need in transient homelessness was on a rise and continuing to develop to be a considerable trend. The need had grown from addressing the issue with a one or two night motel voucher to assisting the new residents to becoming self-sufficient. The development of a rural shelter or short term transitional housing program was the start of cutting edge housing programs to be offered. The program was designed to assist the target clientele during a two week period of time in finding stable housing and alignment of limited resource available to assist on a long period time. In less than a year the community identified that there was numerous stabilizing elements not provided to permanently assist the families and individuals.

Through other funding sources model programs were discovered, such as the HUD Supportive Service Programs, which had been successful in urban areas, but not yet had been successful in a Nevada rural community. The new identified model was an intense case management program that provided the ongoing support networks up to individuals and families up to two years. Through this model the county agency identified the need to introduce a case manager that would dedicate 100% of the time to the development family enhancements plans and transforming the community into a wrap around service coordination agencies.

In rural communities such as Fallon and Churchill County the territorial perspective had been instilled for numerous years and now the concept of providing services in a full continuum would seem as an impossible task. The mentoring of agencies to look for assistance from others to develop a full spectrum case plan rather than an immediate need or just the agencies target service could be an ever ending task.

In 2006, the start of a strategic plan to assist not only in the development of an agency plan began, but the over target to assist in the leadership building of community agencies to provide additional services in the overall goal to end poverty and homelessness within Churchill County. Through this planning process the first step would be to identify qualified and willing community members to join our team.

THE COMMUNITY TEAM

The selection of critical members in the development team was crucial in not only in the agency plan to address the overall mapping in the leadership development of the community. During the initial development Churchill County Social Services agency plan the thought of territories needed to be addressed to include all the elements and to begin the other agencies to have buy in. The large areas in the continued increase of poverty are seen as lack in job opportunities or minimum skilled work force, substance abuse, and County awareness of the increasing social issues that had developed. So through the identifying process members from New Frontier Treatment Center, JOIN, and the County Manager were asked to join our agency in the venture of making a real change in the community.

AGENCY CHALLENGES

Through time of mentoring from the planning agency “Move the Mountain” the team began to develop leadership techniques and assess the community needs on the actual community level. Previously Social Services looked at trends and reacted, the new development was to strategically look at the community in a now and future approach and address those needs not as one agency but to look at other future leaders to instill the techniques to deter the crisis incidents as a community approach.

Churchill County Social Services experienced at what seemed to be a drastic change of staffing, but now has assisted in a team approach to grow into a well strategically developed community action agency. A complete staff change occurred over a one year time, which now took the small local government agency to a new profession, trained and motivated team level. Common sense of outcomes is being achieved and the continued development of the community as a goal is being addressed on a agency team approach.

DATA COLLECTION

Through successful models previously utilized in other communities it was team decision to look to the identified low income neighborhood, located in the heart of Fallon. Through a multi-community development team an assessment tool was produced. Volunteers through out the community were seeked out to contact the residents of the neighborhood and identify the needs and barriers to them as individuals and families living within the community. In a one day period 54 surveys were completed. The results were shocking on numerous levels, but not in away they could assist the team in the development of a community transformation plan.

Through community conversations the one item that was not identified during the survey planning was that the change in homeownership had targeted the neighborhood and now was not a high rental neighborhood, but now a 1st time homebuyer community.

When the issues were addressed the logical revamped plan was to look at families and individuals that utilize the current agencies to provide assistance to their needs. During a three month period only 52 individuals agreed to assist the agencies by completing the surveys, but the ones received have been compiled and have assisted in the planning efforts of the Churchill County Social Services Strategic Plan. Step by step the transformation plan has been mapped out, not only for our agency, but to begin the process of community awareness, development, and addressing the future issues through a planned approach rather than reacting to the at the moment crisis at hand.

CASE for CHANGE

Churchill County is the Oasis of Nevada. We have been a small rural farming community since 1904. Our local mascot is the Greenwave, representing the community's foundation in agriculture and alfalfa blowing in the wind. Churchill County has a population of approximately 34,000 residents consisting of county, City of Fallon, Hazen and the Middle gate areas. We have a military base that has over 1100 active duty military men and women and approximately 2,000 civil servants and contractors. An additional 40,000 transient military personal a year are brought in for various training activities. Agricultural and military related activities are major, stabilizing components of Churchill County's economy.

However, within our community we have seen growth come in large spurts within the last 4 years. Housing costs has more than doubled for 3 bedroom 2 bath homes in our area. The median cost of a home in 2002 was \$136,250.00. The median cost of a home in 2006 is \$285,000.00. The average monthly rental cost for a 3 bedroom 2 bath place in 2002 was \$975. In 2006 the same place rents for \$1100. Per the data collected from America's Job Bank on 10/16/06, the average hourly wage for Churchill County is \$11.27. A household with this average hourly wage would have a total monthly gross income of \$1953.09. Based on the above rental cost, the remaining balance would be \$853.09. This does not even take into account taxes, insurance costs, and additional basic needs expenses. Many households are finding it difficult or impossible to live in this community at their current income level, without outside assistance.

Due to this financial challenge, community agencies have been inundated with requests for additional services to include utilities, food, rent assistance and gas assistance to get to and from work. Within the last year Churchill County Social Services has received 1,984 requests for services. Of those 1,464 have been approved creating a large funding shortfall for basic needs. Through out area agencies assistance funding is lacking for critical services such as:

- Gas / transportation assistance, for work and medical related needs
- Affordable insurance, medical, prescription and / or dental
- Temporary housing subsidies, to recover from a crisis

This list could go on and grows as the population grows. If these are shortfalls this year, what will the future present to us?

MISSION

Churchill County Social Services' goal is to facilitate the self-sufficiency of program recipients. These programs provide for the health and welfare of county residents who are eligible residents and indigents to receive emergency temporary assistance.

VISION

Individuals and Families have opportunities to develop, grow, and prosper as valued, respected residents of the community. Our community is welcoming, responsive and offers opportunity and respect for all residents through:

- Quality Education
- Livable wage jobs
- Affordable housing
- Recreational Opportunities
- Family oriented
- Informal support networks
- Skilled workforce
- Active faith community
- Diverse economy
- Drug free
- Safety

Churchill County Social Services supports community members to grow in self-sufficiency. Churchill County Social Services leads the community in taking action to end poverty.

Community Strategy I

Build community partnerships and agency capacity to ensure basic needs are met and future life assets are developed.

Ten Year Outcome:

- A). Community plan exists and is implemented

Three Year Outcome:

- A). Community plan is developed

Indicator:

- a). Written plan

Activities:

1. Develop Community Team-Guiding Coalition
2. Community meetings
3. Contact, interview, invite community partners
4. Define terms

Three Year Outcome:

- B). Formal partnerships are increased by 15

Indicator:

- a). Identify current partnerships
- b). Compare annually the partnerships with baseline-develop tracking tool

Activities:

1. Identify potential and current partners
2. Invite partners to participate in whatever (community meetings/community leaderships)
3. Define wrap-around

Community Strategy II

Build community programs to ensure all people have safe, adequate, affordable housing.

Ten Year Outcome:

- A). 90 % of persons have a safe, stable place to live
- B). Community housing plan is executed/implemented

Three Year Outcome:

- A). Community housing plan is developed
- B). Completed housing plan – approved and corrected to update Churchill County master plan – affordable housing

Indicator:

- a). Written plan
- b). Updated and approved master plan

Activities:

1. Work with written plan to address housing for families and individuals in poverty/homeless
 - a. Target low-income housing
 - b. Develop thru community meetings new first time buyer programs
 - c. Develop housing partnerships – ex: developers, state/federal agencies, etc.
2. Inform community members of cost of living versus living wage.
3. Continue to meet with housing coalition to address current trends in housing/homeless
4. Define terms within plan

Agency Strategy

Create an innovative, pro-active agency that leads the community to end poverty.

Ten Year Outcome:

- A). Community plan exists and is implemented by community leaders

Three Year Outcome:

- A). Community plan is developed
- B). Team of community leaders is established

Indicators:

- a). Written plan and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) are signed

Activities:

1. Develop community team – guiding coalition
2. Community meetings
3. Contact, interview, and invite community leaders
4. Define terms within plan