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Macomb County

Homeless plan revised

Macomb tweaks initiative to end homelessness by 2014 to include families, kids, people without disabilities.

Charles E. Ramirez / The Detroit News

MOUNT CLEMENS -- The county has come up with a revised plan to end homelessness in Macomb by 2014.

The changes expand the plan to address the changing face of the county's homeless population, said Carrie Fortune, coordinator of the Macomb Homeless Coalition, the umbrella group for organizations that provide shelter and support services to the homeless.

"The plan now covers all of the county's homeless," Fortune said. "It now covers families, children and people who don't have disabilities -- all of whom weren't covered under the first plan."

Previously, federal guidelines directed the coalition to focus its efforts on chronically homeless individuals, she said.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development defines a chronically homeless person as an individual with some type of physical or mental disability or drug addiction who has been continuously homeless for a year or more.

The revisions come as the ranks of the county's homeless continue to grow, according to the coalition.

The county conducts a census of the homeless every two years and reports its findings to HUD to obtain funding for its programs.

The plan's revisions were developed by a task force made up of 70 representatives from local agencies, organizations and businesses, Fortune said.

Jimetta Lewis, executive director of the Macomb County Rotating Emergency Shelter Team and a member of the task force, said she's confident the entire county will pull together to make the plan work. MCREST, based in Roseville, is a group of local church congregations that temporarily house the homeless.

One of the plan's goals is to create a one-stop center for the homeless that would provide living quarters for mentally ill clients, a clinic and other support services.

The county has received more than \$600,000 from HUD for the center, which is planned to be built adjacent to MCREST's offices near Little Mack and 13 Mile, Fortune said.

The group is seeking approval from the city of Roseville.

A homeless man, who gave his name only as George, said he thought was a great idea.

George, 49, said he has been staying at MCREST's shelters for 42 months.

"MCREST helps a lot," he said. "A safe haven will only help more."

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