From Direct Service to Lived Experience: Individual Roles in Homelessness Policy Advocacy

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Should direct service providers "stay in their lane," or do they have real advocacy they can provide for systemic change?



Pair and share:

What are benefits to service providers in your field being involved in larger advocacy efforts? What about drawbacks?

What is the Homeless Services Consortium Education and Advocacy Committee?

- Provides information to the public, elected officials, and HSC members about homelessness in Dane County.
- Develops relationships with elected officials and proposes legislation.
- Creates and submits annual advocacy platform to HSC board of directors for approval.
- Direct, “micro” service providers can help identify specific needs in the community to advocate for

Who can join the Homeless Services Consortium Education and Advocacy Committee?

- Participants include direct service providers, school district employees, City of Madison staff (advocacy efforts limited), and working, retired, or community members who are on disability

- Can be highly replicable for many COCs - committees focused exclusively on advocacy and education

- Advocacy AND education

Advocacy Opportunities: Dane County Housing First Advocacy Day



- Members of the HSC passionate about Housing First can meet with their area legislators one day per year to discuss plans moving forward

- Issue -> Value -> Problem -> Solution -> Action model to talk with legislators, discuss mission and vision of organization

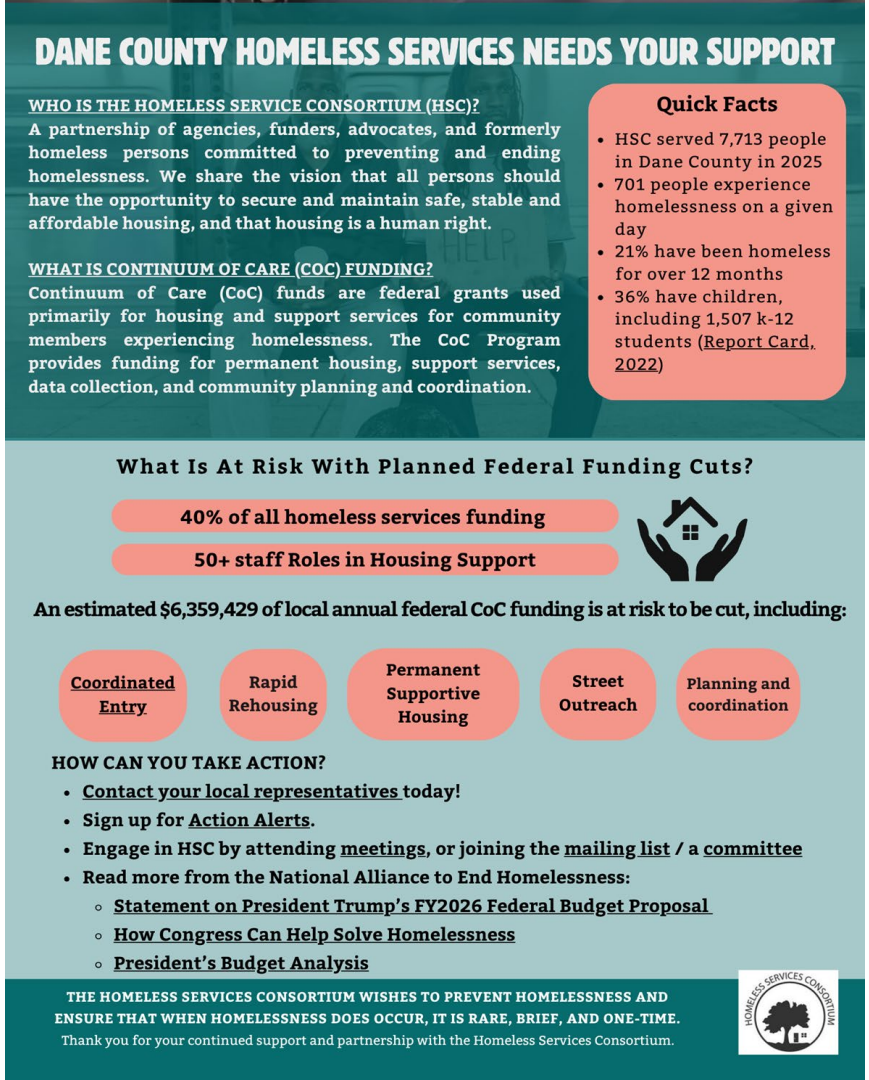
Other Advocacy Opportunities: One pagers, participation in community meetings, other opportunities

- National Homelessness Law Center Cross-State Anti-Criminalization Call

- Discuss current local and federal legislation affecting homeless populations in meetings, different perspectives, calls to action
  - Creating one pagers for awareness
  - Letter writing
  - Recent topics: anti-camping, shelter laps, “nuisance” properties, school engagement

One pager example re: federal funding cuts

Non-partisan advocacy



What are some draws to participation, according to participants (via anonymous survey)?

- “Finding guidance on how to be more of an active advocate in my community.”
- “Wanting to learn more about the system and how to get in to help inform decision-making”
- “Advocacy on part of youth and families”
- “I've been homeless and experienced a lot of barriers to housing and lost a lot just to be able to gain housing and we'll likely be homeless again very soon”
- “Working with families and students experiencing homelessness in public schools”
- “Providing advocacy so we can improve the way we respond to homelessness in our community.”

Advocacy opportunities in Dane County that led to change, according to participants

- Petitions on efforts to decriminalize homelessness

- “HEN (Homelessness Education Network) this is a group of school staff across Dane County that meet twice or three times a year to connect on promising practices, share families and networking for resources and county wide advocacy. Often families in our rural districts are not reflected in the city of Madison and the voice of school and families' rural communities are amplified by our shared voice and vision for acknowledgment and support. These families and youth, singles are usually doubled up and not supported or recognized in the HSC community. HEN works hard to work with the CoC to make sure these voices are heard, counted and supported.”

Other advocacy examples

- “I have seen people change their attitude about homelessness through educating”

- “Advocated for the doubled-up position that now sits with the county, was member of the doubled-up work group that worked on this, also a member of the Homelessness Awareness group that brings the homeless summit to Dane County now in its third year”

- “There was some advocacy done around doubled-up homelessness that led to Johneisha Prescott's position at the County and funding for the doubled-up pilot program. Advocacy was had around the men's shelter, especially in the last budget cycle when we realized the men's shelter would not meet the current need”

Pair and Share!



What advocacy would you like to see in your county and in your field that you think service providers could contribute to?

Other national example: Houston, Texas



- Houston service providers have created a team that has essentially “solved” homelessness through organizations like The Way Home
  - Community planning and engagement

- Over 90% of residents in Housing First programs have remained successfully housed in Houston for over two years

Questions?

https://www.danecountyhomeless.org/

Thank you!!!

References

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